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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
CHURCH OF CHRIST.

BY THE LATE
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With Additions and Corrections,

BY THE LATE
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CENTURY XII.

CHAPTER I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE LIFE OF BERNARD.

A GREAT luminary strikes our attention at the entrance of this century—the famous Bernard, abbot of Clairval. As the general scene of our history still continues dark and gloomy, let us stick close to the splendid object. At least I would wish to exhibit a just estimate of the life, character, and writings of this renowned saint. For the subject may not only throw a considerable light on the religion and manners of this century, but will also illustrate that connexion between Christian doctrine and practice, which it is the principal design of this work to explore from age to age.

There was a time when Bernard was idolized throughout Europe; while he lived, his word was a law; and, for ages after his death, he was scarcely thought to have been capable either of fault or mistake. But the public taste has long since deviated into the other extreme, and it will behove me to say a few words, with a view to combat that power of prejudice, by which most minds are apt to be carried down the torrent of fashion.

Bernard was doubtless a very ardent champion of the popes of Rome; I mean, of their office, not of their personal characters. He inveighed against the vices of the men, and the various evils of their ecclesiastical administration. But he supported their pretensions to the chair of St. Peter, and opposed with vehemence all who withstood those pretensions. FORGIVE HIM THIS WRONG: it was common to him with the Christian world; and the great Saxon Reformer, who, four hundred years after, could see at length, though by slow degrees, the wickedness and folly of the whole established system under which he had been strictly educated, has ever been looked on as a prodigy. In superstition also Bernard was unhappily involved all his days; it

was the evil of the times. His austerities have, with nauseous punctuality, been recited by his panegyrist*. They might have spared their accounts, as they themselves confess that he afterwards owned he was in error, both in injuring his own health, and in exacting too much of labour and sufferings from his disciples. Nor is the sincerity of Bernard to be doubted, either in his juvenile zeal, or in his candid and frank confession of his faults†. He even accused himself of sacrilege, because by his indiscreet excesses he had rendered himself almost unfit to serve God and the Church. And though the weakness of his frame continued till death, as the consequence of the injuries which his body had received by his austerities, he seems to have taken some care of health in the latter part of his life.

But the strongest prejudices which we are inclined to admit against him in our times, are derived from his supposed miracles, and from his real attachment to the cause of the Crusades.

In truth, I was disgusted with the tedious perusal of his miracles, with not one of which do I mean to trouble the reader. But Bernard was canonized; it was therefore necessary, by the etiquette of the Roman See, that a Saint should work miracles; and no wonder, when the interests of all parties concerned were favourable to fraud, and when credulity was a general evil, that miracles should be feigned, be circumstantially related, and be implicitly believed. Thus Ignatius, the father of the Jesuits, was said, sixty years after his death, to have wrought miracles; though in his life, published fifteen years after that event, no mention is made of any. Our king

* These are several; the lives of Bernard, which they wrote, are at the close of the 2d Vol. of his Works; which are in two folios. I use the Parisian edition of Mabillon.

† Vol. II. p. 1094.

acter of Bernard, amidst the profusion of honours heaped on his character throughout Europe, was his undissembled humility. Though no potentate, whether civil or ecclesiastical, possessed such real power as he did in the Christian world, and though he was the highest in the judgment of all men, he was nevertheless, in his own estimation, the lowest. He said, and he felt what he said; namely, that he had neither the will nor the power to perform the services for which he was so much extolled, but was wholly indebted to the influence of divine grace. At intervals, from the employments of ecclesiastical affairs, he meditated on the subject of the Book of Canticles. The love of Christ towards his Church, his great condescension towards it, though sullied and dishonoured by sin, the reciprocal affection also of the Church towards the divine Saviour, the prelibations of his love afforded toward her, varied however with anxieties and interruptions, these subjects engaged his attention, and he wrote on them in that manner which experience only can dictate.*

Another writer of Bernard's life tells us,† of the excellent dignitaries of the Church, who had received their education in the monastery of Clairval. But as I know nothing of any of them, except one, it must suffice to mention him, pope Eugenius III. From a monk he rose to that height of ecclesiastical dignity; and he still practised the austerities of the convent so far as his exalted station admitted; and we have yet extant five books, addressed to him by Bernard, written with that air of genuine piety and sincerity, which showed that the abbot was no respecter of persons. The pope himself was irreproachable in his manners, continued to reverence the abbot, was zealous toward God, and appears to have far excelled the generality of popes. For the worst thing that can be said of Eugenius was, that he seems to have had no scruples in accepting the popedom. But it is not for man to say how great a quantity of ignorance and superstition is compatible with the existence of genuine piety. Eugenius was raised to the pontificate in the year 1145, and governed nine years in a state of splendid misery. Feuds

Eugenius
III. becomes
pope,
A. D. 1145.

and factions convulsed his government, and he was obliged to fly from Rome into France, to avoid the fury of his enemies. It was probably a blessing in the disguise of afflictions that he was never allowed to taste the sweets of power and grandeur.

Theobald, count of Blois, elder brother to Stephen king of England, was also much guided by the counsels of Bernard, and he was surely a very extraordinary character. Though a powerful prince, he lived in abstemiousness, simplicity, and plainness. Nothing indecent was permitted to be said* or done in his presence. His care and munificence in relieving the afflicted was wonderful: in a famine he opened his store-houses to the poor: his life, in short, was devoted to the service of mankind: and I hope, that agreeably to Ernald's observation, he laid up treasures above. We must, however, be content with details of external things from a writer, who gives no account of the inward vital godliness of his heroes. Theobald also had his share of afflictions, though the account of their nature, and of his relief from them at last, is beyond measure obscure.

The talents of Bernard in preaching, were, doubtless, of the first order. He possessed that variety of gifts which fitted him either to address the great or the vulgar. He knew how to improve conversation to salutary purposes, and to overrule the frivolous tridling of a company by introducing something serious, which yet was of an inviting and an agreeable nature. At the command of the pope, and at the request of other bishops, he was wont to preach in various places; and the impressions left on the congregations, who crowded from all parts to hear him, demonstrated the powers of his eloquence.†

The crusade of Lewis VII. called the younger, was supported by the eloquent voice of Bernard, who unhappily prevailed to draw numbers to join that monarch in his absurd expedition, which was in its consequences pregnant with misery and ruin.‡ If we had no other apologies for Bernard than those very absurd ones suggested by Gaufrid, it must be confessed he would be totally inexcusable. But in the review of his works we shall have occasion to hear the abbot speak for himself.

* Life of Bernard, 1123.

† 1127. Life of Bernard, by Ernald.

* Life of Bernard, by Ernald, 1129.

† Life of Bernard, by Gaufrid. ‡ Id. 1137.

CHAPTER II.

BERNARD'S DEFENCE OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH AGAINST ABELARD.

THE merits of the controversy between these two great men, can scarcely be appreciated, without some previous review of the life and transactions of the latter. Peter Abelard was born in Brittany, in the year 1079.* He was, doubtless, a man of genius, industry, and learning. In early life he was put under the tuition of Roscelin, an acute logician, already mentioned, who incorporating his philosophical subtilties with Christian ideas, departed from the simplicity of the faith, and, toward the close of the foregoing century, was condemned for tritheism.

Abelard needed not the instructions of such a master, in order to learn the arts of self-sufficiency. Confident and presumptuous by nature, elated with applause, and far too haughty to submit to the simple truth, as it is revealed in Scripture, he was, from the moment that he applied himself to the study of the sacred writings, ardently disposed to embrace heretical singularities. After he had appeared in a very splendid light in the schools of philosophy, and had been equally distinguished by his acuteness and by his contentious spirit, he attended the lectures of Anselm† in divinity. What sort of lectures they were we are not told, but I have not the worse opinion of them from the supercilious contempt with which Abelard spoke of them. He himself had given very little attention to the sacred books, and yet very speedily decided against his teacher, pronounced him void of reason and common sense, and declared, that, with the assistance of an easy expositor, the Scriptures were perfectly intelligible to any one who had the smallest pretensions to literature. "Are you equal to the work of expounding the Scriptures?" said his

companions. "I am ready," said he: "choose any book which you please, from the Old or New Testament, and allow me a single commentator." They instantly fixed on the most difficult of all the prophets, Ezekiel. He studied that night, and next morning declared that he was prepared to expound the prophet: "for it is not by leisure," said he, "but by energy of genius, that I undertake to master the sciences." He exhibited himself in public, lectured repeatedly on Ezekiel, and was admired by his ignorant auditories.

Hitherto everything seems to be a modern scene. The same juvenile confidence, supported by the same ignorance of themselves, and the same depraved nature, has formed many Socinian and Pelagian preachers and writers in our times, who, between the age of twenty and thirty, have despised the wisdom of antiquity, and the authority of men most justly renowned for good sense, learning, and holiness, and have committed themselves to the direction of plausible and presumptuous innovators, who are often sufficiently artful in beguiling the unwary. One of their most successful devices is, they pretend to teach young students of divinity how to think for themselves. It is remarkable, however, that we very seldom find any of those who have gone to visit the sick lion, return from his den. A self-confident spirit naturally leads the mind into opinions the most daringly subversive of the Gospel, as well as into a course of life the most opposite to its precepts. And when a man has begun to despise the influence of the Holy Spirit, he is awfully left at large to his own dark designs, and to the crafts of the prince of darkness. The connexion between doctrines and practice is close and exact. He, who thought highly of himself was easily disposed to think meanly of divine grace; and the best uses of the story of this miserable man are these, to teach youth to be modest, and to inform mankind, whether young or old, that the Scriptures should ever be studied with reverence, humility, and prayer.

* I have been obliged to Mr. Berington's history of this man, for the arrangement of certain facts and circumstances. I scarcely need to say, that I am constrained to differ, toto cælo, from him in sentiments. Nor is it possible that it should be otherwise, where two persons have scarcely one common principle of theology in which they agree.

† This person must not be confounded with the famous archbishop of Canterbury of that name.

Abelard had the baseness to seduce a young woman, named Eloisa, who was brought up in Paris by her uncle. The names of both these persons are familiar to those who have read our poet Pope, and it would be far remote from the plan of this history to enlarge on scenes of so flagitious a nature. Only the real prin-

ciples of grace, I constantly find, are productive of holy practice. He, who has not seen the evil of sin in his own nature, and the preciousness of the grace of Christ, even while he boasts of his regard to moral virtue, will sport with iniquity, and call evil good, and good evil. The unhappy woman herself learned to glory in her shame, and professed that she thought it an honour to become the harlot of so renowned a person as Abelard. Sin deceives and hardens the heart incredibly; even holy David, for a season, felt its fascinating power; and nothing less than the influence of divine grace can subdue it. Blinded by lust, Abelard and Eloisa felt no remorse for their monstrous treatment of her uncle, whose confidence they abused, and whose kindness they repaid by the most vile and wicked ingratitude. In the mean time, Abelard studied and expounded the prophets, and continued to preach, not the Lord, but himself, as he had ever done. Happy had it been for the Christian world if there had been no more such theologians. But thus it is with men who speculate on religion at their ease, and make it a vehicle for their own advancement, honour, and wealth. With shameless versatility, they can at one time undertake to explain the Scriptures, at another gratify the lusts of the flesh. With men truly serious for their own souls it is not so: they may be slow in their advances in Christian science; but their steps are safe; and, while religion is by them brought to the test of experience, their conduct is preserved in uprightness.

I throw a veil over the particulars of the shameful story. Suffice it to say, that in the issue, Abelard's projects of ecclesiastical ambition were disappointed, and that both he and the unhappy woman retired into monastic obscurity.

Ambition and the force of an active genius soon engaged Abelard again in theological inquiries. Of all the ancient fathers, Origen most suited his taste; and, mindful of the instructions of Roscelin, he began to philosophize in public on the doctrines of the Gospel, and composed, in three books, his Introduction to Theology; in which he attempted to render the mysteries of Christianity more agreeable to reason than they had been represented by the ancient fathers. The Trinity, in particular, he describes as a doctrine known to the ancient schools of philosophers, and revealed to

them in recompense of their virtues. This is certainly a language very different from that of the Scriptures, which never mention philosophers, except with a view to guard against their seductions, and always represent their views as extremely abhorrent from the doctrines of the Gospel. The modern historian of Abelard is large and diffuse in describing the treatment which his hero met with, but desultory and indistinct in the account which he gives of his real sentiments. He asserts, however, that Abelard was persecuted without cause; that his book really contained nothing that was expressly heterodox; and while he positively and decidedly condemns the conduct of his adversaries, he gives his readers no sufficient data by which they may judge for themselves. But thus it is that heresy has ever been defended. While its words do eat as a canker, and gradually pervert the minds of the unwary, every charitable attempt to counteract the poison is treated as bigotry, illiberality, and fanaticism. The praise of good sense and sound argument is considered as appropriate to the heretic. He, at least, is allowed and encouraged to spread his doctrines with freedom, and to asperse the orthodox with the keenest invective; while all who undertake to defend the plain sense of Scripture are stigmatized as persecutors. Scenes of this sort have, to the disgrace of human nature, been renewed from age to age: and so low and mean are the ideas of charity inculcated by those who call themselves liberal, that the real spiritual benefit of thousands seems to them scarcely an object of any magnitude, compared with the personal reputation of the applauded heretic.

Let us then endeavour to give, from the best evidences, a distinct view of the leading sentiments of Abelard, that we may be enabled to form a just idea of the controversy which at present engages our attention. I have drawn them from the history of Alexander Natalis,* and the testimonies both of Abelard himself, and of Bernard his opponent, are introduced into this account.

I. Abelard distinguished the persons of the Trinity in this manner. He described God the Father to be FULL POWER, the Son to be a CERTAIN POWER, the Holy Spirit to be NO POWER. He said, "the Son was to the Father as a CERTAIN

* Alexand. Nat. 12th Cent.

power to power, as species to genus, as materiatum to materia, as man to an animal, as a brazen seal to brass."

I suppose, were I to translate the Latin words of this passage, for the sake of the less learned reader, I should make no addition to his stock of knowledge.

2. He represented the Holy Spirit to have proceeded from the Father and the Son, but not from the substance of the Father and the Son. Let this article pass as an unintelligible subtilty, if the reader please. The next speaks plainly a sentiment which strikes at the root of Christianity.

3. He denied that the devil ever had any commanding effective influence over man, and therefore he denied that the Son assumed flesh for the sake of freeing man from the devil. God appeared, said he, in flesh, for no other end than for our instruction by word and example, nor did he suffer and die for any other reason, than to show and recommend his love toward us. I scarcely need to say, that this is the very essence of Socinianism.

That I have not mistaken the meaning of Abelard will further appear from a view of his reasonings against the doctrine of atonement. "How is it possible that God should be reconciled to us by the death of his Son, since, in all reason, he ought to have been more incensed against men for the murder of his Son than for the violation of his precept by the eating of a single apple? If Adam's sin could not be expiated but by the death of Christ, what expiation could be made for the horrid crime of murdering Christ himself? Could the death of an innocent Son be so pleasing to God, that he would be reconciled to us men on the commission of it?—Who does not see, that it is cruel and unjust, that any one should require the blood of the innocent? How much less could God be so pleased with such an action, as to be reconciled on account of it to the whole world?" Thus far Abelard.* Socinians have never said anything more specious. To those, who know how to reverence divine wisdom, and to submit to the express word of God, such reasonings will appear unworthy of an answer. What I am concerned for at present is, to state the fact, that Abelard was a heretic, that Bernard did not accuse him either unjustly or precipitately; and that the assertion of the

historian of Abelard,* namely, that his hero "was not guilty of a single error," is altogether unfounded.

It may be proper to add, that Abelard, having set aside the Scripture doctrine of an atonement, gives it as his opinion, that the real cause and design of Christ's incarnation was, that he might illuminate the world with the light of his wisdom, and inflame it to the love of God.

4. He affirmed that the Holy Spirit was the soul of the world. A phrase much used by the philosophers.

5. He asserted, that Christ, God and man, is not a third person in the Trinity, and that God is not properly to be called man.

6. That by free-will, without the help of grace, we can both will and perform that which is good, in direct contradiction to the seventh Chapter to the Romans.

7. That in the sacrifice of the altar, there remains, in the air, the form of the former substance.

8. That not the fault but the penalty of original sin is derived from Adam.

9. That there is no sin, except in the full consent of the man, and that consent attended with or implying a contempt of God.

10. That no sin is committed by concupiscence, inward delight in evil, or ignorance. However obscurely he expresses himself, he evidently lessens the demerit of sinful thoughts.

11. That diabolical suggestions are made, in a natural way on men, by the contact of stones and herbs, as the sagacious malice of evil spirits knows how to suit the various efficacy of these things to the production of various vices.

12. Faith he called an estimation or opinion of things not seen. "As if," says † Bernard, "a man might think and speak, in matters of faith, what he pleases, or, as if the Sacraments of our faith were not sure and certain in their nature. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are children of God. The whole object of faith is divinely confirmed by prophecies and miracles, established and consecrated by the incarnation, bloody death, and glorious resurrection of the Redeemer. How can any man give to so divine a principle as

* History of Abelard and Eloisa, p. 278.

† I anticipate the sentiments of Bernard in this place; more of his arguments against Abelard will be given, when we come to the account of his opposition to the heretic.

the faith of the Gospel, so low and mean a title as opinion, except one who hath not received the Holy Spirit, or who is ignorant of the Gospel, or who looks on it as a fable?" The difference between divine and human faith in the Christian religion is here not improperly stated by Bernard.

13. In commenting on the epistle to the Romans, Abelard thus expresses himself: "Since the divine compassion, by bare intuition, could have freed man from the devil, what necessity, what reason, or what need was there, that, for our redemption, the Son of God should assume our nature, should sustain so many and so great miseries, and the painful and ignominious death of the Cross? To us the reason seems to be as follows,—that our justification by his blood, and our reconciliation to God, consisted in this singular grace exhibited to us, namely, in his taking upon him our nature, and in his persevering by word and example even to death, in instructing us."*

"Thus he drew his true disciples the more closely to himself by love. Our redemption, therefore, consists in that great love excited in us by the passion of Christ, which not only frees us from the servitude of sin, but gives us the liberty of the sons of God."

In another place, he says, "Though our doctors, since the days of the Apostles, are of different sentiments, I think the devil had no effective power over man, except a permissive power from God, as a gaoler,† nor did the Son of God assume flesh that he might free men from slavery."

14. He asserts, that fresh continued influences of divine grace are not necessary to the production of every single good action, contrary to the plain sense of the parable of the vine and its branches,

* Observe how the idea of atonement is excluded, to make way for that of instruction, while evangelical terms are still used. Some of the other articles are negatory or obscure; this is palpably plain, and of essential importance in the controversy. In the same light the opposition which he makes, in a great degree, to the work of the Holy Spirit, is to be considered.

† He plainly misrepresents the ancient doctors; none of whom assign any other sort of power to Satan; but by this misrepresentation he speciously introduces his opposition to the doctrine of the atonement.

and our Lord's own explication of it in John xv.

I might add also another sentiment of Abelard, namely, "that God does no more for him, who is saved, than for him who is not saved." He argues, that, "if man be naturally more prone to evil than to good, his sins merit no blame; nay, that* God himself seems blameable for making him so weak and frail." Humble and intelligent Christians know how to answer; "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" And, moreover, they will, with great truth, contend that such men as Abelard ought not to complain that the character of humble and sincere Christians is denied to them, and that their invectives against their opponents are not only unfounded, but also prove themselves to be void of integrity and candour, because they endeavour to impose on mankind by pretending to be what they are not.

On the whole, it seems impossible, that a man who had known any thing of the power of native depravity, should have advanced such sentiments as Abelard published to the world. Still, if he had kept his thoughts to himself, or had even been a modest inquirer, and proposed his doubts for the sake of information from persons better versed than himself in theological inquiries, his sentiments would have been no proper object of an ecclesiastical council. But Abelard had proceeded to assume the character of a teacher; and what fundamental doctrine of Christianity had he not opposed? The views of the Trinity had been either perverted under his hands, or confounded with the speculations of philosophers. The atonement of Christ, on which alone the hope and comfort of real Christians, in all ages, depends, had, in effect, been denied: the efficacious influence of divine grace had been asserted to be, in many cases at least, unnecessary; and the fallen state of man by nature had been excluded from his creed. If he had renounced the Christian name, at the same time that he renounced the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, he would have merited the character of an honest man; and, by separating himself from Christian society, would have prevented the weak and the unwary from being imposed on by his notions. But such candour and frankness seldom belong to the character of heretics: strict truth and plain dealing

in religious matters are scarcely to be expected from any but those who are humble before God, and sanctified by his truth. Why Abelard chose still to call himself a Christian is obvious; his schools would have been deserted if he had acted openly and honestly. Unless then it can be proved that there are no fundamental truths of Scripture, or, that all sentiments are equally insignificant, it behoved the rulers of the Church, from every principle of piety and charity, to take cognizance of the growing heresy.

A council was held at Soissons, and Abelard was summoned to appear. He was charged with tritheism, and with having asserted that God the Father was alone Almighty.

Council of
Soissons.

He was ordered to burn his volumes, and to recite the symbol of Athanasius. He obeyed both the mandates, and, after a short confinement, was set at liberty. I am not disposed to approve of all the steps taken by this council. I only maintain, that the principle of their proceedings was just and equitable. Every person who is a member of any society, religious or civil, would own, if a similar occasion presented itself, that he had a right to require the treacherous member who had laboured to subvert that society, either publicly to retract his sentiments, or to submit to a decree of expulsion.

But Abelard, in his own account of the transaction, largely descants on the iniquity and imperiousness of the Synod. The acrimonious invective, the airs of triumph on occasion of little advantages gained by himself in the course of the debate, the shrewdness of his cavils, and above all, the dexterous evasion of the main points on which the controversy rests, these things appear on the face of his narrative, and are so exactly similar to the conduct of modern heretics, much better known to the world, that I may well be spared the recital of them. Moreover, want of sincerity, as well as of temper, is so evident in the narrative of Abelard, that we can lay no decisive stress on his testimony in things with which his own character is concerned. Indeed the want of honesty and veracity appears to have been most striking features in this ingenious and learned disputant.

A commentary on the Epistle to the Romans was also published by Abelard, to which, in an introductory preface, he has prefixed an observation on the com-

parative value of the Gospels and the Epistles. "The former, he thinks, are designed to teach those things which every Christian ought to know; the latter to inculcate a strict attention and obedience to them. These last," says he, "contain some wholesome documents and advice, which, though they appertain not to the essence of belief, may serve to embellish the Christian establishment, and to developé its tenets." This is the method of speaking usual with Socinians, namely, to undervalue the authority of some parts of Scripture, compared with others, as if holy men of God did not speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost with equal authority through the whole of the sacred volume. It is not necessary to give any other account of the commentary than that which the reader may conjecture for himself from the view already stated of the leading sentiments of the author.

Bernard, paying a visit to the nunnery of the Paraclete, over which Eloisa presided, was heard from the pulpit by the abbess and her nuns with admiration. He read and approved of their laws and institutes, which had been drawn up by Abelard. He objected only to one phrase in their repetition of the Lord's Prayer. For the common expression *DAILY*, in the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread," they had been taught to say *super-substantial bread*. Abelard, it seems, had literally followed the etymology of the Greek word;* *seduced*, I suppose, by the Aristotelian chimeras, which relate to substance. The plain mind of Bernard, attending to sense and utility, rather than to sound and glitter, revolted against the innovation; and, while he spake with a respectful deference of the man, and commended every thing else relating to the nunnery, he expressed his disapprobation of the unusual term. When Abelard heard of it, his pride took fire; he wrote to Bernard a warm expostulation, and, by undertaking to show the superior authority of St. Matthew to St. Luke, he endeavoured to support the propriety of the term *super-substantial*. Here again appeared the Socinian mode of undervaluing one part of Scripture, in comparison of another. This is the first instance recorded of an open altercation between Bernard and Abelard. For I find, at least, no decisive proof of any opposi-

* *Επιθυσιον*.

tion made, as yet, by the former, to the publications of the latter. On the contrary, Bernard was hitherto far from being clear in his own judgment concerning the real theological character of Abelard; and of his caution and charity we shall presently see abundant proofs. The little story which has been told is trifling in its own nature, if anything can be called trifling which illustrates the human character, and displays the connexion between doctrine and disposition, which was never more apparently exhibited than in the transactions of Abelard.

The council of Soissons had been held in the year 1121. It was a long time after this that Bernard took any particular notice of Abelard. Either he had heard little of the controversy, or had not thought himself called on to deliver his sentiments. Abelard, however, notwithstanding his retractions, persevered in teaching his heresies; and it became, at length, impossible for his errors to escape the observation of the abbot of Clairval.

About the year 1139,* William, abbot of St. Thierry, alarmed at the growing progress of Abelard's doctrine, wrote to Geoffry, bishop of Chartres, and to Bernard, entreating them to undertake the defence of divine truth. "God knows I am confounded," said he,

"when I, who am 'no man,'† am compelled to address, on a subject of urgent importance, you and others, whose duty it was to speak, though hitherto ye have been silent.‡ For when I see the faith of our common hope grievously and dangerously corrupted, without resistance, and without contradiction, that faith, which Christ hath consecrated for us with his blood, for which Apostles and martyrs contended even to death, which holy teachers defended with much labour and fatigue, and transmitted entire and uncorrupt to these dregs of time, I feel a distress which constrains me to speak. I could wish, if it were necessary, even to lay down my life for it. They are no small objects which I lay

before you: the faith of the Holy Trinity, the person of the Mediator, the Holy Spirit, the grace of God, the sacrament of our common redemption, are the subjects which engage my attention. For Peter Abelard again teaches and writes novelties: his books cross the seas, and pass over the Alps: and his new sentiments concerning the faith are carried into provinces and kingdoms, are preached to crowded audiences, and are openly defended; they are even said to have made their way into the court of Rome. I say to you both, your silence is dangerous, both to yourselves and to the Church of God—I tell you, this monster is as yet in labour; but if he be not prevented, he will produce a poisonous serpent, for which no charmer can be found.

"I lately met with, 'The Theology of Peter Abelard.' I confess this title made me curious to read. I have sent you the books, with my remarks; whether there is a just cause for my apprehensions, judge ye. As new terms and new ideas disturbed my spirit, and I had no one before whom I could freely unbosom my thoughts, I have applied myself to you, and implore you to defend the cause of God and the whole Latin Church. The man fears you, and dreads your authority. For, indeed, almost all the champions of divine truth being deceased, a domestic enemy hath invaded the defenceless state of the Church, and hath betaken himself to a singular method of teaching; dealing with Scripture, as he used to do with logic, by introducing his own inventions and novelties; a censor, not a disciple of the faith, a corrector, not a follower."

He then mentions the heads of the heresy, which he had discovered, and which were much the same as those which have already been described, and he promises to enlarge in writing on the same argument, "with the help of Him, in whose hand are both we and our words." "Nor," says he, "do I value your being offended at my language, provided I please you in the doctrine. If I can convince you that I am justly moved, I trust you also will be moved, and, in an important cause like this, will not fear to part with him, though he be a foot, a hand, or even an eye. I myself have loved him, and wish to do so still, God is my witness: but in this cause I see neither relation nor friend."

Bernard read the book which William sent, and returned this answer: "I

* Bern. Opera. Vol. I. p. 303.

† Psalm, xxii.

‡ Hence it is evident that Bernard had not yet distinguished himself in this controversy, though it must have been of above eighteen years' standing. A plain proof of his caution and modesty.

think your zeal both just and necessary: that it was not idle, the book, which you have sent me, demonstrates. In this book you effectually stop the mouths of gainsayers: not that I have given it that accurate survey, which you desire; but I own I am pleased with it, even from a cursory reading, and I think the arguments solid and convincing. But as I have not been accustomed to trust to my own judgment, especially in things of so great importance, I believe the best way would be for you and me to meet, and talk over the subject. Yet even this, I think, cannot be done till after Easter, lest the devotions of the holy season be distracted. But I must beseech you to have patience with me, and to pardon my silence on the subject, since I was hitherto ignorant of most if not all the particulars. As to that which you exhort me to, God is able to inspire me with his good Spirit through your prayers."

Bernard, having at length made himself master of the subject, and being impressed with its magnitude, resolved to exert himself on the occasion. He first held a private conference with Abelard, and admonished him, in a friendly manner, to correct his errors. But this first attempt being fruitless, he took two or three persons with him, according to the precept of the Gospel; and, in their presence, expostulated with the innovator.* Finding his endeavours to be unsuccessful, and observing, on accurate inquiry, how much the evil spread, it now became a question with Bernard, whether he ought to sacrifice the honour of God and the good of souls to the humour of an artful and obstinate heretic. As a conscientious spirit, like his, was obliged to decide this question in the negative, and as he had sufficiently exculpated himself from the charge of personal malice, or blind precipitation, he began to warn the disciples of Abelard against the errors of their master, and, as far as in him lay, to guard the Christian world against the growing heresy.

He wrote to pope Innocent in these terms: "Another foundation is laid than that which has been laid for us. A new creed is coined in France: virtues and vices are discussed, not according to rules or morality: the Sacraments are treated unfaithfully; and the mystery of the Holy Trinity is investigated, not in

simplicity and sobriety, but in a manner contrary to that which we have received. Our theologian, with Arius, disposes of the Trinity by degrees and measures: with Pelagius, prefers free-will to grace; with Nestorius, divides Christ, and excludes the man Christ Jesus from all connexion with the Trinity."*

To another bishop he wrote thus: "The dragon had been silent many days; but, when he was silent in Britain,† he conceived iniquity in France. The man boasts, that he hath infected the court of Rome with the poison of his novelty: that he hath dispersed his books among the Romans: and he assumes those as the patrons of his error, by whom he ought to be condemned. May God defend that Church for which he died, that he may present it to himself, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."‡

Let this suffice for a specimen of the glowing language of Bernard; too vehement, perhaps, but surely kindled by the fire of charity. Those, however, alone can judge of the spirit of the man with candour and equity, who feel the importance of divine truth. Humanly speaking, the errors of Abelard, aided by the propensities of our depraved nature, might in a silent and gradual manner have pervaded all Europe, and the propagation of Socinianism might have been matured six centuries ago, if the mischief had not been thus vigorously opposed.

In the archiepiscopal city of Sens, a superstitious ceremony, namely, the translation of a saint's body into the cathedral Church, was to be performed in the year 1140. Abelard challenges Bernard. A. D. 1140. Abelard, incensed at the open and repeated opposition of Bernard, challenged him to make good his charges of heresy at this solemn assembly. Undoubtedly, he proceeded regularly in the formality of the challenge. For he implored the archbishop of Sens to cite his accuser before the assembly, and promised to meet him. The archbishop wrote to Bernard accordingly, and named the day on which he should expect to see him. Bernard seems to have been considerably embarrassed at this step. His good sense enabled him to see the difference between

* Bern. Opera. Vol. I. p. 306.

† He alludes to the Pelagian heresy, which had flourished in Britain.

‡ Bern. Opera. Vol. I. p. 307.

* Bern. Opera. Vol. I. p. 310.

popular preaching, and close scholastical argumentation. He had been habituated to the former: with the latter he was unacquainted: and, he knew that Abelard excelled all men in the arts of controversy, in which also age and experience would give him a great advantage over a young antagonist. Bernard, therefore, at first refused to appear. "I was but a youth," says he, in his own account of this matter, "and he a man of war from his youth.* Besides, I judged it improper to commit the measures of divine faith, which rested on the foundations of eternal truth, to the petty reasonings of the schools. I said, that his own writings were sufficient to accuse him, and that it was not my concern, but that of the bishops, to decide concerning his tenets."

Elated at the apparent pusillanimity of Bernard, Abelard collected his friends, spake in a strong tone of victory, and appealed to many concerning the justice of his cause. "What things he wrote of me to his scholars," says Bernard, "I love not to relate. He took care to spread the news every where, that he would answer me at Sens on the day appointed. I yielded, however, though with tears and much reluctance, to the advice of my friends. They saw that all men were going, as it were, to the spectacle, to behold the combatants. What would they say, if one of them did not appear? The people would stumble, the adversary would triumph, and error would grow stronger, if none should appear to answer and to confute. Moved by these reasons, I determined at length to meet Abelard at the time and place, with no other preparation than that Scripture promise, do not premeditate how you may answer; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall say; and that other, the Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me."†

The assembly was splendid. Lewis VII. was there with his nobles; the archbishop with the bishops of his diocese, many abbots, professors, and in general all the learned of France were present.

The superstitious ceremony being performed on the first day, on the second the two abbots appeared, and every eye was fixed on them. The whole assembly was

suspended in expectation of the contest. Bernard arose, and in a modest and diffident manner declared; "I accuse not this man; let his own words speak against him. Here they are, and these are the propositions extracted from them. Let him say, I wrote them not, or let him condemn them, if they be erroneous, or let him defend them against my objections." He then delivered the charges to the promoter, who began distinctly to read them. He had not read far, when Abelard arose. "I appeal," said he, "to the pope," and refusing to hear any more, began to leave the assembly. The assembly was astonished at the unexpected step. "Do you fear," said Bernard, "for your person? you are perfectly secure; you know that nothing is intended against you: you may answer freely, assured of a patient hearing."* "I have appealed to the court of Rome," cried the appalled heretic, and withdrew.

Bernard, in writing the account of these transactions to the pope, gives it as his opinion, that the procedure of Abelard was unjustifiable, to appeal from judges, of whom he had himself made choice.†

If the issue of the conference between these two renowned antagonists had been such as to disappoint the reader's expectations, something, however, divinely instructive, may be learned from the narrative. I know nothing in Bernard's history more decisively descriptive of his character, than his conduct in this whole transaction. By nature, sanguine and vehement; by grace and self-knowledge, modest and diffident; he seems, on this occasion, to have united boldness with timidity, and caution with fortitude. It was evidently in the spirit of the purest faith in God, as well as in the most charitable zeal for divine truth, that he came to the contest; while Abelard, who, presumptuous through a long course of scholastic honours, came elated and self-confident, drooped in the very crisis which called for his eloquence and resources. His courage seems to have failed him; or, perhaps the consciousness of real heresy made him incapable of standing before a distinct and orderly examination. At any rate, the humble was exalted, and the proud was disgraced, according to the maxims of the Gospel; and the conduct of the men was a precise counter-

* Bern. Opera. Vol. I. p. 183.

† Ibid.

* Vita Bern. Vol. II. p. 1138.

† Id. 183.

part of the doctrines which they severally espoused.

The bishops of France wrote to the pope an account of the procedure; and, in their words, I shall recite the little that remains to be mentioned of the acts of the assembly.

Having given an account of the conduct of Bernard, perfectly agreeable to that which we have heard from the abbot himself, they observe, that "he certainly appeared at Sens, inflamed with pious fervour, nay, unquestionably with the fire of the Holy Spirit."* And they proceed as follows:

"As Abelard's sentiments were read over and over in public audience, and as the arguments of Bernard, partly built on the most solid reasons, partly on the authorities of Augustine and other holy fathers, convinced the synod, that the tenets, which he opposed, were not only false but also heretical, we, sparing the man out of deference to the apostolic See, condemned the opinions. We entreat you to confirm our decrees, and to impose silence on the author of the books, in order to prevent the pernicious consequences with which his errors may be attended."

In what manner Bernard disproved the tenets of Abelard before the council, may be judged from the following brief review of his long epistle to the pope.†

"The new theologian of France is one, who scorns to be ignorant of anything in heaven above, or in earth beneath; to one point only, himself and his own ignorance, he is perfectly blind. While he is prepared to give a reason for every thing, he presumes things above reason, and contrary both to reason and to faith. We ought to consider that Mary is commended, because she prevented reasoning by faith,‡ and that Zachariah was punished, because he tempted a faithful God by reasonings. Abraham also is extolled, who believed in hope against hope.

"But our theologian says, 'What does it profit, if what we teach cannot be rendered intelligible?' Thus promising, perfectly to explain mysterious things, he places degrees in the Trinity, measures in the Divine Majesty, and numbers in eternity. In the very entrance on his work, he defines faith to be 'an esti-

mation or an opinion.' But Christian faith has no such limits. Let estimation and opinion belong to the academies, whose character it is to doubt of all things; to know nothing. I shall follow the sentiments of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and know that I shall not be confounded. His definition of faith, I own, is agreeable to me: Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen. Substance of things hoped for; not a fancy of empty conjectures. The idea of substance is connected with something certain and fixed. Faith is not opinion, but certainty. I shall not dwell upon a number of nugatory speculations, in which, while he labours to make Plato a Christian, he makes himself a pagan. I come to more weighty matters. I have read in a certain book of his sentences, and in his exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, that he holds an original sentiment concerning the mystery of our redemption: namely, that the ancient doctors were unanimous in their mode of interpretation concerning the subject, that they all held in such a manner; but, that he holds in a different manner. And art thou he, who constructest for us a new Gospel? Thou hast discovered, it seems, that the Son of God did not assume flesh, that he might free man from the devil. Let them give thanks, says the Psalmist, whom the Lord hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.* This thou wouldst not deny, if thou wert not under the power of the enemy. Thou canst not give thanks with the redeemed, who art not thyself redeemed. That man seeks not for redemption, who knows not himself to be a captive. But those, who do know, cry to the Lord; and the Lord hears them, and redeems them from the hand of the enemy. Hear an apostle: "If God, peradventure, may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."† Hearst thou these words, AT HIS WILL, and dost thou deny the power of the devil?"—Hear the Lord himself. He is called by him, the prince of this world,‡ and the STRONG MAN ARMED, AND THE POSSESSOR OF GOODS;§ and dost thou say, that he has no power over men?—This

* Vita Bern. Vol. II. p. 1131.

† Bern. Vol. I. p. 650.

‡ Luke i. 38.

VOL. II.

* Ps. cvi. 6.

† 2 Tim. ii. 25.

‡ John xiv. 30.

§ Luke xi. 21.

power of Satan was known to the Apostle, when he said, "who delivered us from the powers of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."*—Let him learn, therefore, that the devil has not only power, but a just power over men. Though the devil himself, who invaded us, is not just; but God who exposed us to him, is just.

"Man was then justly enslaved, but mercifully delivered: with such mercy, however, that justice appeared even in his deliverance. For what could man do of himself, to recover lost righteousness, being now a bondslave of the devil? Another's righteousness is therefore assigned to him after he had lost his own. The prince of this world came, and found nothing in Christ;† and, when he still would lay violent hands on the innocent, most justly he lost the captives, whom he possessed; and that Being upon whom death had no just claim, having unjustly suffered the pains of death, by this voluntary submission justly freed from the debt of death, and from the dominion of the devil, him who was legally obnoxious to both. Man was the debtor: man also paid the debt. For, if one died for all, then were all dead,‡ that the satisfaction of one might be imputed to all, as he alone bore the sins of all; and now he, who offended, and he who satisfied divine justice, are found the same; because the head and the body is one Christ. The head then satisfied for the members, Christ for his own bowels, since, according to St. Paul's Gospel, which fully confutes the error of Abelard, God hath quickened us together with him, who died for us, having forgiven all trespasses, blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances, nailing it to his cross, and spoiling principalities and powers.§ May I be found among those spoils of which adverse powers are deprived! If I be told, your fathers enslaved you, I answer, my brother hath redeemed me. Why may not I have another's righteousness imputed, since I have another's sin imputed to me? Is there sin in the seed of the sinner, and not righteousness in the blood of Christ?—As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. The fault has truly laid hold of me, but grace has also visited me. If the judgment was by one to

condemnation, the free-gift was of many offences to justification.* Nor do I fear, being thus freed from the powers of darkness, to be rejected by the Father of lights, since I am justified freely by the blood of his Son. He who pitied the sinner, will not condemn the just. I call myself just, but it is through His righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness†, and he is made of God for us righteousness.‡ Thus is man made righteous by the blood of the Redeemer; though Abelard, this man of perdition, thinks the only use of his coming was, to deliver to us good rules of life, and to give us an example of patience and charity. Is this the whole then of the great mystery of godliness, this which any uncircumcised and unclean person may easily penetrate? What is there in this beyond the common light of nature? But it is not so: for the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God:§ Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent;|| and, if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.¶—He asks, had the devil dominion over Abraham and the other elect? No; but he would have had, if they had not been freed by faith in him that was to come. As it is written, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness; and Abraham rejoiced to see my day; he saw it and was glad. It was the blood of Christ, which like dew distilled on Lazarus, and preserved him from the flames of hell through faith in him who was to suffer. We must believe of all the elect of that time, that they were born as we are, under the powers of darkness, but were thence delivered before they died; and that only by the blood of Christ.

"Abelard asks, why so tedious and painful a mode of deliverance, since Christ could have effected it by a mere volition? Who affirms that the Almighty was limited to this mode? But the efficacy of this method, which he preferred to all other possible ones, is surely demonstrable from that very preference: and, perhaps, in this its excellence may appear, that the grievous sufferings of our Redeemer afford us an admonition of the strongest and most impressive nature, concerning our own fallen and miserable

* Coloss. i. 13.
† 2 Cor. v. 15.

† John xiv. 30.
§ Coloss. ii. 15.

* Rom. v. 16.
† 1 Cor. i. 30.
|| Mat. xi. 25.

† Rom. x. 4.
§ 2 Cor. ii. 14.
¶ 2 Cor. iv. 3.

condition. But no man knows, nor can know to the full, what precious benefits, what wisdom, what propriety, what glory the unsearchable depth of this mystery contains in itself.—But, though we may not search out the mystery of the divine will, we may feel the effect of its execution, and reap the fruit of its goodness: and what we may know, we ought not to conceal.—When we were yet sinners, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Where reconciliation is, there is remission of sins. In what then lies remission of sins? This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you, for the remission of sins.*—Why my blood, say you, what he might have done by a bare word? Ask God himself.—I may know that it is so: why it is so, I may not. Shall the Potter say to him that formed him, why hast thou made me thus?

“Strange, says he, that God should be reconciled to men by the death of his Son, which ought to have incensed him the more against them. As if in one and the same transaction the iniquity of wicked men might not displease, and the piety of the sufferer please God. What, says he, can expiate the guilt of the murder of Christ, if nothing less than that murder could expiate the sin of Adam? we answer briefly, that very blood which they shed, and the intercession of him, whom they slew.—Not simply the death but the voluntary obedience unto death, of the Redeemer, was well pleasing to God; of the Redeemer I say, who by that death destroyed death, wrought salvation, retrieved innocence, triumphed over principalities and powers, reconciled all things in heaven and in earth, and restored all things. And because this precious death, which was to be spontaneously undergone, could not take place but through the sin of men, he, not delighted indeed with their wickedness, but taking occasion from it to execute the purposes of his own benevolence, by death condemned death. This blood was able to expiate the guilt which shed it, and therefore left no doubt of its expiating the first original sin. In answer to his tragical complaints of the cruelty of this dispensation, we say, God did not thirst for blood, but for salvation, which was to be effected by blood. Salvation we say, and not, as he writes, the mere display

of love, and the exhibition of useful instruction and a powerful example. For what avails instruction without recovery? How useless the finest lessons, unless the body of sin be destroyed in us! At this rate the whole harm of Adam’s sin lies in the exhibition of an evil example, since the medicine must be adapted to the quality of the wound. For, if we be Christians and not Pelagians, we must confess the sin of Adam to be derived to us, and by sin death; and that righteousness is restored to us by Christ, not by instruction, but by regeneration; and by righteousness life; that, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, righteousness came upon all men to justification of life.* If, as he says, the design of the incarnation was illumination, and a powerful incentive to love, we may own these things came from Christ; but, from whom came redemption and deliverance?

“As far as in him lies, he, who attributes the glory of redemption not to the cross of Christ, but to our proficiency in holy conversation, renders void and of no effect the mystery of the divine dispensation. But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom is our salvation, life, and resurrection.

“I see, indeed, three capital objects in this work of our salvation, the form of humility by which the Son of God made himself of no reputation, the measure of love, which he extended even to the death of the cross, and the mystery of redemption, in which he suffered death. The two former, exclusive of the latter, are as if you painted on a vacuum. Great and necessary indeed was the example of humility; great, and worthy of all acceptance, was the example of his charity; but remove redemption, and these have no ground to stand upon. I would follow the humble Jesus, I desire to embrace with the arms of love him who loved me, and gave himself for me; but—I must eat the Paschal Lamb. Unless I eat his flesh and drink his blood, I have no life in me. It is one thing to follow Jesus, another to embrace, another to feed upon him. To follow, is wholesome counsel; to embrace, is solemn joy; to feed upon him, is a happy life. For his flesh is meat indeed, and his

* Luke xxii. 20.

* Rom. v. 18.

blood is drink indeed. The bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.* What room is there for counsel or for joy, without life? they are mere pictures and shadows, without a solid ground and substance. Therefore, neither examples of humility, nor displays of charity, are anything without redemption."

If the reader has attentively considered the arguments of Abelard, and the answer of Bernard, he has seen what weight ought to be laid on a fashionable sentiment of this day, namely, that in consequence of the improvements in reasoning and philosophy, a person is now capable of expounding the Scriptures much better than the ancients could do. If the observation be supposed to be applicable to the essential doctrines of salvation, I ask, How does this appear to be the case? In subjects of human art and science, indeed, new discoveries may be expected, but with what pertinency can the remark be applied to divinity? The whole system of divine truth is not more perfectly revealed now than it was seventeen hundred years ago. The Scriptures are the same; common sense is the same; the influence of the Holy Spirit is the same; and human wants are the same: and if men search and pray in humility and seriousness; if they cry after knowledge, and lift up their voice for understanding; if they seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, what is there to hinder them from understanding the fear of the Lord, and finding the knowledge of God, in one age as well as in another? † Is not God said to be willing to show, in the ages to come, the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus? ‡ And will any man say, that, in some particular periods, he is not willing to unfold these inestimable riches? It is not to be denied, but that by skill in learned languages, by study, and by general cultivation of the human mind, much light may be thrown on several doubtful passages of holy writ: their connexion and meaning may be rendered clearer, and so far improvements may be made in the interpretation of Scripture; but when this is admitted, we must still maintain that no new discoveries are to be expected in regard to the essential and fundamental truths of di-

vine wisdom and holiness, and to these truths this whole remark is exclusively confined. These, wherever the Bible can be had in an intelligible language, seem to lie open to the view of all humble and serious inquirers in every age. What can modern Socinianism say more than Abelard said? And does not Bernard answer it in the same manner as evangelical divines do now? Even in the darkness of the twelfth century we have seen the light as clear and full in the main, as it can be at this day. Old errors may be revived and dressed up anew, but they are the same errors still. Even the praise of original genius will be denied to the modern heretic, by him, who carefully investigates antiquity. The whole circle of human sciences, however they be cultivated and improved in our days, can add nothing to the stock of spiritual understanding. In every age God has not been wanting to his Church; and divine truth has ever appeared the same, and has brought forth the same holy fruits in those, who fear God, and believe the Gospel of his Son.

I shall not now need to give an abstract of the other letters, which Bernard wrote on this occasion. In them all he sees the true ground of Abelard's errors. While this heretic undertook to comprehend all that God is, by mere human reason, while nothing seemed to escape his penetration either in heaven above or in the depth beneath, he was totally ignorant of himself.* He was ignorant of nothing, but of himself. † Such is the language of Bernard, concerning him, while he censors the pope and other dignitaries of the Roman Church against the seductions of heresy, and informs them how much Abelard presumed on the expectation of finding patrons at Rome, where his books had been dispersed. ‡

The influence of Bernard's labours in this cause on the minds of the Christian world was very great, and decisively defeated the designs of the enemy. Gaufridus, one of the writers of Bernard's life, observes, "Blessed be God, who gave to us a better master, by whom he confuted the ignorance of the former, and quashed his arrogance, by whom Christ exhibited to us three special objects in his sufferings,—an example of virtue, an

* John vi. † Prov. ii. ‡ Eph. ii. 7.

* Vol. I. p. 184, 185. † 186.
‡ 312.

incentive of love, and a sacrifice of redemption.*

Roused by the exhortations of Bernard, the pope pronounced a definitive sentence

Abelard condemned by a definitive sentence of the pope.

against Abelard, ordered his works to be burned, and the heretic to be confined in some monastery, at the discretion of the leaders of the council

which had condemned his doctrine. We have, however, better authority than that of the pope for pronouncing his sentiments heretical. And though the decisions of the pope deserve no attention from Christians, it was matter of sincere pleasure to all, who loved the souls of men, that Abelard was stripped of the power of doing mischief. As for the rest, he was treated with as great lenity as the nature of ecclesiastical government at that time, which was certainly absurd and arbitrary in many respects, would admit. He was permitted to end his days in the monastery of Cluni, over which Peter the venerable presided, who treated him with much compassion and friendship. An interview was also promoted by the good-natured offices of Peter, and of another abbot, between the two champions, the particulars of which are not known. Only it appears, that Bernard declared himself satisfied with Abelard's orthodoxy. I suppose the latter would, in conversation, retract, or soften, or explain his thoughts in the same manner as he did in an apology, which he published at this time. But the reader remembers, that this was not the first time of his submitting himself to the judgment of the Church. Whether he was sincere or not, it belongs not to man to determine. The charity of Bernard, however, is incontestable, because he dropped the accusation, as soon as Abelard had ceased to vent heretical sentiments. Not personal malice, but Christian zeal seems to have influenced the abbot of Clairval in this whole transaction.

If it be asked, what benefit resulted from the scene, which we have reviewed? it is answered, either Abelard's retractation was sincere or not. If the former, the advantage was great to the heretic himself; if the latter, he doubtless added hypocrisy to his other crimes, though he was prevented from making himself accessory to the ruin of others. But the

guilt of hypocrisy was properly and solely his own. If his opponents contracted any guilt on the account, it would be unlawful to oppose error at all, for fear of possible consequences. To this I add, that the benefit resulting to the whole Church for ages, is unquestionably evident; a consideration worthy the attention of those, who, in their charity for single heretics, seem to forget the mercy and charity due to the souls of thousands. Abelard, however, continued after these events in quiet

Death of Abelard, A. D. 1142, or 1143.

obscurity, till his death, which took place in 1142, or 1143. Eloisa survived this extraordinary man many years. Their correspondence still remains, and I have examined it with a view to discover, whether there be any evidences of genuine conversion in the unhappy couple. That they were sorry for their past follies is certain; that the latter part of their lives was outwardly decent and regular is no less evident; but of real repentance, genuine faith in Christ, and the true love of God, I cannot discern any satisfactory proofs.

I have now enabled the reader, by an orderly statement of facts, to decide for himself what candour and justice there is in the declaration of a learned historian, that "Bernard misunderstood some of the opinions of Abelard, and wilfully perverted others. For," continues he, "the zeal of this good abbot too rarely permitted him to consult, in his decisions, the dictates of impartial equity; and hence it was, that he almost always applauded beyond measure, and censured without mercy."* Wilful perversions, and by a good man too! what inconsistency of language! Or is Bernard called a good man ironically? Or did this writer feel a sympathy with one of these great men, and an antipathy to the other? Certainly, whoever, like Bernard, defends the real truth as it is in Jesus, with the simplicity of a Christian, even though he preserve modesty, caution, and charity, must expect no mercy from the criticisms of men more zealous for the honour of what they improperly call rational religion, than for that of Jesus Christ. The world will LOVE ITS OWN: "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" and he, who in charity supports

Criticism of Mosheim.

* Vol. II. 1074.

* Mosheim, p. 691. Vol. I. Quarto.

evangelical truth, and, under God, is made wise to win souls to real humility and holiness, should commit himself to him that judgeth righteously and patiently wait his decision.

If Mosheim do not altogether deserve the censure implied in these observations, undoubtedly he is not to be acquitted of uncharitableness, temerity, and self-sufficiency.

CHAPTER III.

CONTROVERSIES OF BERNARD WITH SEVERAL OTHER REAL OR SUPPOSED HERETICS. SOME ACCOUNT OF THE CATHARI.

So great was the esteem of Bernard throughout the Western Churches, that no characters of eminence in the religious world arose, but he was looked up to as a judge to decide concerning their merits. It happened that he had not always the same means of accurate information, as in the case of Abelard; and hence there is reason to believe, that he treats as heretics some persons, who were "the excellent of the earth." I shall throw together into this chapter the best information, which I can collect, concerning these matters. At any rate we shall find some light concerning the real Church of Christ.

Gillebert de la Porree, bishop of Poitiers, possessed of a subtle genius, and indulging a taste like that of Abelard, undertook to explain the mystery of the Trinity, by some curious distinctions and refinements. Offence was, however, given by his publications, and the zeal and eloquence of Bernard were employed in confuting him by public disputation. I shall not attempt to explain this controversy. It seems to have originated from the metaphysical spirit of Gillebert, whose chief fault appears to have been, that he was not content with plain truth, and with stopping there in his inquiries, where the Scripture does. The Trinity in unity, received in the simplicity of Scripture, is one of the clearest, as well as one of the most decisively scriptural doctrines in the world; and so it has always appeared to those who believe what is revealed, and who are content to be ignorant of the MANNER how the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three in one. But, though there seems no positive evidence of the heresy of

Gillebert, the council of Rheims condemned some of his propositions, which were of a dangerous nature. Gillebert recanted them: Bernard candidly expressed his belief of the sincerity of the recantation; and the bishop of Poitiers was allowed to return to his bishopric.*

I have examined the sentiments of Gillebert, and cannot, I own, form any determinate conception of their nature. He wandered in the misty regions of abstruse metaphysics, and seems both to have lost himself, and to have been unintelligible to his readers. Bernard endeavoured to stop the mystic inquirer in his career; and this was no unprofitable employment; but again Mosheim is displeased with the conduct of the abbot, and seems to intimate, that he himself understood the opinions of Gillebert, and that Bernard did not, when he says "these refined notions were far above the comprehension of good St. Bernard, who was by no means accustomed to such profound disquisitions, to such intricate researches."† Does Mosheim really mean what he says, or is the epithet good, synonymous with weak and ignorant? Bernard was, however, with the critic's leave, a man of sound understanding and of true wisdom; and if it were worth while, I could easily furnish the reader with such specimens of Gillebert's subtleties, as would fully justify the account given of him at the beginning of this chapter.

If to oppose the popedom with vigour and fortitude be in itself a certain criterion of a real Christian, Arnold of Brescia may justly be ranked among the most eminent saints. But the spirit and views of an innovator should be known, that we may determine, whether he deserve the character of a reformer. In Arnold, the spirit of an old Roman republican was united with the theological sentiments of a Socinian. He was the disciple of Abelard, and was in action as daring as that heretic had been in speculation. Bernard vehemently opposed his designs; and while he allowed his mo-

* Bern. Vol. II. p. 1138.—Du Pin's 12th Cent. Chap. VIII.

† Quarto, Vol. II. p. 602. As Mosheim's work, translated by Macdaine, is far better known than the original in England, I always quote the former, and would be understood, both here and elsewhere, to refer to that rather than to the latter.

rals to be decent and regular, he guarded the Christian world against his ambition and secular artifices. The conduct of Arnold demonstrated, that Bernard penetrated into his real character. For this disciple of Abelard, having gained over at Rome a large party to his views, by his address and dexterity stirred up a sedition against the pontiff; during the violence of which, private houses were burned; the property of the clergy and nobles was plundered; the pope was driven from Rome; and, in general, the civil government was disordered and convulsed. Flushed with success, Arnold planned a scheme for the restoration of the forms of the old republic: but Providence favoured not his designs. In the end he was seized and burned, and his ashes were thrown into the Tiber. His case demonstrates, that to oppose what is established, however great be the abuses or faults of an establishment, is an uncertain criterion of character. What is it, which men really mean to substitute in the room of that government which is established? This is a question to which every man, who fears God, should seriously attend, before he suffer himself, by countenancing innovations, to introduce anarchy and confusion. Here Arnold of Brescia failed entirely.*

Tanchelin in Flanders, and Peter de Bruys, with his disciple Henry, in France, were also famous innovators in this century. The first appears to have been altogether so worthless and extravagant a person, that I shall not detain the reader a moment concerning his character or his actions. Nor can I give such an account of the others as is very satisfactory to my own mind. They were both treated as heretics: they both made many converts to their sentiments; and were condemned by the then reigning powers. Peter was burnt to ashes, and Henry was put under a confinement, in which he seems to have ended his days. Peter of Cluni, from whose writings we have the most copious account of de Bruys, and doubtless a man of a mild and moderate temper, charges him with atrocious excesses, and represents him as supporting his tenets by violence and sedition.† The testimony against the moral character of Henry is still more

peremptory. For Bernard charges him with scandalous impurities of practice, and refers to such proofs and circumstances, as might have led to a detection of the charges, if he had indeed been innocent. And it was very much by the authority of Bernard, that the credit and party of Henry were sunk in the Christian world.*

These men, however, bore a striking testimony against the predominant corruptions of the Church. The superstitious rites with which the primitive custom of infant-baptism was now disgraced, naturally gave a strong plausibility to their arguments in favour of adult-baptism exclusively. They protested also against the extravagant sumptuousness of churches, the adoration of relics and images, and against masses, prayers for the dead, and transubstantiation. It is not worth while to discriminate with minute accuracy, what were the tenets of Peter, and what were those of Henry. With no great difference from one another, they descanted on the topics just mentioned; they loudly inveighed against the papal and clerical abominations, under which Europe groaned at that time, and provoked a storm of vengeance, which proved their ruin. If we may judge from the accounts of their lives,—and they are very scanty and confused,—these men seem to have been rather bad citizens than heretics. The darkest circumstance relating to their character is, that they seem not to have been so clear and explicit in describing what they approved, as what they condemned. Satire and invective are plants of rapid and easy growth in the malignant soil of human nature. Men of the greatest licentiousness, both in sentiments and practice, can discover and display, with sufficient ability, the evils of popery. It belongs only to souls truly humbled, and well-informed in scriptural principles, to erect in its room the edifice of real evangelical truth and holiness; and I wish I could show the reader that Peter and Henry performed this in any degree.

But though, among the supposed heretics of this century, we have failed in attempting to discover any particular leaders, who carry the unquestionable marks of real Christians, yet that there must have been some who were really such, is evident, from the consideration,

* Bern. p. 187, &c. Vol. I. Berington's Abelard, p. 301, &c.

† Du Pin's Heretics, 12th Cent. Berington's Abelard.

* Vol. I. p. 238. Vol. II. 1139.

that there certainly were opposers of the Church of Rome at this time, who deserve the name of PROTESTANTS.* The writer, to whom I have already been indebted for some evidence of this nature, particularly in the account of Claudius of Turin, has, with singular learning and industry, illustrated this part of ecclesiastical history, and seems to have consulted the very best monuments and records. It would be tedious to follow him through the mazes of a scene beyond expression obscure and perplexed. Nor can I depend on the attempts which he has made to class and distinguish his Protestant sects. The accusation of Manicheism was commonly brought against them all; nor will I venture to say, that every Christian sentiment or practice which he describes belongs to any one particular body of people. Those, who have conversed with different denominations of Christian professors, know how difficult it is to explain the various ramifications of parties, which, nevertheless, all seem to spring from one root: they are aware, also, how frequently it happens, that those, who are only superficially acquainted with the sectaries, and have noticed some external agreement, will hastily suppose persons to belong to the same class, when, in reality, they are quite opposite in spirit; and lastly, they have observed, that a disagreement in externals by no means, in all cases, implies an opposition of sentiments. Christian professors may differ in these smaller matters, and may even suspect the soundness of one another's principles, merely for want of mutual intercourse, when, in substance and in all essentials, they are the same people. Elaborate attempts to explain the several peculiarities and discriminations, for want of proper evidence, have often darkened this subject, instead of elucidating it. The worst consequence of such attempts is, that by the mixture of good and evil, which runs through such accounts, where the leading vestiges of Christianity are all along kept out of view, the reader can scarcely discern any true Church of Christ to have existed at all. How shall we conduct ourselves through this labyrinth? by laying down from the best authorities, the real marks of godliness, which existed among the various sects of professing Christians.

* Allix on the ancient Churches of Piedmont, p. 139—183.

If this can be done, the reader will find that the presence of God has been among them, however difficult it be to define the limits of the Church of Christ by human artificial distinctions. This I shall attempt to do in the case before us, omitting those things which are foreign to the design of this history.

Evervinus of Steinfield, in the diocese of Cologne, wrote to Bernard, a little before the year 1140, a letter, preserved by Mabillon, concerning certain heretics in his neighbourhood.* He was perplexed in his mind concerning them, and wrote

A report of certain heretics by Evervinus. A. D. 1140.

for a resolution of his doubts to the renowned abbot, whose word was law at that time in Christendom. Some extracts of this letter are as follows: "There have been lately some heretics discovered among us near Cologne, though several of them have, with satisfaction, returned again to the Church. One of their bishops and his companions openly opposed us in the assembly of the clergy and laity, in the presence of the archbishop of Cologne, and of many of the nobility, defending their heresies by the words of Christ and the Apostles. Finding that they made no impression, they desired that a day might be appointed for them, on which they might bring their teachers to a conference, promising to return to the Church, provided they found their masters unable to answer the arguments of their opponents, but that otherwise they would rather die, than depart from their judgment. Upon this declaration, having been admonished to repent for three days, they were seized by the people in the excess of zeal, and burnt to death; and what is very amazing, they came to the stake, and bare the pain, not only with patience, but even with joy. Were I with you, Father, I should be glad to ask you, how these members of Satan could persist in their heresy with such courage and constancy, as is scarcely to be found in the most religious believers of Christianity?"

It cannot be denied that the reigning corruptions both of faith and practice, from the times of Gregory the second and third, distinguished by real idolatry, had rendered the pretence of uniformity, considered as a mark of the Church, entirely unsound. In these circumstances,

* Allix, Churches of Piedmont, p. 140.

then, the appeal to a fair and open course of Scriptural argument, was not unreasonable: the refusal of this appeal, and the requisition of an unqualified submission made to the supposed heretics, was unchristian: and, if neither in the general course of their lives, nor in their behaviour on this occasion, there was any thing arrogant, deceitful, or turbulent;—and Evervinius charges them with nothing of the kind;—the patience and joy of their martyrdom may seem to have arisen from the consideration, that God was with them. But Evervinius goes on: “their heresy is this: they say, that the Church is only among themselves, because they alone of all men follow the steps of Christ, and imitate the Apostles, not seeking secular gains, possessing no property, following the pattern of Christ, who was himself perfectly poor, and did not allow his disciples to possess any thing.” Doubtless they carried this point too far;* for, rich Christians are charged to be rich in good works, willing to distribute, apt to communicate.† these are precepts, which suppose that the possession of opulent property is not incompatible with the character of a true Christian. The error is, perhaps, natural enough to those real good men whose habits and prejudices are chiefly of the vulgar sort; and I would hence infer, that these supposed heretics were mostly of the lower class of people. God seems to have had a people among them, who detested the Romish abominations, and who served him in the Gospel of his Son. They appear, however, to have had no learned persons among them capable of doing justice to their characters. We must take these from the accounts of enemies. Evervinius proceeds: “Ye, say they to us, join house to house, and field to field, seeking the things of this world; so that even those, who are looked on as most perfect among you, namely, those of the monastic orders, though they have no private property, but have a community of possessions, do yet possess these things. Their own condition in the world they represent in such terms as these; we the poor of Christ, who have no certain abode, fleeing from one city to another, like sheep in the midst of wolves, do endure persecution with the Apostles

and Martyrs; though our lives are strict, abstemious, laborious, devout, and holy, and though we seek only what is necessary for the support of the body, and live as men who are not of the world. But ye, lovers of the world, have peace with the world, because ye are of it. False apostles, who adulterate the word of Christ, seeking their own,* have misled you and your ancestors; whereas, we and our fathers, being born and bred up in the apostolical religion, have continued in the grace of Christ, and shall continue so to the end of the world. By their fruits ye shall know them, saith Christ; and our fruits are the footsteps of Christ. The Apostolical dignity, say they, is corrupted, by engaging itself in secular affairs, while it sits in the chair of Peter. They do not believe infant-baptism to be a duty, alleging that passage of the Gospel, whosoever shall believe and be baptized, shall be saved.†—They put no confidence in the intercession of Saints; and all things observed in the Church, which have not been established by Christ himself or his Apostles, they call superstitions. They do not admit of any purgatory after death; but affirm, that as soon as the souls depart out of the bodies, they enter into rest or punishment, proving their assertion from that passage of Solomon, which way soever the tree falls, whether to the south or to the north, there it lies; whence they make void all the prayers and oblations of believers for the deceased.—Those of them who have returned to our Church, told us, that great numbers of their persuasion were scattered almost every where, and that among them were many of our clergy and monks.”

All this seems to be at least as fair an account of true Christians, as might be expected from the mouths of enemies. Evervinius can be considered in no other light than that of an enemy, for he calls these men by the harsh names of mon-

* Philipp. ii. 21.

† The propriety of infant-baptism has been once for all vindicated, in Vol. I. of this history. I shall only add here, that these sectaries are charged with Manicheism, and of course with the total rejection of water-baptism. It was no unusual thing to stigmatize new sects with the odious name of Manichees, though I know no evidence that there were any real remains of that ancient sect in the twelfth century.

* It is probable, however, that Evervinius misrepresented them, as will appear afterwards. † 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

sters;—and it deserves to be noticed, that from his confession it plainly appears, there were societies of Christians, in the twelfth century, who disowned the pope and all the fashionable superstitions. These societies were poor and illiterate indeed, hardly distinguishable from a number of fantastical and seditious sects, headed by the very exceptionable characters we have reviewed; and they were not denominated from any one leader of eminence. They do not seem to have understood the necessity of the existence of property, and therefore, with vulgar ignorance, they held, as it was reported, a tenet inconsistent with the good order of society;* yet, with all these defects, they probably possessed the spirit of real godliness; and though imperfect in light, and in some points of practice, upheld the real truth of God, during the general profligacy and corruption.

If Bernard had been habitually conversant among them, I can conceive that much good might have arisen to both parties. From him they might have learned a more copious and perspicuous view of the doctrines of divine grace, and improved in the knowledge of the fundamental truths of the Scripture. His pious zeal and charity and humility might have instructed their minds, and disposed them to give up their absurd ideas concerning property and social rights: and he, from an intercourse with them, might have learned that the pope was indeed the Antichrist of Scripture, and so have been emancipated from a variety of superstitions, in which he was involved all his days. But mutual ignorance and prejudice prevented both him and them from even intimately knowing each other. In his 65th and 66th sermons on the Canticles,† he attacks these sectaries; he condemns their scrupulous refusal to‡ swear at all, which, according to him, was also one of their peculiarities. He upbraids them with the observance of secrecy in their religious rites, not considering the necessity which persecution laid upon them. He finds fault with a practice among them, of dwelling with women in the same house, without being married to them;

though it must be owned, he expresses himself as one who knew very little of the manners of the sect. From the strength of prejudice, and from the numberless rumours propagated against them, he suspects them of hypocrisy; yet his testimony in favour of their general conduct seems to overbalance all his invectives. “If,” says he, “you ask them of their faith, nothing can be more Christian: if you observe their conversation, nothing can be more blameless; and what they speak they prove by deeds. You may see a man, for the testimony of his faith, frequent the Church, honour the elders, offer his gift, make his confession, receive the sacrament. What more like a Christian? As to life and manners, he circumvents no man, overreaches no man, and does violence to no man. He fasts much, he eats not the bread of idleness, he works with his hands for his support.—The whole body, indeed, are rustic and illiterate; and all whom I have known of this sect are very ignorant.

He who confesses a set of men to have been so apparently sound and upright in faith and practice, should not have treated them with contempt, because they were poor and vulgar. Their ignorance and rustic habits should rather serve as some apology for their errors concerning the nature of baptism and of human society. And the proofs of their hypocrisy ought to be very strong indeed, which can overturn such evidences of piety and integrity as Bernard himself has admitted concerning them. It seems also from his account, that they were not Separatists, in the modern sense of the word. Though no doubt they had private religious assemblies, they attended the worship of the general Church, and joined with other Christians in everything which they deemed to be laudable. It would be tedious to examine minutely the charges and arguments of Bernard. He attacks some Manichean errors with great justice, supposing the men, against whom he writes, to be Manichees. He argues in defence of infant baptism, and,—lamentable blindness in so holy a person!—he vindicates the doctrine of purgatory, and other Roman superstitions. He owns, that these men died with courage in defence of their doctrine, and blames those who, in an illegal and irregular manner, had destroyed some of them. Some notions, concerning marriage, which they were supposed

* We shall afterwards see abundant occasion to doubt the truth even of this charge.

† P. 1493, Vol. I.

‡ The truth of this charge also, as will appear afterwards, is much to be doubted.

to hold, he justly rebukes, though, from the excessive prejudice of their adversaries, it is very difficult to know how to affix charges of real guilt upon them.

Let not the lover of real Christianity be distressed at these things. The power of prejudice is great; and it is hard to say how many wrong notions both Bernard and these supposed heretics might maintain, through the circumstances of the times, and yet both serve the same God in the Gospel of his Son. That he did so is abundantly evident; that many of THEM did so, their lives and their sufferings evince. It will be one of the felicities of heaven, that Saints shall no longer misunderstand one another. But there want not additional evidences that this people of Cologne were true PROTESTANTS. Egbert, a monk, and afterwards abbot of Schönau, tells us,* that he had often disputed with these heretics, and says, "These are they who are commonly called Cathari." From his authority I shall venture to distinguish them by this name. The term corresponds to the more modern appellation of PURITANS, and most probably was affixed to them by their contemporaries, in derision and contempt. Egbert adds, that they were divided into several sects, and maintained their sentiments by the authority of Scripture. See by the confession of an enemy their veneration for the divine word, and their constant use of it, in an age when the authority of Scripture was weakened, and its light exceedingly obscured, by a variety of traditions and superstitions. "They are armed," says the same Egbert, "with all those passages of Holy Scripture, which in any degree seem to favour their views; with these they know how to defend themselves, and to oppose the Catholic truth, though they mistake entirely the true sense of Scripture, which cannot be discovered without great judgment."—"They are increased to great multitudes throughout all countries—their words eat like a canker. In Germany we call them Cathari; in Flanders they call them Piphles; in French Tisserands, because many of them are of that occupation."† Bernard himself also, a Frenchman, speaks of both sexes of them as weavers; and it became not a man of his piety to

speak degradingly of the humble labours of peaceful industry. But such were the times! monastic sloth appeared then more holy than useful mechanical occupations. We seem, however, by comparing together several fragments of information, to have acquired some distinct ideas of these Cathari: they were a plain, unassuming, harmless, and industrious race of Christians, condemning, by their doctrine and manners, the whole apparatus of the reigning idolatry and superstition, placing true religion in the faith and love of Christ, and retaining a supreme regard for the divine word. Neither in that, nor in any other age, since the propagation of the Gospel of Christ, have the fanciful theories of philosophers contributed to enlighten or improve mankind in religious matters. It is a strict attention to the revealed word, which, under the influence of the Divine Spirit, has alone secured the existence of a holy seed in the earth, who should serve God in righteousness; though they might frequently be destitute of learning and every secular advantage; as seems to have been the case with the Cathari. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

It appears also that their numbers were very considerable in this century; and that Cologne, Flanders, the south of France, Savoy, Milan, were their principal places of residence.

"They declare," says Egbert, "that the true faith and worship of Christ is no where to be found but in their meetings, which they hold in cellars and weaving rooms. If ever they do accompany the people, with whom they dwell, to hear mass, or to receive the sacrament, they do it in dissimulation, that they may be thought to believe what they do not; for they maintain, that the priestly order has perished in the Roman Church, and is preserved only in their sect." He gives, however, and at too great a length to be here inserted, some noble testimonies of the soundness of their doctrine, in the rejection of purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the like.

I am obliged to collect, from thinly-scattered materials, the evidences of the true character of these Cathari; and much has, I think, already appeared in their favour, from the mouths of enemies. Egbert, we see, allows, in perfect agreement with Bernard, that they

Testimonies
in favour of
the Cathari.

* Allix, p. 149.

† That is, weavers; see Du Pin, Cent. XII. p. 88.

were not Separatists, in the modern sense of the word, and that they attended the public service and sacraments of the general Church. I suppose they knew how to make a practical distinction between what still remained divinely excellent in the Church, and what was idolatrous and corrupt. They seem to have conformed to the public worship, much in the same manner as the Apostles themselves did to the Jewish Church, while it existed, still preserving an union among themselves in worship, and in hearing sermons, so far as the iniquity of the times would permit. That which Egbert charges to their hypocrisy, I should think admits of a more liberal construction. It may appear to deserve the name of candour and even of charity. He, who agrees with you in practice, so far as you are right, ought to be respected for his conformity, notwithstanding that in things, which he deems wrong, he explicitly opposes you.—It were to be wished, that all serious Christians had acted in that manner, and had not been so hasty, as some of them have been, in forming a total separation from the general Church, then the happy influence of their views in religion might have spread more powerfully; nor is there any particular danger that they themselves would have received infection from the world, while they were estranged from it in practice and in manners. After all, circumstances may arise, when an entire separation from the whole body of nominal Christians may become necessary to the people of God. But this should never be attempted with precipitation. And the meekness and charity, which the Cathari exhibited on this point, seem highly laudable. He also, who has observed so much of the world, as to perceive that a deliberate system of hypocrisy usually prevails among a collection of idle vagrants, but seldom or never among men who subsist by patient industry, will be little moved by Egbert's charge of dissimulation.

The same Egbert confesses also, that they had many things mingled with their Master's doctrine, which are not to be found among the ancient Manichees. "They are also," says he, "divided among themselves: what some of them say is denied by others." If the Cathari held some doctrines quite distinct from Manicheism, it should seem, that the whole charge of that ancient odious here-

sy, might be nothing more than a convenient term of reproach. Even Bernard, who appears to have been extremely ill informed concerning this people, remarks, that they had no particular father of their heresy;—an observation, which may imply more than he was willing to allow, namely, that they were not heretics, but Christians. As to the diversity of sentiments among themselves, what denomination of Christians ever existed, who, in some smaller matters, did not maintain several diversities?

The people continued in a state of extreme persecution, throughout this century. Galdinus, bishop of Milan, who had inveighed against them during the eight or nine years of his episcopacy,* died in the year 1173, by an illness contracted through the excess of his vehemence in preaching against them.

The Cathari persecuted throughout this century. Galdinus of Milan inveighed against them for 8 or 9 years till his death, A. D. 1173.

There is a piece, entitled "The Noble Lesson," written undoubtedly by one of the Cathari, which in the body of it says, eleven hundred years are already passed, since it was written thus; "for we are in the last time."† The writer, supposing that the world was drawing near to an end, exhorts his brethren to prayer, watching, and the renunciation of worldly goods. He speaks with energy of death and judgment; of the different issues of godliness and of wickedness; and, from a review of the Scripture history, connected with the experience of the times in which he lived, concludes, that there are but few that shall be saved.

The first principle of those, says he, who desire to serve God, is to honour

* Allix, p. 153.

† The manuscript of this composition was given to the public Library of the University of Cambridge, by Sir Samuel Morland in the year 1658. The people of whom the author speaks, are called Wallenses or Vaudes, from the valleys of Piedmont. They afterwards were called Waldenses, from Peter Waldo, of whom hereafter; and by that name they are known to this day. But by the date 1100 they were evidently a distinct people before his time, and, most likely, had existed, as such, for some generations. The seeds of the Cathari had, in all probability, been sown by Claudius of Turin, in the ninth century. The whole of the "Noble Lesson" is given us by Sir Samuel Morland, in his History of the Churches of Piedmont. Allix, 160. Morland's Hist.

God the Father, to implore the grace of his glorious Son, and the Holy Ghost, who enlightens us in the way of truth. This is the Trinity, full of all power, wisdom and goodness, to whom we ought to pray for strength to overcome the devil, the world, and the flesh, that we may preserve soul and body in love. To the love of God, he observes, the love of our neighbour should be joined, which comprehends the love even of our enemies. He speaks of the believer's hope of being received into glory. He explains the origin of all that evil which reigns in the world; and traces it up to the sin of Adam, which brought forth death; whence, says he, Christ hath redeemed us by his own death. He asserts the necessity of holiness in order to salvation. He explains the spirituality of the law of God, and describes the punishment of transgressors as the effect of divine justice and goodness. He illustrates the holiness of the divine character, in the economy of the Old Testament, and in the history of the Israelites, and delineates the purity and perfection of the Gospel-precepts. He relates the great historical facts of Christianity, and makes some just observations on the spirit of persecution. Very remarkable is the character which he gives of the Vaudes in his own time, contrasted with that of their enemies. Let the reader consider, whether we have not here the flock of Christ among wolves. "If a man," says he, "love those who desire to love God and Jesus Christ; if he will neither curse, nor swear, nor act deceitfully, nor live in lewdness and injustice, nor avenge himself of his enemies, they presently say, the man is a Vaude; he deserves to be punished: and iniquitous methods are then used to rob him of the fruits of his lawful industry. Such a one, however, consoles himself with the hope of eternal salvation." He represents their enemies as supposing themselves to be good men and true Christians; and exposes their folly in placing hopes on a death-bed repentance, the priestly absolution and masses.

He roundly condemns the whole system of Antichrist, which prevailed in his time, particularly the fatal doctrine of priestly absolution. He describes the true practical principles of Christian godliness, and declares that no other divine revelation is to be expected. He speaks with equal simplicity and strength of the

last judgment, and of the everlasting punishments of the wicked; "from which," says he, "may God deliver us, if it be his blessed will, and give us to hear what he shall say to his elect, Come hither, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world, where ye shall have true pleasure, riches, and honour. May it please the Lord, who formed the world, that we may be of the number of his elect, to dwell in his court for ever. Praised be God. Amen."

Such was the provision of divine Grace, to take out of a corrupt and idolatrous world of nominal Christians, a people formed for himself, who should show forth his praise, and who should provoke the rest of mankind by the light of true humility, and holiness: a people, singularly separate from their neighbours in spirit, manners, and discipline; rude indeed, and illiterate, and not only discountenanced, but even condemned by the few real good men, who adhered altogether to the Romish Church, condemned, because continually misrepresented. I know not a more striking proof of that great truth of the divine Word, that, in the worst of times, the Church shall exist, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WRITINGS OF BERNARD REVIEWED.

IN this chapter I shall take notice of some of those parts of Bernard's writings which bear no relation to the controversies that have already engaged our attention.

His epistles come first under our consideration; and, among these, the epistle directed to Bruno, elected archbishop of Cologne, deserves the attention of pastors, and of every person who aspires to the most important of all functions.

"You* ask of me, illustrious Bruno, whether you ought to acquiesce in the desires of those, who would promote you to the office of a bishop. What mortal can presume to decide this? Perhaps God calls you; who may dare to dissuade? Perhaps he does not; who may advise you to accept? Whether the

Bernard's
epistles.

* Ep. 8. Vol. I.

calling be of God, or not, who can know, except the Spirit, who SEARCHES THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD, or he, to whom the Spirit may reveal it? Your humble, but awful confession, in your letter, renders it still more difficult to give advice; so grievously, and, as I believe, with truth, do you condemn the course of your past life. For, it cannot be denied, that such a life is unworthy of so sacred an office. But you fear on the other side, and I also have the same apprehensions, that it may be wrong not to improve the talent of knowledge committed to you, though your conscience do thus accuse you; only it may be observed, that you may faithfully employ that talent in some other method, less extensive indeed, but less hazardous. I own, I am struck with a serious dread: I speak freely to you, as to my own soul, what I really think, when I consider from what, and to what you are called; especially, as no time for repentance will intervene, through which the passage, however dangerous, might be made. And truly, the right order of things requires that a man should take care of his own soul, before he undertake the care of the souls of others. But what if God hasten his grace, and multiply his mercy toward you? Blessed indeed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. For who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? If God justify, who is he that condemns? The thief obtained salvation in this compendious method. One and the same day he confessed his sins, and was introduced into glory. The cross was to him a short passage from a region of death into the land of the living, and from the mire of corruption into the paradise of pleasure. This sudden remedy of godliness the happy sinful woman found, when on a sudden, where sin had abounded, grace began also to abound. Without a long course of penitential labour her many sins were forgiven.—It is one thing, however, to obtain a speedy remission; another, from a life of transgression, to be promoted to a bishopric. I can give no decisive opinion. But there is a duty, which we may perform for a friend without danger, and not without fruit; we may give him the suffrage of our prayers to God on his behalf. Leaving to God the secret of his own counsel, we may earnestly implore him to work in you and concerning you, what is becoming in his sight, and what is for your real good.”

Bruno having accepted the archbishop-

ric, Bernard wrote thus to him.* “If all, who are called to the ministry, are of necessity called also to the heavenly kingdom, the archbishop of Cologne is safe indeed. But if Saul and Judas were elected, the one to a crown, the other to the priesthood by God himself; and the Scripture, which asserts this, cannot be broken, the archbishop of Cologne has reason to fear. If that sentence also be now as true as ever, namely, that God hath not chosen many noble, mighty, and wise, has not the archbishop of Cologne a threefold reason for solicitude? He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger,† is the voice of Wisdom itself. May I always deal with my friends in the language of salutary fear, not of fallacious adulation! To that he directs me, who says, Blessed is the man that feareth alway.‡ From this he dissuades me, who says, O my people, those who lead thee cause thee to err.”§

In so serious a light appeared to Bernard the nature of the pastoral office. Do men in our times seek for eminent ecclesiastical situations with such impressions? Or, do secular gains frequently make a predominant part of their views? Perhaps there is not any one point of all practical religion, in which the ancients may more advantageously be compared with the moderns, than in the subject of the pastoral office, with regard to the ideas of its importance, and the qualifications which it requires!

In|| another epistle to Guigo and his brethren, Carthusian monks, he describes the nature of true charity. “There is one who confesses to the Lord, because he is mighty; there is another, who confesses to him, because he is good to the confessor; and a third, who confesses to him, because he is simply good. The first is a slave, and fears for himself; the second is mercenary, and desires his own interest merely; the third is a Son, and behaves dutifully to a Father. He, who lives under the predominance of fear, or of desire of his own interest, is selfish; but charity seeketh not her own. When a man prefers his own will to the eternal law of God, he perversely attempts to imitate the Creator, who is a law to himself. Alas! In us such a spirit binds us downward to death and hell. He, who will not be

* Ep. 9.

† Luke xxii. 26.

‡ Prov. xxviii. 14.

§ Isaiah iii. 12.

|| Ep. 11. p. 28.

sweetly ruled by the divine Will, is personally governed by himself, and he, who casts off the easy yoke and light burden of love, must suffer the intolerable load of self-will. My Lord God, may I breathe under the light burden of love, nor be restrained by slavish fear, nor allured by mercenary desire; but may I be led by thy free Spirit, which may witness with my spirit that I am thy child! Love, indeed, is not without fear and desire; but it sanctifies and regulates them both. But, because we are carnal, our love is carnal at first, which, if it be directed in right order, improving in its steps under the conduct of grace, will be consummated by the Spirit. In the first place, a man loves himself on his own account; and, when he finds that he is not sufficient for his own happiness, he begins, by faith, to seek after God as necessary for him. He then loves God in the second degree, but for himself, not for the sake of God. But when, through the urgency of his wants, he has been brought to cultivate acquaintance with God, by degrees God himself begins to be known as he is, and of course to be loved: having tasted that the Lord is gracious, he passes to the third degree, to love God for what he is in himself. In this degree he stops, and I do not know that any man in this life attains a fourth, namely, that a man should love himself only on account of God. Let them assert this, who have found it: to me, I own, it seems impossible. But, it will take place, when the good and faithful servant shall be introduced into the joy of his Lord."

Let this suffice for a small specimen of the metaphysical doctrine of charity, on which there has been so much controversy in different ages. The gradual progress of spirituality in religion seems to be justly described by Bernard; and the plain dictates of common sense do evidently restrain the flights of his fancy. For, in truth, what is the amount of all the metaphysics, which good men have written, concerning the disinterested love of God, but this, that it ought to be sincere, not selfish; and does not the common meaning of the word love teach us this? If I may be said to love a friend for the sake of my own interest, it is, at least, a very improper mode of speech; for, in strict propriety I love not him, but my own interest, or some gain which I conceive attainable through him. On the other hand, the talk of loving God,

and relinquishing self-love, is unnatural and idle romance. On this subject then, which has tortured the minds of pious souls, it would be wise to stick to common sense, which knows no repugnance between the love of God and self-love, though the latter ought in all cases to be subordinate to the former: and this is the point, which Bernard seems to have understood and maintained. The greatest defect in the letter seems to be that, which was common to the age, namely, the want of a distinct and orderly description of the FAITH of the Gospel, which alone can work the love which he describes.

In another epistle,* he comments very justly on the judicial ignorance, which St. Paul describes as the punishment from God on those who knew God, and yet glorified him not as God.† "But," says he, "God, who calleth things that be not, as though they were, in compassion to those, who are reduced, as it were, to nothing, hath, in the mean time, given us to relish by faith, and to seek by desire, that hidden manna, of which the Apostle says, Your life is hid with Christ in God.‡ I say in the mean time, because we cannot yet contemplate it according to its nature, nor fully embrace it by love. Hence we begin to be something of that new creature, which will at length become a perfect man, and attain the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and this will take place beyond doubt, when righteousness shall turn again to judgment, and the desire of the traveller shall be changed into the fulness of love. For, if faith and desire initiate us here when absent, understanding and love will consummate us when present. And, as faith leads to full knowledge, so desire leads to perfect love.—By these two arms of the soul, understanding and love, it comprehends the length and depth, and breadth and height; and Christ is all these things." He goes on to expose the folly of seeking the praise of men, and the inconsistency of this spirit with the humility which becomes creatures so empty and vain.

Bernard, having been addressed in terms of great respect by Rainald, an abbot,§ with his usual humility shows how averse he was to hear himself commended. "Indeed," says he, "by extolling

* 18 p. 35.

† Rom. ii.

‡ Coloss. iii. 3.

§ Ep. 72. p. 73.

you depress me. But, that I may not sink under the pressure, I am consoled by the testimonies of divine truth: it is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy statutes. Such is the marvellous efficacy of the Word of God, that while it humbles, it exalts us. This is indeed the kind and powerful operation of the Word, by whom all things were made; and thus, indeed, Christ's yoke becomes easy, and his burden light. Light, indeed, is his burden. For what can be lighter than a load, which even carries every person, who bears it. A burden which unburdens the soul. In all nature I seek to find some resemblance to this, and I seem to discover a shadow of it in the wings of the bird, which are borne by the creature, and yet sustain and support its flights through the open firmament of heaven."

To undertake pilgrimages to Jerusalem was the folly of the times. An abbot, John Carnotensis, was seized with this infatuation. Bernard, however, rebuked* his zeal, and endeavoured to convince him, that he ought not to abdicate the pastoral care which had been committed to him. The chief argument which supported John in this scheme, was drawn from the strength and vehemence of his desires. It is the usual plea of all, who really deserve the imputation of enthusiasm in religion; and it is sufficiently answered by Bernard. "You say, whence should I have so strong a desire, if it be not from God? With your good leave I will speak my sentiments. Stolen waters are sweet: and whoever is not ignorant of Satan's devices, will not hesitate to say, that this poisonous sweetness is infused into your thirsting heart by a minister of Satan, transformed into the appearance of an angel of light."

Bernard de Portis was a young man of the Carthusian order, and had been elected bishop of a church among the Lombards. Bernard, however, thinking him unfit for the situation, wrote to pope Innocent his sentiments; which had so great authority, as to prevent the young man's consecration. "It is, indeed, worthy of your dignity, to place a hidden light in a conspicuous situation. Let it be placed, if you please, on a candlestick, that it may be a burning and shining light, but only in a place where

the violence of the wind may not prevail to extinguish it. Who knows not the restless and insolent spirit of the Lombards? What can a young man of a weak body, and accustomed to solitude, do amidst a barbarous, turbulent, and stormy people? His sanctity and their perverseness, his simplicity and their deceitfulness, will not agree together. Let him be reserved, if you please, for a more suitable situation, and for a people, whom he may so govern as to profit; and let us not lose, by a precipitate preference, the fruit which may be reaped in due time."*

To Baldwin,† whom he had dismissed from his own monastery, and appointed abbot of the monastery of Reate, he writes with that vehemence of zeal and affection, which characterize his writings. "Doctrine, example, and prayer," he recommends as the three things which constitute a pastor. The last of the three he particularly recommends, as "that, which gives grace and efficacy to the labours of the preacher, whether these labours be of word or of deed."

See how the views of eternity mingle with the charitable affections of Bernard, and how familiar, and, at the same time, how animating were his prospects of the last day! "I long for your presence," says he to a friend,‡ "but when? At least in the city of our God; if in truth we have here no continuing city, but seek one to come. There, there shall we see, and our heart shall rejoice. In the mean time, I shall be delighted with what I hear of you, hoping and expecting to see you face to face in the day of the Lord, that my joy may be full. In addition to the many good things which I constantly hear of you, let me beg your earnest prayers for us."

To§ Eugenius his disciple, newly advanced to the pontificate, of whom we have already given some account, he writes with an ardour of sincere piety, which might induce one to forget, if any thing could, the vices of the popedom itself, as well as the pitiable superstitions, with which early habits had clouded the honest devotion of Bernard. "I waited," says he, "for some time, if perhaps, one of my sons might return, and assuage a father's grief, by

* Ep. 82. p. 85.

* Ep. 155. p. 157.

† Ep. 201. p. 139.

‡ Ep. 204. p. 195.

§ Ep. 238. p. 234.

Bernard's letter to the Pope Eugenius.

saying, Joseph thy son liveth, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. No account arriving, I write, indeed, not from inclination, but from necessity, in compliance with the requests of friends, to whom I could not deny the little services, which the few days I yet may have to live may allow. I envy not your dignity, because what was wanting to me, I trust I have in him, who not only comes after me, but also by me. For, dignified as you are, I have begotten you through the Gospel. What then is our hope, our joy, and crown of rejoicing? Are not you—in the presence of God?—It remains, that this change being made in your circumstances, the state of the Church may be changed also for the better. Claim nothing from her for yourself, except that you ought to lay down your life for her sake, if it be necessary. If Christ has sent you, you will reckon that you came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. A genuine successor of Paul will say with him, ‘Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy.’* Peter’s successor will hear Peter’s voice, ‘not as lords over God’s heritage, but as ensamples to the flock.’†—All the Church of the Saints rejoices in the Lord, expecting from you, what it seemed to have had in none of your predecessors for many ages past. And should not I rejoice?—I own I do so, but with trembling. For, though I have laid aside the name of a father, I still have towards you a father’s fear, anxiety, affection, and bowels. I consider your elevation, and I dread a fall: I consider the height of dignity, and I startle at the appearance of the abyss, which lieth beneath. You have attained a higher lot, but not a safer; a sublimer station, but not a securer. Remember, you are the successor of him, who said, ‘silver and gold have I none!’‡ He then explains the particular business, on occasion of which he wrote at this time; and he desires him to act in such a manner, “that men may know that there is a prophet in Israel.” “O that I might see before I die the Church of God, as in ancient times, when the Apostles let down their nets for a draught, not for silver and gold, but of souls! How do I wish you to inherit the voice of him, who said, thy money perish with thee!§ O voice of

thunder! let all who wish ill to Zion be confounded at its sound! Many now say in pleasing expectation, the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Many say in their hearts, the flowers appear in our land. Take courage then, and be strong. But, in all your works, remember that you are a man, and let the fear of him, who restraineth the spirit of princes, be ever before your eyes. What a number of pontiffs before you have in a short time been removed! By constant meditation, amidst the blandishments of this fading glory, remember your latter end. Those, in whose seat you now sit, you will doubtless follow to the grave.”

It cannot be denied, that the zeal, the sincerity, the purity of Christian doctrine, in all the essentials, at least, the charity, and the blameless manners of a reformer, appeared in Bernard. How happened it then, that numbers of illiterate weavers, as we have seen, detected the spirit of Antichrist in the popedom, and avoided its superstitions, while this abbot was imposed on by its false glare of sanctity! I suppose, BECAUSE he was an abbot. The delusive splendour of fictitious holiness, so intimately connected with Antichrist, deceived one of the most upright of human kind. It was not given him to observe the unreasonableness of expecting the completion of his pious wishes in the Church, under the auspices of the See of corruption! If he had lived at large in the world, with no predilection for the court of Rome, and had been favoured with the same divine grace, and even with no higher degree of Christian virtue, than that which he then possessed, he might have been the head of the Cathari, whom he ignorantly censured! So much do circumstances contribute to the formation of characters in life, and so much reason have many, whose piety is far inferior to that of Bernard, to be thankful, that the lot is fallen to them in pleasant places.

From the Epistles let us pass on to other treatises. The five books concerning Consideration,* addressed to pope Eugenius, first offer themselves to our inspection. As this pontiff was serious in his religious views, he had desired Bernard to send him some salutary admonitions. The honest plainness of the abbot was at least equal to the unaffected humility

* 2 Cor. i. 13.

† 1 Pet. v. 3.

‡ Acts iii. 6.

§ Acts viii. 30.

* Vol. I. p. 414.

of the pontiff. The first book is taken up with salutary cautions against that hardness of heart which an immensity of business is ever apt to produce. Bernard, who knew the toilsome life of a pope, and the snares with which he was daily encompassed, informs Eugenius that he was seriously afraid, lest, through a despair of managing a prodigious and unmeasurable course of business with a good conscience, he should be tempted to harden his heart, and deprive himself of all conscientious sensibility. "Begin not," says he, "to ask what is meant by hardness of heart. If you fear it not, you are already under its power. That is a hard heart which dreads not itself; for it is destitute of feeling. Why do you ask me what it is? ask Pharaoh. No man was ever saved from this curse but through that divine compassion, which, according to the prophet,* takes away the stone, and gives a heart of flesh." After a graphical description of the properties of a hard heart, he sums up the view with this sentence, "It neither fears God, nor regards man. See to what an end these accursed occupations will lead you, if you give yourself wholly to them, leaving nothing of yourself to yourself." He complains of the usual mode of the pontifical life, incessantly taken up with hearing and deciding causes; whence no room is left for prayer, teaching and instructing the Church, and meditation on the Scriptures. "The voice of law, indeed, is perpetually sounding in the court, but it is the law of Justinian, not of the Lord." He advises him to pity himself, and not to throw his own soul out of the list of his objects of charity, lest, in serving others perpetually, he neglect his own spiritual condition. He directs him to suppress and cut short the endless frauds and cavils of law with which the courts abounded; to decide in a summary manner on cases evidently plain; to prefer substantial justice to the tedious parade of artificial formalities, and to animadvert with severity on the frauds of advocates and proctors, who made a traffic of iniquity. By this means he would fulfil the duties of his station with uprightness, and redeem time for privacy, contemplation and prayer.

In all this, I see the honest and pious soul of Bernard struggling against the

corruption of the times. But the zeal was ineffectual. If Gregory I. lamented the load of his secular avocations, much more might Eugenius, who lived in an age still more corrupt, and upheld a pontificate still more secularized, and contaminated beyond all bounds by a system of iniquity. Even others, less exalted, and less incommoded with the shackles of the world than the pope of Rome, have found, both in civil and ecclesiastical life, the pressure of business too heavy for their minds. If they were conscientious, they were ready to sink under the difficulties; if careless and indifferent, they grew hardened in iniquity, and lost all regard to piety and virtue. An inferior clerical station is infinitely more desirable in the eyes of a pastor, who means to serve God; and dignities in the Church may attend with profit to the lectures addressed to a pope.

In the beginning of the second book he makes a digression on the ill success of the expedition to the Holy Land, which had been undertaken through the exhortations of himself and of pope Eugenius. Here the eloquence of Bernard seems to be at a stand. He owns, however, with reverence, the unsearchable judgments of God; desires to take shame to himself, rather than that the glory of God should be sullied; and pronounces that man happy, who is not offended at an event so disastrous and unexpected. If the casuistry of Bernard, in this subject appear feeble, and expose him to the derision of the profane, his humility, however, and his piety, seem unexceptionable. Recovered, as it were, from the sadness of his reflections on this humiliating occasion, he resumes the discourse on Contemplation, presses on the pontiff the duty of examining himself, and, toward the end, lays down rules of holy and charitable conversation, deserving the attention of every pastor.

In* the remaining part of this treatise, as well as in that which follows on the office of bishops, the zealous abbet describes and enforces the episcopal duties

* It may be proper to mention here a remarkable testimony which Bernard gives to the upright and disinterested conduct of Eugenius, in his third Book de Consid. Two archbishops of Germany coming to this pope to plead a cause, offered him large presents, which he refused to receive, and obliged them to send back.

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

with his usual vehemence. He is particularly severe on the ambition of ecclesiastics in his time. He describes them as "heaping up benefices on benefices, and restless till they can attain a bishopric, and then an archbishopric. Nor, says he, does the aspirant stop there; he posts to Rome, and by supporting expensive friendships and lucrative connexions, he looks upward still to the summit of power."* How much more usefully might the spirit of Bernard have been employed in the instruction and regulation of the Church, could he have seen that the idolatrous system, to which his early monastic habits had attached him, admitted no cure; and that a distinct separation, to which men really wise and good are never hasty to advert, was yet, in present circumstances, justifiable and necessary.

The zeal of Bernard appears also very fervent in a small tract concerning Conversion, which contained the substance of a sermon preached at Paris before the clergy.† He insists largely and distinctly on the necessity of divine illumination, in order to genuine conversion. He exhorts his audience to self-examination; and, while he presses them to investigate their own breasts, he points out the salutary effects of a just conviction of sin! "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.‡ Who is poorer in spirit than he who finds in himself no rest, no place where to lay his head? This is the divine economy, that he who feels the evil of sin, may learn to please God in newness of life; and he who hates his own habitation, a house of pollution and misery, may be invited to a house of glory, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. No wonder that he finds it hard to believe! Does misery make a man happy? But whoever thou art, in these circumstances, doubt not: not misery, but mercy gives bliss: but then the proper seat of mercy is misery. Thus distress of mind produces humility. Wholesome is that weakness which needs the hand of the physician, and blessed is that self-despair, through which God himself will raise and establish the heart. Even here the converted soul shall find the pleasures to which he is called a hundred-fold greater than those which he has relinquished, as well

as, in the world to come, eternal life. Expect not from us a description of their nature. The Spirit alone reveals them: they are to be known only by experience. Not erudition, but unction teaches here; not knowledge, but inward consciousness comprehends them. That the memory of past sins should remain, and the stain of them be taken away, what power can effect this? The word alone, quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword. 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Let the Pharisee murmur, 'Who can forgive sins, but God alone?' He, who speaks thus to me, is God. His favour blots out guilt, so that sin shall remain on the memory, but no longer, as before, discolour it. Remove damnation, fear, confusion, as they are removed by full remission; and our past sins will not only cease to hurt us, but will also work together for good, that we may devoutly thank Him who has forgiven them." With such energy of evangelical piety does Bernard preach the doctrines of grace and conversion to the clergy; an energy sullied, indeed, and obscured with that mysticism, which the solitude of monks always encouraged, yet substantially sound in its nature, and founded on the fundamental truths of the Gospel. Toward the close, he rebukes and exhorts the clergy as such, and bewails that intemperate ambition, which moved, and, may I not say, still moves, so many to precipitate themselves into divine functions from secular views? Let a sentence or two on this subject close our review of this sermon, and let those apply the rebuke to themselves whose practice seems to speak this language, namely, that the ministry is the only office in the world, in which presumption is a virtue, and modesty a vice. "Men run every where into sacred orders, and catch at an office revered by spirits above, without reverence, without consideration; in whom, perhaps, would appear the foulest abominations, if we were, according to Ezekiel's prophecy, to dig into the walls, and contemplate the horrible things which take place in the house of God."*

The sermons of our author on Solomon's Song, demonstrates that he was well acquainted with vital godliness. In the 36th he shows the various ways by which knowledge puffeth up.† "Some," says

Bernard's sermons.

* P. 478. † P. 489. ‡ Matt. v. 3.

* Ezek. viii. 8, 9, 10. † P. 1404.

he, "wish to know, merely for the sake of knowing; a mean curiosity. Some wish to know, that they themselves may be known; a mean vanity. Some seek for knowledge from lucrative motives; an avaricious baseness. Some desire to know, that they may edify their neighbour; this is charity. Others, that they may be edified; this is wisdom." On the whole, he owns that the cultivation of knowledge is good for instruction, but that the knowledge of our own weakness is more useful for salvation.

In the 74th sermon on the same divine book,* Bernard lays open something of his own experience on the operations of the Holy Spirit, and illustrates our Saviour's comparison of them to the wind; "thou knowest not whence it cometh, and whither it goeth."† After a preamble, full of cautious modesty, and the most unaffected reverence, he says, "I was sensible, that he was present with me; I remembered it after his visits were over; sometimes I had a presentiment of his entrance, but I never could feel his entrance or his exit. Whence he came, and whither he departed; by what way he entered, or left me, I confess that I am even now ignorant: and no wonder, for his footsteps are not known.‡ You ask then, since all his ways are unsearchable, whence could I know that he was present? His presence was living and powerful: it awakened my slumbering soul: it moved, softened, and wounded my heart, which had been hard, stony, and distempered. It watered the dry places, illuminated the dark, opened those which were shut, inflamed the cold, made the crooked straight, and the rough ways plain; so that my soul blessed the Lord, and all that was within me praised his holy name. I had no evidence of the Lord's presence with me by any of the senses; only from the motion of my heart, I understood that he was with me; and, from the expulsion of vices, and the suppression of carnal affections, I perceived the strength of his power: from the discernment and conviction of the very intents of my heart, I admired the depth of his wisdom: from some little improvement of my temper and conduct, I experienced the goodness of his grace: from the renovation of my inward man, I perceived the comeliness

of his beauty; and from the joint contemplation of all these things, I trembled at his majestic greatness. But because all these things on his departure became torpid and cold, just as if you withdrew fire from a boiling pot, I had a signal of his departure. My soul must be sad till he return, and my heart is again inflamed with his love; and let that be the evidence of his return. With such experience of the divine Word, if I use the language of the spouse, in recalling him, when he shall absent himself; while I live, her word, 'return,'* shall be familiar to me. As often as he leaves me, so often shall he be recalled, that he may restore me to the joy of his salvation; that is, that he may restore to me himself. Nothing else is pleasing, while he is absent, who alone is pleasure: and I pray that he may not come empty, but full of grace and truth, as he was wont to do." Then he goes on to explain the well-tempered mixture of gravity and delight, of fear and joy, of which all true converts are the subjects; and he supports his description by that apposite quotation, "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice unto him with trembling."†

It appeared not impertinent to the design of a history like this, to lay before the reader the inmost soul of a Saint of the twelfth century, confessing and describing the vicissitudes of spiritual consolations and declensions, which, with more or less varieties, in all ages of the Church, are known to real Christians. I know that much caution is necessary in speaking of them; but if we speak according to the divine oracles, as Bernard seems to do, it should be a "small thing with us to be judged of man's judgment." The doctrine of regeneration itself, with all the mixed effects of spiritual health and sickness, in a fallen creature, is foolishness to the natural man.‡ If any man, however, have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.§ It will be the wisdom of mere nominal Christians not to deride, but to seek for the Holy Spirit; and while godly souls estimate his presence or his absence, by such marks and effects as Bernard describes, they will not only be free from enthusiasm, but will also make it their constant aim, not to grieve the Spirit of

* P. 1529.

† John iii. 8.

‡ Ps. lxxvii. 19.

* Canticles vi. 13.

† Ps. ii. 11.

‡ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

§ Rom. viii. 9.

God, by which they are sealed to the day of redemption.

In* the 78th sermon on the Canticles, he describes the Church as predestinated before all time, that it should be the spouse of Christ, and supports his observation from the words of St. Paul.† He speaks of the influence of the Holy Spirit, and of the conversion of sinners as the effect of this predestination. "Yet Emanuel," says he, "is the Personage, who was of us, and for us was clothed with our curse, and had the appearance, not the reality of our sin."

In a sermon on the beginning of the 91st Psalm, he answers a question which obviously arises to the mind of a serious person exercised in experimental godliness. Both the question and the answer deserve to be given in the author's own words. "What is the reason, that though we pray and supplicate incessantly, we cannot attain that abundance of grace which we desire? Think you that God is become avaricious, or indigent, impotent, or inexorable? Far, far from us be the thought: but he knows our frame. We must not, therefore, cease from petitioning, because, though he gives not to satiety, he gives what is needful for support; though he guards us against excessive heat, he cherishes us as a mother, with his warmth. As the mother sees the hawk approaching, and expands her wings that her young ones may enter and find a safe refuge, so his bosom being prepared, and, as it were, dilated for us, the ineffable kindness of our God is extended over us. This is a dispensation adapted to the infirmity of our condition; even grace itself must be moderated, lest we fall into an undue elevation of mind, or a precipitate indiscretion."‡

"Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost?" is the serious question, which the Church of England asks of all her candidates for the ministry. Let him who would answer it conscientiously, ask his own heart, what he feels of Bernard's description, which, if not an accurate answer to the question, may, however, furnish the attentive reader with some salutary contemplations. "He who is called to instruct souls, is called of God, and not by his own ambi-

tion; and what is this call, but an inward incentive of love, soliciting us to be zealous for the salvation of our brethren? So often as he, who is engaged in preaching the Word, shall feel his inward man to be excited with divine affections, so often let him assure himself that God is there, and that he is invited by him to seek the good of souls. Truly, I love to hear that preacher, who does not move me to applaud his eloquence, but to groan for my sins. Efficacy will be given to your voice, if you appear to be yourself persuaded of that, to which you advise me. That common rebuke will then at least belong not to you;—"thou who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"* †

See how divinely he describes the grace of God in the Gospel. "Happy is he alone, to whom the Lord imputeth not sin. To have him propitious to me, against whom alone I have sinned, suffices for all my righteousness. Not to impute my sins, is, as it were, to blot out their existence. If my iniquity is great, thy grace is much greater. When my soul is troubled at the view of her sinfulness, I look at thy mercy, and am refreshed. It lies in common; it is offered to all, and he only who rejects it, is deprived of its benefit. Let him rejoice, who feels himself a wretch deserving of perpetual damnation. For the grace of Jesus still exceeds the quantity or number of all crimes. My punishment, says Cain, is too great for me to expect pardon. Far be the thought. The grace of God is greater than any iniquity whatever. He is really kind and merciful, plenteous in goodness, ready to forgive. His very nature is goodness; his property is to have mercy. Indeed he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. But mercy he draws from his own nature; condemnation is a work to which we in a measure compel him. He is, therefore, not called the Father of vengeance, but the FATHER OF MERCIES."†

The following thought, concerning temptations, is striking. "In creation, in redemption, and other common benefits, God is common to all; in temptations, the elect have him to themselves. With such special care does he support and deliver, that he may seem, as it were,

* P. 154. † Eph. i. former part.

† B. 2. C. 15. *Florum Bernardi*. A small treatise, from which are extracted some of the most beautiful passages of this author.

* In *Cantic. Serm.* 58. p. 156. *Florum*.

† From various *Serm.* *Flor.* 229.

neglecting all others, to confine his care to the tempted soul.*

We have already given a small specimen of his own experience, in regard to the various operations of the Holy Spirit. From different sermons we may now see the practical use which he makes of the doctrine. "It is a dangerous thing," says he, "to be insensible of the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit. For how shall his presence be sought, whose absence is not known? And how shall he, who returns to console us, be worthily received, if his presence be not felt? May the unction, therefore, be never removed from us, the unction† which teaches us of all things, that when the Holy Spirit comes he may find us ready. He who walks in the Spirit never remains in one state. His way is not in himself; but as the Spirit dispenses to him, according to his good pleasure, now more faintly, now more eagerly, he forgets the things which are behind, and reaches forth to the things which are before. Distrust not, when thou findest weariness and torpor; seek the hand of thy Guide, beseeching him to draw thee, till thou be enabled to run the way of God's commandments. And, on the other hand, beware of presumptuous confidence, when thou walkest in the light of divine consolation, lest, when he withdraws his hand, thou be more dejected than it becomes a Christian to be."‡

The divine life was then, it seems, understood, in the twelfth century, that same life which is felt in all ages by holy men, which has its foundations in the genuine doctrines of grace, which alone produces true virtue upon earth, which is the comfort of real Christians, and the ridicule of mere philosophers, whether nominally Christians or not, and which will issue in heavenly glory. That after the greatest attainments and the most earnest efforts, a Christian should still feel himself infected with sin, has often been matter of great vexation and surprise to the most pious and the most intelligent persons. Great mistakes have been committed on this subject; some have, at length, induced themselves to believe, that in-dwelling sin has been totally expelled from their breasts; others have given themselves

up to unprofitable solicitude and dejection. A great part of the mystery of practical godliness lies, no doubt, in the due conception of the case, and in the practical regulation of the heart, concerning it. Let us hear Bernard on this point; he speaks in unison with the soundest Christians in all ages; and, what is more, with St. Paul, in Rom. vii. "Let no man say in his heart, these are small evils; I care not for them; it is no great matter, if I remain in these venial sins. This is blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, and confirmed impenitence. On the other hand, evil cannot altogether be eradicated or extirpated from our hearts, while we are in the world. However great thy proficiency, thou art mistaken, if thou think sin to be dead. Whether thou wilt or not, the Jebusite will dwell within thy borders. He may be subdued, not exterminated. Sin, the disease of the soul, cannot be taken away, till we are freed from the body. By the grace of God it may be repressed, so that it shall not reign in us, but it is ejected only at death.—In many things we offend all:* let no man despise or neglect these evils; nor yet should the Christian be too solicitous concerning them; He will forgive us even with pleasure, provided we confess our guilt. In these evils of daily incursion, negligence is culpable, and so is immoderate fear; for there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,† and who consent not to the motions of concupiscence. That we may be humble, the Lord suffers concupiscence itself still to live in us, and grievously to afflict us, that we may feel what grace can do for us, and may always have recourse to his aid."‡ Such were the humble sentiments of this holy personage concerning this subject, and so equally remote was he from the delusive pride of the Perfectionist, and the flagitious negligence of the Antinomian.

I shall conclude this review of Bernard's works, with a short extract,§ which expresses the foundation of his Christian hopes; and it is that, in which all real Christians, in all ages, will cordially concur with him: "I consider three things, in which all my hope consists, the love of adoption, the truth of the promise, and the power of perform-

* Flor. 257.

† I John ii. 41, &c.

‡ I John ii. 27.

* James iii. 2.

† Flor. 373.

‡ Rom. viii. 1.

§ De Evang. Serm. 5.

ance. Let my foolish heart murmur as much as it please, and say, Who art thou, and how great is that glory, or by what merits dost thou expect to obtain it? I will confidently answer, I know whom I have believed, and I am certain, that he hath adopted me in love; that he is true in promise; that he is powerful to fulfil it; for he can do what he pleaseth. This is the threefold cord, which is not easily broken, which being let down to us from our heavenly country to earth, I pray that we may firmly hold, and may he himself lift us up, and draw us completely to the glory of God, who is blessed for ever."

CHAPTER V.

DEATH AND CHARACTER OF BERNARD.

No one of the ancient fathers seems to have had so little justice done to his memory as Bernard. He lived in an age so ignorant and superstitious, that Protestants are ready to ask, Can any good thing come out of the twelfth century? It is difficult, indeed, to say, whether he has been more injured by the extravagant encomiums of some, or by the illiberal censures of others. Even the fictitious miracles, of which the wretched accounts of his biographers are full, indirectly asperse his character, and by no uncommon association of ideas, seem to detract all credibility from the best attested narratives of his piety and virtue. While then Papists represent him as an angel, and Protestants as a narrow bigot, or a furious zealot, those who know nothing more of him than what they have learned from the prejudice of opposite extremes, are tempted to think him an object worthy of contempt, if not of detestation.

The great Roman historian, in a beautiful fragment preserved to us concerning the death of Cicero, observes, that to celebrate his character, as it deserves, a Cicero himself should be found as panegyrist.* A somewhat similar observation may be made concerning Bernard; and happily his voluminous writings, which have escaped the ravages of time, vindicate his reputation, and exhibit him

to us with faithfulness and accuracy. It was necessary to be brief in my extracts; else much more numerous proofs of his genuine piety, humility, and charity, than those which the reader hath already seen, might have been adduced. Nor have I concealed his superstitious turn of mind, and the unhappy prejudices, which induced him to censure some of those, of whom "the world was not worthy," and with whose true character he was unacquainted. He was deeply tinged with a predilection for the Roman hierarchy; he had imbibed most of those errors of his time, which were not directly subversive of the Gospel; and the monastic character, which, according to the spirit of the age appeared to be the greatest glory, seems to have much eclipsed his real virtues, and prevented his progress in true evangelical wisdom.

But if we strip him of the ascetic vest, and consider the interior endowments, he will appear to have been no mean or ordinary character. His learning was moderate; but his understanding was solid, and his judgment seldom erred in subjects or cases, where the prejudices of the age did not warp the imagination. His genius was truly sublime, his temper sanguine, his mind active and vigorous. The love of God appears to have taken deep root in his soul, and seems to have been always steady, though always ardent. His charity was equal to his zeal; and his tenderness and compassion to Christian brethren went hand in hand with his severity against the heretical, the profane, and the vicious. In humility he was truly admirable; he scarcely seems to have felt a glimpse of pleasure on account of the extravagant praises every where bestowed upon him. His heartfelt dependence on Christ, and his heavenly affections were incontestibly strong. He united much true Christian knowledge with much superstition; and this can hardly be accounted for on any other supposition, than that he was directed by an influence truly divine. For there is not an essential doctrine of the Gospel, which he did not embrace with zeal, defend by argument, and adorn by life. Socinianism in particular, under God, was by his means nipped in the bud, and prevented from thriving in the Christian world. Such was Bernard, who is generally called the last of the fathers.

The accounts of his death, considered

* Cicero quidem laudatore opus esset. Liv. fragm.

as compositions, are no less disgusting to a taste of tolerable correctness, than those of his life. While his

Death of Bernard. A. D. 1153. friends admired him as an angel, he felt himself, by nature, a sinful fallen creature.

He was about sixty-three years old when he died of a disease in the stomach. A letter which he dictated to a friend, a very few days before his decease, is worthy of our attention, as a genuine monument of that simplicity, modesty, and piety, which had adorned his conversation. "I received your love, with affection, I cannot say with pleasure; for what pleasure can there be to a person in circumstances replete with bitterness? To eat nothing solid, is the only way to preserve myself tolerably easy. My sensitive powers admit of no further pleasure. I am not able to close my eyes: sleep hath departed from me: and no longer procures for me the least intermission of my pain. Stomachic weakness is, as it were, the sum total of my afflictions. By day and night I receive a small portion of liquids. Everything solid the stomach rejects. The very scanty supply, which I now and then receive is painful; but perfect emptiness would be still more so. If now and then I take in a larger quantity, the effect is most distressing. My legs and feet are swoln, as in a dropsy. In the midst of these afflictions, that I may hide nothing from an anxious friend, in my inner man—I speak as a vulgar person—the spirit is ready, though the flesh be weak. Pray ye to the Saviour, who willeth not the death of a sinner, that he would not delay my timely exit, but that still he would guard it. Fortify with your prayers a poor unworthy creature, that the enemy who lies in wait may find no place where he may fix his tooth, and inflict a wound. These words I have dictated, but in such a manner, that ye may know my affection by a hand well known to you."* Such were the dying circumstances of this excellent Saint. So peculiarly were they disposed, that they seemed to rebuke the ignorant admiration of his friends; and thus, through faith and patience, did he at length inherit the promises.†

* Vol. II. p. 1170.

† Many miracles are ascribed to Bernard by the Romish Church. He is looked on as the last of the holy Fathers; and is said to have founded 160 monasteries.

CHAPTER VI.

GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS CENTURY.

THIS may, in a great measure, be collected, so far as the Latin Church is concerned, from the copious account which has been given of Bernard. Of the Greek Church hardly anything occurs which properly falls within the design of this history. Superstition, idolatry, frivolous contentions, and metaphysical niceties, attended with a lamentable want of true piety and virtue, form almost the whole of the religious phenomena in the east.

In this chaos of the Church, I can only mention a few facts and circumstances, which may throw some lights on its general state; and they shall be such as have not been considered in the history of Bernard, nor directly relate to the Waldenses, whose affairs commenced in the latter part of this century, but will deserve a strict narration.

Just at the close of the foregoing century, pope Urban* held a synod of one hundred and fifty bishops, in order to promote the Crusades, and exhorted the Christian world to concur in supporting the same cause. He died in the year 1099, and Jerusalem was taken by the crusaders in the same year.† The pale of the visible Church was extended by the conquests of the western warriors, and several episcopal Sees, were again formed in regions, whence the light of the Gospel had first arisen to bless mankind. But these were of short duration; and, what is much more material to be observed, while they continued, they gave no evidence, that I can find, of the spirit of true religion. This is a circumstance, which throws a very displeasing shade on the whole character of the fanatical war which at that time agitated both Europe and Asia. I have excupated the western Christians from the charge of positive injustice in undertaking it; in every other light it deserves much of the asperity of the censure, with which modern authors in general agree to treat it. Among a thousand evils which it produced, or at least encouraged,

Death of Urban, and the taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders, A. D. 1099.

* This pope, viz. Urban II. held the famous council here mentioned, at Clermont in Auvergne, A. D. 1095, for the recovery of the Holy Land.

† Baronius, Cent. XII.

this was one, namely, that indulgences were now diffused by the popes through Europe, for the purpose of promoting what they called the holy war. These had indeed been sold before by the inferior dignitaries of the Church, who, for money, remitted the penalties imposed on transgressors: they had not, however, pretended to abolish the punishments, which await the wicked in a future state. This impiety was reserved to the pope himself, who dared to usurp the authority which belongs to God alone. The corruption having once taken place, remained and even increased from age to age, till the time of the Reformation. It is needless to say, how subversive of all piety and virtue this practice must have been. That the Romanists did really promote this impious traffic is but too evident from their own writers.* Hence the strict propriety of St. Paul's representation of the man of sin, AS SHOWING HIMSELF THAT HE IS GOD†, is evinced; hence, the characters of those, who opposed the power and doctrine of popery in those times, receive the most ample vindication, and hence the merit of the Reformation itself may, in a great measure, be appreciated. I only add, that the whole discipline of the Church was now dissolved, and men, who had means to purchase a license to sin, were emboldened to let loose the reins of vice, and follow, at large, their own desires and imaginations.

Nor were these evils compensated by some other circumstances, which tended to promote the revival of learning in this age. Gratian, a native of Tuscany, and a monk of Bologna, made a famous collection of canon laws, and published them in 1151. His work was much facilitated by the discovery of the pandects of the emperor Justinian, which took place in 1137.‡ Ecclesiastical causes were henceforward tried by the canon law. To encourage the study of this science, the degrees of bachelor, li-

centiate, and doctor, degrees mentioned by no writer before the time of Gratian, were instituted by pope Eugenius III. the disciple of Bernard. But they were soon after introduced at Paris by Peter Lombard, who was called the master of the sentences, and were bestowed on students of divinity as well as of law. For Lombard was supposed to have performed the same service to divinity, which Gratian, his contemporary, had done to law. Paris and Bologna, the former in divinity, and the latter in law, were now looked on as the greatest seminaries in Europe. In this revival of learning our own island also bore a part. The university of Oxford, which had been founded in the time of Alfred, and had suffered much from the ravages of the Danes, came to a considerable degree of eminence in this century. The learning, as well as the impiety of the Continent, passed into England, and we shall shortly see a dreadful instance of the effects of both appearing in the university last mentioned. For while the real word of God was generally neglected, and the salutary doctrine of the Gospel was buried in darkness, the literary improvements of the times might sharpen the intellectual faculties, but could produce no benign effects on the manners of mankind. To finish this brief detail of the progress of learning, I shall add, that Cambridge had begun to be a seminary of learning Learning revives at Cambridge, A. D. 1109. some little time after Oxford, but in that view had been

quite oppressed by the incursions of the Danes. It revived, however, in some degree, about the year 1109, when Gislebert, with three other monks, was sent by the abbot of Croyland to his manor of Cottenham, near Cambridge. These monks went every day to Cambridge, where they hired a barn as a convenient place for public lectures. One read grammar in the morning, a second read logic at one o'clock, and a third, at three in the afternoon, gave lectures on rhetoric from Tully and Quintilian. Gislebert himself preached on Sundays, and other holidays. The barn was soon found insufficient to contain the auditors; and, therefore, accommodations were provided for the labours of these men in different parts of the town. Such is the account which Peter of Blois gives of the infant state of learning in the university of Cambridge.

* See Mosheim, Cent. XII. p. 595. Qu. Edit. Morinus, Simon, and Mabillon, are the popish authors, who are not ashamed to vindicate this system of iniquity.

† 2 Thess. ii.

‡ Mosheim, Cent. XII. p. 567. Bower's Lives of Popes, Vol. VI. p. 69. Du Pin, Cent. XII. Chap. XVII.

The laudable passion for intellectual improvement was strong in this century. In the room of the Fathers succeeded the Schoolmen, whose theology was founded by Peter Lombard. A metaphysical subtilty pervaded their investigations, and they were idolized by the ignorant, among whom should be ranked the nobility of that age, almost as much as the plebeians. The human mind, however, by exercise, recovered a new tone and vigour; but learning could not communicate grace, nor even enable men to see the folly of enslaving themselves to the popedom. The influence of the bishop of Rome grew prodigious: the emperors of Germany trembled under the rod; and some of the bravest and wisest of the English princes were found unequal to a contest with the hierarchy. But to dwell on these scenes would be to forsake the path of Church-history.

Where THEN was the Church of Christ, and what was its condition? In the general appearance of national religion she was not to be discovered. God had, however, his SECRET ONES. There might be, and probably there were, in vulgar life, various persons too poor and too insignificant to be regarded in history, who feared God and served him in the Gospel of his son, but whom an humble station in society secured from persecution. There were also here and there some of the recluse, who practised something better than superstition. The story of Bernard has given us an illustrious instance. In the west, we have seen also the Cathari, who formed religious societies among themselves. These increased exceedingly, and assuming a new name, much better known in the latter part of the century,* were exposed to the unrighteous indignation of the then reigning powers, both in church and state. The account of this persecution will demand our particular attention, when we come to the next century. Thus the Church of Christ had a real existence in the west, and shone as a light in a dark place. In the east it is extremely difficult to discover the least vestiges of genuine piety. It is probable, however, that the Church existed among the remains of the Paulicians. For in the year 1118, Alexius Comnenus, who had zealously persecuted this people in the latter

end of the foregoing century, burned a supposed Manichee, who was charged with maintaining all the absurdities of Manes. We have the account from the female historian, his own daughter, Anna Comnena, who every where idolizes the character of her father.* The supposed heretic, however, it ought to be known, rejected the worship of images as idolatry;† a circumstance, which at least affords a strong presumption in favour of his Christian character. The reader will hence be led to believe it not improbable, that there were even then some relics of a church of God in the east. If he complain that the evidence is scanty, I can only lament that history affords no more. And if he recollect the account given of the Cathari in the memoirs of Bernard, and consider them as properly belonging to this place, he will see, that the prophecy of Christ concerning his church, "that the gates of hell should never prevail against it," had its real completion even in the dark times which we are reviewing.

It is no small consolation to the mind of a true believer, that the most disastrous, as well as the most glorious scenes of the Church, are predicted in Scripture. The evidence of prophecy constantly accompanies the light of history, and "behold I have told you before," is the voice of our Saviour, which we hear in every age. In a council held at London in 1108, in the reign of our Henry I. a decree was issued against clerks who should cohabit with women.‡ This council did not mean to give an attestation to the truth of the prophecy of St. Paul, concerning the apostacy of the latter days, one circumstance of which was the prohibition of marriage.§ but they fulfilled the prophecy in the clearest manner. The voices of natural conscience and of common sense were, however, by no means altogether silenced during this gloomy season. Plucentius, bishop of Florence,|| taught publicly, that Antichrist was born, and come into the world; on

Burning of a supposed Manichee, A. D. 1118.

Decree of a Council in London against the marriage of clerks. A. D. 1108.

Pope Paschal II. silences the Bishop of Florence. A. D. 1105.

* Anna Comnena, B. XV.

† Baron. Cent. XII.

‡ Ibid. § 1 Tim. iv.

§ See Bp. Newton on the Prophecies, Vol. III. p. 167.

* Waldenses.

which account pope Paschal II. held a council there in the year 1105, reprimanded the bishop, and enjoined him silence on that subject. Even Bernard himself inveighed so strongly against the popes and the clergy, that nothing but the obstinate prejudices of education prevented him from seeing the whole truth in this matter. It was natural for men, who revered the Scriptures, and who compared what they read of Antichrist with what they saw in the Church of Rome, to express some suspicions, that the prophecy was then fulfilling, though the glare of fictitious holiness, which covered the popedom, prevented them from beholding their object with perspicuity.

Our own island was rapidly advancing all this century into a state of deplorable subjection to the Roman See. Men of solid understanding, like our Henry II. lamented, struggled, and resisted, but with little effect. They felt the temporal oppression of ecclesiastical tyranny, while they were perfectly regardless of their own spiritual misery, and even aided the court of Rome in the persecution of real Christians. That same Henry II. who made so firm a stand against papal encroachments in civil matters, in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, joined with the French King in persecuting the Cathari of Toulouse, who were injuriously denominated Arians;* and, while he abused and perverted one of the finest understandings by a life of ambition and lewdness, and by supporting idolatrous religion, he himself was exposed to the severest sufferings from the papal usurpations. One instance of his barbarity deserves to be distinctly related.

Thirty men and women, who were Germans, appeared in England in the year 1159, and were afterwards brought before a council of the clergy at Oxford. Gerard, their teacher, a man of learning, said, that they were Christians, and believed the doctrine of the Apostles. They expressed an abhorrence of the doctrine of purgatory, of prayers for the dead, and of the invocation of Saints. Henry, in conjunction with the council, ordered them to be branded with a hot iron on the forehead, to be whipped through Oxford, to have their clothes cut

State of the
Church in
England.

Persecu-
tions by
Henry II.
A. D. 1159.

short by their girdles, and to be turned into the open fields; and he likewise forbade any persons, under severe penalties, to shelter or relieve them. As it was the depth of winter, they all lost their lives through cold and hunger.* They had made one female convert in England, who, through fear of similar punishment, recanted. The whole number of the Germans remained, however, patient, serene, and composed, repeating, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Their teacher Gerard, that he might be distinguished from the rest, had an additional stigma on his chin.

What a darkness must at that time have filled this island! A wise and sagacious king, a renowned university, the whole body of the clergy and laity, all united in expelling Christ from their coasts! Brief as is the account of the martyrs, it is sufficiently evident that they were the martyrs of Christ. Driven most probably from home by the rage of persecution, they had brought the light and power of the Gospel with them into England; and so totally senseless and corrupt was our nation, that none received it. It deserves to be noticed, that England was afterwards for a long time disposed to suffer more severely than most other nations, from the exactions of the popedom.

Mr. Berington observes, on occasion of this story, that none but a hero or a madman was at that time qualified to be a reformer. But a true reformer needs not to be either the one or the other. A man of understanding, who fears God, and speaks the words of soberness, is influenced by the Spirit of God, is fitted to reform mankind.

The contention between King Henry and Becket is well known. I have nothing to say of it, except that the whole affair is foreign to my purpose. There is no evidence that a spirit of true religion influenced either the king or the archbishop.

The pope, indeed, reigned calm and victorious throughout Europe. Nevertheless, even in Italy itself, some suspicions that he was Antichrist appeared. Joachini, abbot of Calabria, was a man renowned for learning and piety, and perhaps very deservedly. This man as-

* Hoveden, p. 327.

* Neubrig. Brompt. Collect. See Henry's Hist. of Eng. Vol. III. p. 210.

serted that Antichrist was born in the Roman state, and would be exalted to the Apostolic See.* Our king Richard I. being at Messina in Sicily, going upon his expedition to the Holy Land, sent for this Joachim, and with much satisfaction heard him explain the Book of the Revelation, and discourse of Antichrist. Mr. Berington gives a ludicrous account of this interview between the king and the abbot; and observes, that the "bishops who were present, and Richard, and Joachim, were equally intelligent in the mysteries of the Evangelist with any other interpreters of that day."† This gentleman is a lively, agreeable writer, and has exerted a capacity, learning, and industry, to which I have been obliged on several occasions. But the rude treatment of any part of the word of God deserves to be rebuked, whether he who is guilty of it, be a Roman Catholic or a Protestant, or a sceptic in religion. I doubt not but some of his readers, who never examined the subject with the least attention, will be gratified with the pleasantries of his remark. But let them be told that part of the Apocalypse is very intelligible, even at present: and that all of it will probably be so before the end of time. And is not all Scripture said to be profitable?‡ It behoved not a man professing Christianity, to throw out innuendoes which might have been expected only from an avowed infidel. Has the author ever examined with care the writings of expositors on the Apocalypse? Did he ever attend to Mr. Mede's elaborate and learned works on the subject? Did Sir Isaac Newton's observations on the Apocalypse ever fall into his hands? Or, to come to later times, has he ever studied the works of bishop Newton, bishop Hurd, or the late bishop Hallifax? Let him attend to any one of these, and having digested his scheme, let him then say, if he can, that our ignorant king Richard I. was as intelligent an expositor as he.

If this same Richard had been as earnest in studying the Scriptures, as he was in conducting his romantic expedition into the Holy Land, by comparing the Apocalyptic prophecies with the treatment which he himself received from the pope,

he might have understood that the bishop of Rome was Antichrist. For, in a bull dated 1197, Innocent III. declared, that it was not fit that any man should be invested with authority who did not reverence and obey the Holy See. In another bull, addressed to Richard, he told him, that if he opposed the execution of the decrees of the Apostolic See, he would soon convince him how hard it was to kick against the pricks. In another bull, he declared that he would not endure the least contempt of himself, or of God, whose place he held on earth, but would punish every disobedience without delay, and without respect of persons; and would convince the whole world that he was determined to act like a sovereign.* The "lion-hearted" Richard obeyed his decrees, and gave up his opposition in the cause which he had contested. Innocent, indeed, reigned in England with a power little less than despotic. This was the pope, who confirmed the doctrine of transubstantiation in the grossest sense, who reduced the two succeeding princes John and Henry III. into a state of the lowest vassalage to himself, and who enriched his creatures with the treasures of England, almost entirely at his pleasure.

Bull of Pope Innocent III. A. D. 1197.

Other Bulls of the same Pope.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL.

THE pale of the visible Church was still farther extended in this century among the idolatrous nations; and, though the methods of propagating divine truth were too often unchristian, some missionaries seem to have been actuated by an apostolical spirit. The articles under this head are only few, but well deserve the reader's attention.

Boleslaus, duke of Poland, having taken Stettin, the capital of Pomerania, by storm, and laid waste the country with fire and sword, compelled the remaining inhabitants to submit at discretion. What right he had to make war on the Pomeranians at all, and if he had a right, how far he confined himself within the bounds

* Hoveden, p. 681. Collier's Ecc. Hist. B. VI. p. 401.

† Hist. of Henry II. &c. p. 375.

‡ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

* Gervas Chronicle. See Henry's 3d Vol. of Hist. of Eng.

of justice and humanity, are inquiries not easy to be answered, on account of the scantiness of our information. From such inauspicious beginnings, however, Pomerania was introduced to an acquaintance with Christianity. The conqueror endeavoured, for three years, to procure pastors and teachers from his own dominions, to instruct his new subjects, but

Otho's mission to Pomerania.
A. D. 1124.

could find none. He then engaged Otho, bishop of Bamberg, in the work. The duke of Pomerania met the bishop on his approach, and received him with much respect. The savage inhabitants, however, were with difficulty prevented from murdering him. Otho was firm, and by Christian zeal, patience, and meekness, laboured to efface the disadvantageous impressions which the military executions of Boleslaus could not fail to make on their minds. The duchess of Pomerania, with her female attendants, received the Gospel. So did the duke, with his companions, and he gave this evidence of sincerity, that he was prevailed on by the instructions of Otho to dismiss his concubines, who were twenty-four in number. This missionary was afterwards fiercely assaulted by some of the inhabitants, and escaped with great difficulty. But he bore the injury so meekly, and still persevered in his labours with such evident marks of probity and charity, that he at length established the form of Christianity among them. He* had entered on his mission in the

Otho returns to his flock at Bamberg, and dies.
A. D. 1139.

year 1124, and from his success, was styled the apostle of the Pomeranians.† After he had carried the Gospel into Noin and other remote districts, he returned to the care of his own flock at Bamberg, where he died in 1139.‡ That the work, however, appeared too plainly by the event. The Pomeranians soon after ejected the Christian pastors, and re-established the idolatry of their ancestors.

The inhabitants of Rugen, an island which lies in the neighbourhood of Pomerania, were remarkable for their obstinate opposition to Christianity. Eric, king of Deamark, subdued them, and among other conditions of peace, imposed

on them the necessity of receiving his religion. But they soon relapsed into the idolatry of their ancestors. At length Waldemar, king of Denmark, having subjected them again by his arms to the Danish crown, obliged them to deliver up to him their idol, called Swanterwith, an account of which we have seen in the history of the tenth century. Waldemar ordered it to be hewn in pieces and burned. He compelled the vanquished also to deliver to him all their sacred money: he released the Christian captives whom they held in slavery, and converted the lands which had been assigned to the pagan priests, to the support of a Christian ministry. He did also something which was of a more salutary nature and tendency, whatever were his own motives of conduct. He furnished the ignorant savages with pastors and teachers. Among these shone Absalom, archbishop of Lunden, by whose pious labours, at length, the Gospel received an establishment in this island, which had so long baffled every attempt to evangelize it. Absalom* ought to be classed among those genuine benefactors of mankind, who were willing to spend and be spent for the good of souls. Even Jaremar, the prince of Rugen, received the Gospel with great alacrity, and not only taught his wayward subjects by his life and example, but also by his useful instructions and admonitions. Sometimes he employed menaces, but to what degree, and with what circumstances, I know not. Certain it is, that

Rugen in some measure evangelized,
A. D. 1168.

the people of Rugen from that time were in some sense, at least, evangelized. No people had ever shown more obstinate aversion to the doctrines of Christianity. Nor were the military proceedings of Eric and Waldemar calculated to soften their animosity. In this article, however, as in the last, the characters of the missionaries ought to be distinguished from those of the princes; for, in the accounts of both the missionaries there appears very good evidence of a genuine propagation of godliness. These events in Rugen took place about the year 1168.‡ When I distinguish the characters of the princes from that of the missionaries, I am by no

* Cent. Magd. Cent. XII. p. 16.

† Baronius, Cent. XII. See Magd. Cent.

‡ Butler, Vol. VII.

* Mosheim, Cent. XII. 351. Cent. Magd. Cent. XII. 13.

† Butler, Vol. X.

means certain that the conduct of the former was unjustifiable. The people of Rugen were a band of pirates and robbers; and it is not improbable, but that the right of self-preservation might authorize the Danish expeditions.

The Finlanders were of the same character with the people of Rugen, and infested Sweden with their incursions. Eric, king of this country, vanquished them in war, and is said to have wept, because his enemies died unbaptized. As soon as he was master of Finland, he sent Henry, bishop of Upsal, to evangelize the barbarians. The success of the missionary was great, and he is called the apostle of the Finlanders, though he was murdered at length by some of the refractory people. How far the censure of Mosheim, on his severity to them, may be well founded, I cannot decide. The missionary seems, however, to have been pious, and to have had good intentions. The laudable conduct of his sovereign also deserves to be celebrated. Eric was excellent both as a Christian and a king. His piety provoked the derision of some impious malcontents, by whom he was attacked, while employed in public worship. The remainder of the festival, said he, I shall observe elsewhere. It was the feast of the Ascension, which he was celebrating. He went out alone to meet the murderers, that he might prevent the effusion of

Murder of
Eric,
A. D. 1151.

blood, and he died recommending his soul to God. He was slain in 1151; and his tomb still remains at Upsal, undefaced.* It may be proper to add, that Henry was an Englishman, who had taken considerable pains among the barbarous nations, before the period

Henry, bishop of
Upsal, murdered
in the same year.

of his labours in Finland, and that he was stoned to death at the instigation of a murderer, whom he had endeavoured to reclaim by his censures. His death happened in the same year as that of his royal master.† This person is highly extolled by John Olaus, in his work, *De rebus Gothicis*.‡

The Slavonians were remarkably averse to the Gospel of Christ, and much exercised the patience and charity

of Vicelinus, who preached thirty years in Holsatia and the neighbouring parts. He was at length appointed bishop of Oldenburg, which See Vicelinus, a very shining character, who laboured thirty years among the Slavonians. He died, A. D. 1154. All the

accounts of antiquity are full of the praises of Vicelinus; and his character is briefly, but very strongly celebrated by Mosheim, with such unqualified commendations, that I cannot but wish that very learned historian had favoured us with an abridgement of his life and actions, taken from the sources of information which he quotes, but which seem to us inaccessible. I have consulted the Centuriators, and find matter there sufficient to excite, but not to satisfy our curiosity. The little to be collected from them shall be mentioned in the next chapter. And here is an instance of that which I have had but too frequent occasion to remark, namely, an extreme scantiness of information on subjects most worthy of our researches. How willingly would the evangelical reader have excused the omission of many pages in Mosheim, if he had gratified us with an orderly account of one of the best and wisest Christian missionaries of the age.†

The propagation of religion in Livonia will not deserve any detail. It took place in the latter part of this century: violent and secular methods were principally used, and the wretched inhabitants were compelled to receive baptism;‡ but I know no fruits that appeared in this century worthy the Christian name.

CHAPTER VIII.

WRITERS AND EMINENT PERSONS IN THIS CENTURY.

BERNARD far outshines all the other Christian characters of the age. A very brief survey, however, of some who had

* Mosheim, Cent. XII. 552. Butler, Vol. V.

† His life was written by Benzelius *Monum. Sacc.* p. 33. Butler, Vol. II.

‡ B. 19. C. 3. See Baron. Cent. XII.

* Baron. Cent. XII.

† See Cent. Magd. 16. Mosheim, Cent. XII. 554. The authors quoted by Mosheim are the *Cimbria literata* of Mollerus, and the *Res Hamburg.* of Lambecius.

‡ Cent. Magd.

the greatest reputation for piety, may not be improper.

Meginher, archbishop of Treves, is a character, of whom it were to be wished we had a more distinct account. He inveighed against the luxury and sensuality of his clergy, and so provoked their resentment, that he was obliged to undertake a journey to Rome in his own defence. By the treachery of his own clergy he was intercepted on the road,

and died in prison at Parma

in the year 1130.* If we had

the particulars of these transac-

tions, it is probable that he

would appear to have resembled Chrysostom in his integrity, as well as in his sufferings. Meginher deserves, however, to be mentioned, because his ease evinces how unsafe it was in those days to defend Christian piety, even in the midst of the visible Church of Christ.

About the same time a presbyter, named Arnulph, came to Rome, and faithfully preached against the vices of the clergy. He was himself a man of unblameable life and conversation, and zealously laboured to induce the pastors of the Church to imitate the simplicity and disinterestedness of the primitive Christians. He seems to have foreseen that he should suffer for righteousness sake. "I know," said he publicly, "that ye seek my life. Ye despise me and your Creator, who redeemed you by his only begotten Son. Nor is it to be wondered at, that ye should kill me a sinful man, who speaks to you the truth, since, if St. Peter himself were to rise from the dead, and rebuke your multiplied enormities, ye would not spare him." Arnulph was secretly murdered, and appears to have been a faithful martyr.†

The orthodox sentiments of the Godhead and manhood of Jesus Christ, and the influence of both natures in the redemption, were clearly and soundly vindicated by Ricardus, in a treatise concerning the Incarnation.‡

Rupert, in this century, writing on the Gospel of St. John, observes, on occasion of our Lord's declaring in the xivth chapter of St. John, that the world neither see nor know the Holy Spirit; "that they see him not, arises from their unbelief; that they know him not, proceeds from

their pride. Infidelity regards nothing but what is present; and pride approves not of such a comforter, nay, reckons the life of those who seek his consolations to be madness, and their end to be without honour."

Peter Alphonsus, a Jew, was converted in the year 1106, in the forty-fourth year of his age. Being severely censured by his countrymen, he published a dialogue against the Jews, which seems to have been no contemptible defence of Christianity against his countrymen.* This man was eminent for sacred and profane literature, and it is hoped, became a real ornament to Christianity.†

Whoever in this degenerate age acted faithfully in the ministry, exposed himself to imminent danger. This was the case of Heinricus, bishop of Mentz. He was a rare pattern of meekness, integrity, and charity. But, through the unjust accusation of his clergy, he was deprived of his bishopric by the authority of two cardinals at Worms. "I know," said he, "if I were to appeal to the pope, it would be in vain. I appeal, therefore, to Jesus Christ, the just Judge of quick and dead, who neither accepts persons, nor receives bribes as you do." After his expulsion from his See, which he had held near nine years, he retired to a monastery in Saxony, and lived in privacy and retirement, but without taking upon him the monastic habit, and died in 1153.‡

Vicelinus, before mentioned, was born at an obscure town on the banks of the Weser, in the diocese of Mieden. Having met with a sarcastic reproof from a priest, in his youth, on account of his indolence and ignorance, he was roused to pay the greatest attention to the cultivation of his understanding. Many in that age were equally studious; but Vicelinus was singularly eminent in directing his studies to practical purposes, and to the cultivation of genuine piety, and in avoiding the miserable strife of metaphysical subtilities, to which men of learning were then generally addicted. The scene of his evangelical labours was Holstein, in the kingdom of Denmark: there he

Peter Alphonsus, a Jew, converted. A. D. 1106.

Heinricus expelled from his bishopric at Mentz, dies in a monastery. A. D. 1153.

* Cent. Magd. Cent. XII. 23.

† Cent. Magd. 23.

‡ Id. 98.

* Du Pin, 170.

† Id. 710.

‡ Cent. Magd. 704.

taught men to turn from idols to the living God; for the Holsatians had known nothing of Christianity, but the name: they worshipped groves, fountains, and various vanities. The success

Vicelinus
made bishop
of Olden-
burgh,
A. D. 1123.

of Vicelinus seems to have been solid and lasting: many pagans all around, and particularly the Vandals, were induced to receive Christianity. After he had laboured thirty years in Holstein and the neighbouring parts, he was appointed bishop of Oldenburgh in the year 1123. He still continued near six years in the same course of

Dies,
A. D. 1151.

evangelical labour, in which he had persevered so long before, but was at length confined to his bed by a palsy for upwards of two years, and died in the year 1151.*

Anselm of Havelburg was a bishop of some literary reputation, and flourished in the middle of this century. The only thing, which I find remarkable concerning him, and it gives a strong presumption in favour of his piety or understanding, or both, is this, that he saw and censured the pharisaism of the monkish institutions. He declared, that there were many in his time, successively rising up, who disapproved of the vanity and novelty† of monastic orders.

It may be proper just to mention Peter, abbot of Cluny, surnamed the venerable. That so ignorant and so trifling a writer should have been honoured with a title so magnificent, is one of the strongest marks of the low state of religious knowledge in general at that time. He takes large pains to vindicate the manners and customs of his monastery against objections; and in doing this he is so verbose and circumstantial,‡ that he may seem

to have placed the essence of Christianity in frivolous punctilios and insignificant ceremonies. This is he who received Peter Abelard in his afflictions with great humanity, and who consoled Eloisa after the death of that ingenious heretic, by sending to her, at her request, the form of Abelard's absolution,* which that unhappy woman inscribed on his sepulchre. I can only say, in the praise of Peter, that his manners were gentle, his temper very mild and humane, and that he had what in common language is concisely called a GOOD HEART.

I add Peter Lombard to the list of eminent persons of this century, though I know nothing interesting to relate of him, further than what has already been mentioned. Subtlety of argumentation was his forte; I find no evidence of his genuine humility and piety.

Isidore of Madrid, a poor labourer of this century, was canonized by papal authority. The account of him is too scanty, to enable us to form a proper estimate of his real worth and qualifications. There must, however, have been something singularly striking in his character; as here we have one canonization at least, which could not be the result of interested adulation. His master, John de Vargas, allowed him daily to attend the public offices of the Church; and he, by early rising, took care that the master lost nothing of his due services; he relieved the poor by the produce of his labours: he was humble, laborious, and just; and died near sixty years old, in the exercise of benevolence. What a Saint! if, as may be hoped, he was principled by the faith of Jesus, and, from the heart, renounced his own righteousness as filthy rags!

Isidore died
at the age
of 60.

* Cent. Magd. 748.

† Id. Cent. XII. 761.

‡ Du Pin, Cent. XII. p. 79.

* Baron. Cent. XII.

CENTURY XIII.

CHAPTER I.

PETER WALDO.

THE reader will recollect the account, which has been given of the Cathari,* who were evidently a people of God, in the former part of the last century. In the latter part of the same century, they received a great accession of members from the learned labours and godly zeal of Peter Waldo. In the century before us, they were gloriously distinguished by a dreadful series of persecutions, and exhibited a spectacle to the world, both of the power of divine grace, and of the malice and enmity of the world against the real Gospel of Jesus Christ. I purpose to represent, in one connected view, the history of this people to the time of the Reformation, and a little after. The spirit, doctrine, and progress of the Waldenses, will be more clearly understood by this method, than by broken and interrupted details; and the thirteenth century seems the most proper place in which their story should be introduced.

The Cathari, whom Bernard so unhappily misrepresented, were peculiarly numerous in the valleys of Piedmont. Hence the name *Vandois* or *Vallenses* was given to them, particularly to those who inhabited the valleys of Lucerne and Angrogne. A mistake arose from similarity of names, that Peter Valdo or Waldo, was the first founder of these Churches. For the name *Vallenses* being easily changed into *Waldenses*, the Romanists improved this very easy and natural mistake into an argument against the antiquity of these Churches, and denied that they had any existence till the appearance of Waldo. During the alterations of the Papists and Protestants, it was of some consequence that this matter should be rightly stated; be-

cause the former denied that the doctrines of the latter had any existence till the days of Luther. But from a just account of the subject, it appeared that the real Protestant doctrines existed during the dark ages of the Church, even long before Waldo's time; the proper founder of them being Claudius of Turin, the Christian hero of the ninth century.*

About the year 1160, the doctrine of transubstantiation, which, some time afterwards, Innocent III. confirmed in a very solemn manner, was required by the court of Rome to be acknowledged by all men. A very pernicious practice of idolatry was connected with the reception of this doctrine. Men fell down before the consecrated host, and worshipped it as God; and the novelty, absurdity, and impiety of this abomination very much struck the minds of all men, who were not dead to a sense of true religion. At this time Peter Waldo, a citizen of Lyons, appeared very courageous in opposing the innovation; though it is

The Court of Rome required the doctrine of Transubstantiation to be universally acknowledged, A. D. 1160.

* Dr. Allix, in his history of the ancient Church of Piedmont, has done justice to this subject. I have already made use of his learned labours, and shall again avail myself of them; though my chief source of information concerning this people will be their history, written by John Paul Perrin of Lyons, who wrote in 1618. I could have wished, that his accounts of internal religion had been more full, even though those of the persecutions had been more scanty. But there arose no writers of eminence among the Waldenses; and Perrin's history is in a great measure collected from the records of the process and proceedings against the Waldensian Churches, which were in the offices of the archbishops of Ambrun, and which were very providentially preserved. I shall not quote him in any particular passage, because I make such large use of his history in general.

* See pp. 42, &c.

evident from the very imperfect account which we have of him, that it was not one single circumstance alone which influenced him in his views of reformation. It was the fear of God, in general, as a ruling principle in his own soul, and an alarming sense of the wickedness of the times, which, under the divine influence, moved him to oppose with courage the dangerous corruptions of the hierarchy.

A providential event had given the first occasion to this reformer's concern for religion. Being assembled with some of his friends, and after supper conversing and refreshing himself among them, one of the company fell down dead on the ground, to the amazement of all that were present. From that moment it pleased God that Waldo should commence a serious inquirer after divine truth. This person was an opulent merchant of Lyons, and as his concern of mind increased, and a door of usefulness to the souls of men was more and more set open before him, he abandoned his mercantile occupation, distributed his wealth to the poor, and exhorted his neighbours to seek the bread of life. The poor, who flocked to him, that they might partake of his alms, received from him the best instructions, which he was capable of communicating; and they revered the man, to whose liberality they were so much obliged, while the great and the rich both hated and despised him.

Waldo himself, however, that he might teach others effectually, needed himself to be taught; and where was instruction to be found? Men at that day might run here and there for meat, and not be satisfied. In some convents, among the many who substituted formality for power, there were particular persons, who, "held the HEAD," and drew holy nourishment from him. But a secular man, like Waldo, would not easily find them out, and were he to have met with some of them, their prejudiced attachments to the See of Rome would either have prevented them from imparting to him the food which was necessary for his soul, or have led him into a course of life, by which he would, after their example, have buried his talent in a napkin. The conduct of Bernard, one of the most eminent and best of them, too plainly shows that one of these two things would have been the case. But Bernard was gone to his rest not long be-

fore this time, and seems not to have left any monastic brother behind him at all to be compared with himself. Divine Providence reserved better things for Waldo: darkened and distressed in mind and conscience, he knew that the Scriptures were given as infallible guides, and he thirsted for those sources of instruction, which at that time were in a great measure a sealed book in the Christian world. To men who understood the Latin tongue, they were accessible. But how few were these, compared with the bulk of mankind! The Latin vulgate Bible was the only edition of the sacred book at that time in Europe; and the languages then in common use, the French and others, however mixed with the Latin, were, properly speaking, by this time separate and distinct from it. It is a certain mark of the general negligence of the clergy in those ages, that no provision was made for the ignorant in this respect, though I do not find that there existed any penal law to forbid the reading of the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. It is certain that Waldo found means to diffuse the precious gift of the Scriptures among the people. But different accounts are given us of his manner of doing it.* His enemies assert, that some books of Scripture, having been translated from Latin into French, he assumed the office of an apostle to himself. In particular, Reinerius says, "Being somewhat learned, he taught the people the text of the New Testament." This looks so like a reluctant confession of his learning and knowledge, that I am tempted to believe the words of Matthias Illyricus, who observes: "His kindness to the poor being diffused, his love of teaching, and their love of learning growing stronger and stronger, greater crowds came to him, and he explained the Scriptures. He was himself a man of learning, so I understand from some old parchments, nor was he obliged to employ others to translate for him, as his enemies affirm." Another anonymous author tells us, likewise, that Waldo made a collection in the vulgar tongue of the passages of the ancient fathers, that he might satisfy his disciples by the testimony of the doctors against their adversaries.

But whether Waldo himself entirely performed the work, or encouraged others

* Usher de Christ. Eccl. success. & statu.

to do it, or what is most probable, executed it himself with the assistance of others, it is certain, that the Christian world in the West was indebted to him for the first translation of the Bible into a modern tongue, since the time that the Latin had ceased to be a living language. A most valuable gift! True reformers have ever been remarkable for a desire and endeavour to communicate knowledge among the ignorant: and it is a standing reproach to the whole popish system, that however pious and scripturally judicious some individuals of that Church have been, no pains at all were taken by it to diffuse Biblical knowledge among the vulgar. The praise of this work, if we except the single instance of the Slavonian version of the Scriptures, which, however, was executed by two Greek monks, and not by Papists, is purely and exclusively of protestant origin in Europe, during all the ages preceding the Reformation.

As Waldo grew more acquainted with the Scriptures, he discovered, that the general practice of nominal Christians was totally abhorrent from the doctrines of the New Testament: and in particular, that a number of customs, which all the world regarded with reverence, had not only no foundation in the divine oracles, but were even condemned by them. Inflamed with equal zeal and charity, he boldly condemned the reigning vices, and the arrogance of the pope. He did more: as he himself grew in the knowledge of the true faith and love of Christ, he taught his neighbours the principles of practical godliness, and encouraged them to seek salvation by Jesus Christ.

John De Beles Mayons, the archbishop of Lyons, could not but be sensible of the tendency of these proceedings, and being jealous of the honour of the corrupt system, of which he was a distinguished member, he forbade the new reformer to teach any more, on pain of excommunication, and of being proceeded against as an heretic. Waldo replied, that though he was a layman, yet he could not be silent in a matter which concerned the salvation of men. On this reply, the archbishop endeavoured to apprehend him. But the great affection of Waldo's friends, the influence of his relations, who were men of rank, the universal regard paid to his probity and piety, and the conviction which, no doubt, many felt, that the extraordinary

circumstances of the times justified his assumption of the pastoral character,* all these things operated so strongly in his favour, that he lived concealed at Lyons for the space of three years.

Among other scriptural discoveries, the evils of the popedom struck the mind of Waldo; and Pope Alexander III. having heard of his proceedings, anathematized the reformer and his adherents, and commanded the archbishop to proceed against them with the utmost rigour.

Waldo could no longer remain in Lyons. He escaped; his disciples followed him; and hence a dispersion took place, similar to that which arose in the primitive Church on occasion of the persecution of Stephen. The effects were also similar: the doctrine of Waldo was hence more widely disseminated through Europe. He himself retired into Dauphiny, where his tenets took a deep and lasting root. Some of his people did probably join themselves to the Vaudois of Piedmont, and the new translation of the Bible was, doubtless, a rich accession to the spiritual treasures of that people. Waldo, himself, however, seems never to have been among them. Persecuted from place to place, he retired into Picardy. Success still attended his labours; and the doctrines which he preached appear to have so harmonized with those of the Vaudois, that with reason they and his people were henceforward considered as the same.

To support and encourage the Church of Christ formed no part of the glory of the greatest and wisest princes of that age. The barbarous conduct of our Henry II. has been already noticed; and Philip Augustus, one of the most pru-

* Waldo's friends reasoned aright in this, as I am inclined to think they did, arguing from the necessity of the case, and the strength of that divine aphorism, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," let not, however, such extraordinary cases give a sanction to many self-created teachers, who disturb rather than strengthen the hands of faithful pastors by their irregular proceedings. See Butler's Analogy, p. 232. Oct. Edit. or p. 158. 4to Edit. Our Lord himself has taken occasion to make the comparison between positive institutions and moral precepts; by delivering his authoritative determination in a proverbial manner of expression, has made it general; "I will have mercy and not sacrifice."

dent and sagacious princes whom France ever saw, was no less enslaved by the "god of this world."* He took up arms against the Waldenses of Picardy, pulled down three hundred houses of the gentlemen who supported their party, destroyed some walled towns, and drove the inhabitants into Flanders. Not content with this, he pursued them thither, and caused many of them to be burned.

From the account of a very authentic French historian,† it appears, that Waldo fled into Germany, and at last settled in Bohemia. There he ended

his days in the year 1179, or before that time.‡ It is evident, from good records, that

the churches of Dauphiny corresponded with those of Bohemia, and that these last were, on some occasions at least, supplied with pastors from Piedmont. These things show the mutual connexion of the Waldensian Churches, and prove the superior antiquity of those of the Valleys, the severity of the persecution, and the important services of Peter Waldo. A very extraordinary personage! resembling in many respects the immediate successors of the Apostles themselves! But his piety, endowments, and labours, have met with no historian capable of doing them justice; and, as in every light he had no reward upon earth,

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

† Thuan. Hist. sui temp. 457.

‡ The account which Mosheim has given us of the Waldenses, is so very different from mine, that it may seem proper that I should assign the reasons, why I presume to differ from so learned an historian in matters of fact. 1st. I have adduced ample testimonies, and the reader, who will consult Dr. Allix, may see more, to prove, that these persons existed before the time of Peter Waldo, and consequently, that he was not, as Mosheim asserts, the proper parent and founder of the sect. 2d. That his account of their insisting on the necessity of the poverty and manual labours of their pastors is a mistake, will appear from their own declarations in the next chapter. 3d. So far was Waldo from being the founder of the Churches of the Valleys, that it does not appear that he ever was in Piedmont at all. 4th. Mosheim asserts, that he assumed the pastoral function in 1180, but it is evident from Thuanus, that he died before that era. On the whole, the information of Mosheim concerning this people seems very scanty, confused and erroneous. See Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 615.

he appears to have been eminently one of those of whom the world was not worthy; but he turned many to righteousness, and shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.* The word of God grew and multiplied in the places where he had planted, and even in still more distant regions. In Alsace and along the Rhine the Gospel was preached with a powerful effusion of the Holy Spirit; persecutions ensued, and thirty-five citizens of Mentz were burned at one fire in the city of Bingen, and at Mentz eighteen. The bishop of Mentz was very active in these persecutions, and the bishop of Strasburg was not inferior to him in vindictive zeal; for, through his means, eighty persons were burned at Strasburg. Everything relating to the Waldenses resembled the scenes of the primitive Church. Numbers died praising God, and in confident assurance of a blessed resurrection; whence the blood of the martyrs again became the seed of the Church; and in Bulgaria, Croatia, Dalmatia, and Hungary, churches were planted, which flourished in the thirteenth century, governed by Bartholomew, a native of Carcassone, a city not far distant from Toulouse, which might be called in those days the metropolis of the Waldenses, on account of the numbers who there professed evangelical truth.† In Bohemia and in the country of Passaw, it has been computed that there were eighty thousand in the former part of the fourteenth century. Almost throughout Europe Waldenses were to be found; and yet they were treated as the off-scouring of the earth, and as people against whom all the power and wisdom of the world were united. But "the witnesses continued to prophesy in sack-cloth,"‡ and souls were built up in the faith, the hope, and the charity of the Gospel; and here was the faith and patience of the Saints.

CHAPTER II.

THE REAL CHARACTER OF THE WALDENSES.

BUT we are justly called on, in this place, to vindicate the claim which this people made to the honourable character

* Daniel xii. 3.

† Matthew Paris, in his Hist. of Hen. III. Ann. 1223.

‡ Revelat. xi. 3.

of the Church of God. In times of very great decline, whoever is led by the Spirit of God to revive true religion, necessarily exposes himself to the invidious charges of arrogance, uncharitableness, and self-conceit. By condemning all others, he provokes the rest of the world to observe and investigate his faults. These disadvantages the Waldenses had in common with other reformers: they had also disadvantages peculiarly their own. Power, knowledge, and learning, were almost entirely in the hands of their adversaries: in them very particularly God Almighty chose the weak and foolish things of the world to confound the wise. As they were, for the most part, a plain and illiterate people, they furnished no learned divines, no profound reasoners, nor able historians. The vindication of their claims to the character of a true Church must therefore be drawn principally from the holiness of their lives and the patience of their sufferings. There are, however, besides these, certain documents respecting their principles, which will enable the candid and attentive reader to form a just estimate of these men.

Nothing can exceed the calumnies of their adversaries: in this respect they had the honour to bear the cross of the first Christians. Poor men of Lyons, and Dogs, were the usual terms of derision. In Provence, they were called cut-purses: in Italy, because they observed not the appointed festivals, and rested from their ordinary occupations only on Sundays, they were called *Insabbathas*; that is, regardless of Sabbaths. In Germany, they were called *Gazares*, a term expressive of everything flagitiously wicked. In Flanders, they were denominated *Turlupins*, that is, inhabitants with wolves, because they were often obliged to dwell in woods and deserts. And because they denied the consecrated Host to be God, they were accused of Arianism, as if they had denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. Our old historian, Hoveden, calls them *Arians*.* It was not possible for these poor sufferers to speak a word in defence or explanation of their doctrines, but malice, which discolours everything, was sure to misrepresent it. If they maintained the independency of the temporal powers on the ecclesiastical, a doctrine

now believed almost universally in Europe, they were called *Manichees*, as if they favoured the notion of two principles. So I find *Baronius* calls them, observing that they were rather *Manichees* than *Arians*.* The old odious name of *Gnostic* also was received, with every other term of ancient or modern opprobrium, which might infix a stigma on the character of the sufferers, and seem to justify the barbarity with which they were treated.

Matthew Paris himself, one of the most valuable of the monkish historians, calls them *Ribalds*, or dissolute men. They were termed, and as numbers believed not without justice, sorcerers, and even sodomites. It is surprising how the old calumnies, with which the pagans blackened the primitive Christians, were renewed, namely, that they met in the night, were guilty of incest, and the like. *Reinerius*, their adversary, as mentioned above, was not ashamed to repeat this absurd accusation. To which he adds, that they allowed divorces at pleasure, in order that the sectarians might live together entirely, and exclude all others from their society; that they worshipped their pastors; and that they maintained as a principle, that no magistrate ought to condemn any person to death. But it were endless to recite calumnies of this kind: let us see how they cleared themselves by their own writings. An apology was still extant in the time of *Perrin*, which the Waldenses of Bohemia sent to *Ladislaus*, king of Hungary and Bohemia, by whom they were grievously persecuted. From this and some other of their writings, their conduct is defended.

In answer to the charge of lewdness, they strongly deny it, and gravely express their abhorrence of the sin. "This vice," say they, "consumes the estates of many, as it is said of the prodigal son, who wasted his substance in riotous living. *Balaam* made choice of this vice, to provoke the children of Israel to offend their God. Hence *Samson* lost his sight. Hence *Solomon* was perverted, and many have perished. The remedies for this sin, are fasting, prayer, and the keeping at a distance from temptation. Other vices may be subdued by fighting; in this we conquer by flight." Let men of this refined age, who are enslaved by un-

* Hoveden, p. 327.

* Baron. Cent. XII. Ann. 1176.

cleanness, learn some good rules from the Waldenses, whose simplicity was mixed with true wisdom. The charge of admitting divorcees at pleasure they abhor, and quote the Scripture* against the practice: "Let not the wife depart from her husband, nor the husband put away his wife." They published also a book, describing the causes of their separation from the Roman Church. The separation was at length indeed, through the violence of their persecutors, made complete; but as I have elsewhere observed, the desire of separating from the Latin Church did not commence with them. This people were injuriously represented also as holding the community of goods, and denying the right of all private property. Their answer to the charge was very satisfactory. "Every one of us hath possessed his own at all times and in all places. In Dauphiny and other parts, when we were dispossessed of our substance, the suits for the recovery of each estate were conducted by the particular proprietor.† The Waldenses of Provence do at this present time demand of the pope the restoration of the lands and estates annexed to his domain by confiscation; every particular person making oath of his parcel of goods and lands, which descended to him from time immemorial; for we never have had community of property in the sense objected to us by our adversaries."

Nothing is more common than to slander true Christians with aspersions which tend to deprive them of all respectability in society, and to represent them as quite unfit for the ordinary purposes of human life. We have just seen a foul attempt of this nature formed against the Waldenses. To the same purport they were charged with denying the lawfulness of oaths in all cases without exception. This point of their history has its difficulties: what they really held on the doctrine of oaths is not very apparent from the account which Usher gives us.‡ Most probably they condemn the multiplicity of oaths, with which the courts of law abounded. That they did not, how-

ever, maintain the absolute unlawfulness of oaths is certain, from the exposition of the third commandment in their "spiritual almanack;" in which are these words: "There are some oaths lawful, tending to the honour of God, and the edification of our neighbour, as appears from Heb. vi. 16. Men swear by a greater, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." Other scriptures are alleged by them to the same purport. Men who held these things should be acquitted of the charge of universally denying the lawfulness of oaths. But it seems to have been one of the common artifices of the prince of darkness to calumniate the people of God in this manner. He knows, that if religious men be thought wholly unfitted for this world, because of certain absurd or ridiculous customs, the generality of mankind will pay no great regard to their instructions concerning the right way to the next. It is, therefore, of some consequence to clear up the character of true Christians in this respect.

Another charge against them was, that they denied baptism to infants. In answer to this, in their spiritual almanack, they say, "neither the time nor the place is appointed for those who must be baptized. But we do bring our children to be baptized; which they ought to do, to whom they are nearest related; their parents, or those whom God hath inspired with such clarity." If this be the case,—and the evidence of their own books appears to be unanswerable,—it seems improper to look on the Waldenses as averse to infant-baptism. Yet, that some of them were regarded as professed enemies to the baptism of infants, is affirmed on respectable authority,* and it possibly might be the case with a few of them. The greater part of them are, however, vindicated in this respect by an authority from which lies no appeal, their own authentic writings. However, having been for some hundreds of years constrained to suffer their children to be baptized by the Romish priests, they were under frequent temptations to defer it, on account of the superstitious inventions annexed to that holy ordinance in those times: and very frequently on account of the absence of their own pastors, whom they called Barbs, who were travelling abroad for the service of the

* 1 Cor. vii. 10. 11.

† This appears by the legal process, existing in Perrin's time, which shows that Lewis XII. condemned the usurpers of the goods of the Waldenses to a restitution. This happened about the beginning of the sixteenth century.

‡ Usher de Christ. Ecc. success. & statu.

* Cent. Magd. XII. §33.

Churches, they could not have baptism administered to their children by their ministry. The delay occasioned by these things exposed them to the reproach of their adversaries. And though many, who approved of them in all other respects, gave credit to the accusation, I cannot find any satisfactory proof, that they were, in judgment, antipædo-baptists strictly. And it is very probable that some of the supposed heretics, who have been mentioned above,* delayed the baptism of their children on the same account; because similar circumstances would naturally be attended with similar effects. On the whole, a few instances excepted, the existence of antipædo-baptism seems scarcely to have taken place in the Church of Christ, till a little after the beginning of the Reformation, when a sect arose, whom historians commonly call the anabaptists. I lay no great stress on this subject; for the Waldenses might have been a faithful, humble, and spiritual people, as I believe they were, if they had differed from the general body of Christians on this article. But when I find persons accused as enemies to infant-baptism who were not so, it seems to be a part of historical veracity to represent things as they really were.

The charge of worshipping their Barbs is sufficiently confuted by their exposition of the first commandment in the book of their doctrine. Indeed Albert de Capitaneis, their grand enemy in the diocese of Turin, violently tortured them, in order to extort from them a confession of this idolatry, but to no purpose.

It was a gross calumny to censure them as inimical to the penal power of the magistrate, because they complained of the abuse of his power in condemning true Christians to death without a fair examination; when, at the same time, in their own books, they asserted, that "a malefactor ought not to be suffered to live."†

No less unjust were the charges against them of seditiousness and undutifulness to the supreme power. For in the book of the causes of their separation from the Church of Rome, they said, that every one ought to be subject to those who are in authority, to obey and love them, to honour them with double honour,

with subjection, allegiance, and promptitude, and the paying of tribute to whom tribute is due. The charges of sodomy, sorcery, and the like abominations, are sufficiently confuted by the authentic writings, holy lives, and patient sufferings of this people.

One charge more against them is, that they compelled their pastors to follow some trade. How satisfactory their answer! "We do not think it necessary that our pastors should work for bread. They might be better qualified to instruct us, if we could maintain them without their own labour; but our poverty has no remedy." So they speak in letters published in 1508.*

We have hitherto rather rescued their character from infamy, than delineated its real nature. They appear, on the whole, to have been most unjustly aspersed; and the reader will be enabled to form some idea of their piety and probity, from the following testimonies of their enemies:

A pontifical inquisitor† says, "heretics are known by their manners. In behaviour they are composed and modest, and no pride appears in their apparel." Seysillius says, it much strengthens the Waldenses, that, their heresy excepted, they generally live a purer life than other Christians. They never swear but by compulsion, and seldom take the name of God in vain: they fulfil their promises with good faith; and, living for the most part in poverty, they profess that they at once preserve the apostolical life and doctrine. Lielensteinus, a Dominican, speaking of the Waldenses of Bohemia, says, "I say that in morals and life they are good; true in words, and unanimous in brotherly love; but their faith is incorrigible and vile, as I have shown in my treatise."

These testimonies, for which I am obliged to the researches of archbishop Usher, seem to me to be important. The first, as far as it goes, is favourable; and the second and third are exceedingly decisive. Causes and effects are necessarily connected. How could the Romanist last quoted suppose, that the faith of men could be had whose fruits were so excellent? Could he show such fruits in the Roman Church in general at that time?

We have now seen the fullest testi-

* See p. 21 of this Vol.

† In a book of the Waldenses, called "The Light of the Treasure of Faith."

* Usher de Christ. Eccl. succ. & statu.

† Ibid.

mony to the holiness of the Waldenses; and we shall see shortly that the doctrines which they held were no other than those, which, under the Divine influence, we have all along observed to be the constant root of virtue in the world.

Reinerius, the cruel persecutor, owns that the Waldenses frequently read the Holy Scriptures, and in their preaching cited the words of Christ and his apostles concerning love, humility, and other virtues; inasmuch that the women, who heard them, were enraptured with the sound. He further says, that they taught men to live by the words of the Gospel and the Apostles; that they led religious lives; that their manners were seasoned with grace, and their words prudent; that they freely discoursed of divine things, that they might be esteemed good men. He observes, likewise, that they taught their children and families the Epistles and Gospels. Claude, bishop of Turin, wrote a treatise against their doctrines, in which he candidly owns that they themselves were blameless, without reproach among men, and that they observed the divine commands with all their might.

Jacob de Riberia says, that he had seen peasants among them who could recite the book of Job by heart; and several others, who could perfectly repeat the whole New Testament.

The bishop of Cavillon once obliged a preaching monk to enter into conference with them, that they might be convinced of their errors, and the effusion of blood be prevented. This happened during a great persecution, in 1540, in Merindol and Provence. But the monk returned in confusion, owning that he had never known in his whole life so much of the Scriptures, as he had learned during those few days in which he had held conferences with the heretics. The bishop, however, sent among them a number of doctors, young men who had lately come from the Sorbonne, which was at that time the very centre of theological subtilty at Paris. One of them openly owned, that he had understood more of the doctrine of salvation from the answers of the little children in their catechism, than by all the disputations which he had ever heard. This is the testimony of Vesembecius in his oration concerning the Waldenses. The same

author informs us further, that Lewis XII. importuned by the calumnies of informers, sent two respectable persons into Provence to make inquiries. They reported, that in visiting all their parishes and temples, they found no images of Roman ceremonies, but that they could not discover any marks of the crimes with which they were charged; that the sabbath was strictly observed; that children were baptized according to the rules of the primitive Church, and instructed in the articles of the Christian faith, and the commandments of God. Lewis having heard the report, declared with an oath, "they are better men than myself or my people." One of the confessors of the same king having, by his orders, visited the valley of Fraissiniere in Dauphiny, was so struck with the holy lives of the people there, that he declared in the hearing of several competent witnesses, that he wished he himself were as good a Christian as the worst inhabitant in that valley.

We must add here the testimony of that great historian Thuanus, an enemy indeed to the Waldenses, though a fair and candid one.* He is describing one of the valleys inhabited by this people in Dauphiny, which is called the stony valley. "Their clothing," he says, "is of the skins of sheep;—they have no linen. They inhabit seven villages: their houses are constructed of flint stone, with a flat roof covered with mud, which being spoiled or loosened by rain, they smooth again with a roller. In these they live with their cattle, separated from them, however, by a fence; they have besides two caves set apart for particular purposes, in one of which they conceal their cattle, in the other themselves, when hunted by their enemies. They live on milk and venison, being by constant practice excellent marksmen. Poor as they are, they are content, and live separate from the rest of mankind. One thing is astonishing, that persons externally so savage and rude, should have so much moral cultivation. They can all read and write. They understand French, so far as is needful for the understanding of the Bible and the singing of Psalms. You can scarcely find a boy among them who cannot give you an intelligible account of the faith which they profess; in this, indeed, they resemble their

* Thuar, Hist. B. 27. p. 16.

brethren of the other valleys: they pay tribute with a good conscience, and the obligation of this duty is peculiarly noted in the confession of their faith. If, by reason of civil wars, they are prevented from doing this, they carefully set apart the sum, and at the first opportunity pay it to the king's tax-gatherers."

Francis I. the successor of Lewis XII. received, on inquiry, the following information concerning the Waldenses of Merindol, and other neighboring places; that they were a laborious people, who came from Piedmont to dwell in Provence, about two hundred years ago; that they had much improved the country by their industry; that their manners were most excellent; and that they were honest, liberal, hospitable, and humane; that they were distinct from others in this, that they could not bear the sound of blasphemy, or the naming of the devil, or any others, except on solemn occasions; and, that if ever they fell into company where blasphemy or lewdness formed the substance of the discourse, they instantly withdrew themselves.

Such are the testimonies to the character of this people from enemies!

That they are well spoken of by Protestants since the Reformation, might be expected; and I need not dwell largely upon evidences drawn from this source. Beza, Bullinger, and Luther, testify the excellence of the Waldenses. The last-mentioned Reformer deserves the more to be regarded, because he owns that he was once prejudiced against them. He understood by their confessions and writings that they had been, for ages, singularly serious and expert in the use of the Scriptures.—He rejoiced, and gave thanks to God, that he had enabled the reformed and the Waldenses to see and own each other as brethren.*

Œcolampadius and Martin Bucer also, in the year 1530, wrote an affectionate letter to the Waldenses of Provence.

After so many testimonies to the character of this people, the evidence of Vignaux, a Waldensian pastor in the valleys of Piedmont, who wrote a treatise on their life and manners, may deserve our attention. "We never mix ourselves," says he, "with the Church of Rome in marriage. Yet Roman-catholic lords and others prefer our people as servants, to those of their own

religion, and come from far to seek nurses among us for their children."

It is remarkable that Thomas Walden, who wrote against Wickliff, says, that the doctrine of Waldo was conveyed from France into England. It may not, perhaps, be thought improbable, that the English, being masters of Guienne for a long time, should have received some beams of divine truth from the followers of Waldo. By the general confession of the Romanists, indeed, the Protestants and the Waldenses were looked on as holding the same principles.

The churches of Piedmont, however, on account of their superior antiquity, were regarded as guides of the rest; in-somuch, that when two pastors, who had been sent by them into Bohemia, acted with perfidy, and occasioned a grievous persecution, still the Bohemians ceased not to desire pastors from Piedmont; only they requested, that none but persons of tried characters might be sent to them for the future.

I can only give the general outlines: if the finer and more numerous lines of this scene could be circumstantially drawn, a spectacle more glorious could scarcely be exhibited to the reader. From the borders of Spain, throughout the south of France, for the most part, among and below the Alps, along the Rhine, on both sides of its course, and even to Bohemia, thousands of godly souls were seen patiently to bear persecution for the sake of Christ, against whom malice could say no evil, but what admits the most satisfactory refutation: men distinguished for every virtue, and only hated because of godliness itself. Persecutors with a sigh owned, that, because of their virtue, they were the most dangerous enemies of the Church. But of what Church? Of that, which in the thirteenth century and long before had evidenced itself to be Antichristian. Here were not an individual or two, like Bernard, but very many real Christians, who held the real doctrines of Scripture, and carefully abstained from all the idolatry of the times: How obdurate is the heart of man by nature! men could see and own the superior excellence of these persons, and yet could barbarously persecute them! What a blessed light is that of Scripture! By that the Waldenses saw the road to heaven, of which the wisest of their contemporaries were ignorant, who, though called Christians,

* Vesembecius.

made no use of the oracles of God! How marvellous are the ways of God! How faithful his promise in supporting and maintaining a Church, even in the darkest times! But her livery is often sackcloth, and her external bread is that of affliction, while she sojourns on earth. But let no factious partisan encourage himself in sedition by looking at the Waldenses. We have seen how obedient they were to establish governments; and that separation from a Church, so corrupt as that of Rome, was with them only matter of necessity. The best and wisest in all ages have acted in the same manner, and have dreaded the evils of schism more than those of a defect in discipline. We shall now see what the Waldenses were in point of doctrine and discipline. For their virtues had an evangelical principle, and it is only to be regretted that the accounts are so very scanty on a subject worthy the attention of all who desire to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE OF THE WALDENSES.

THE leading principle of this Church, which God raised up in the dark ages to bear witness to his Gospel, is that in which all the Protestant Churches agreed, namely, "that we ought to believe that the Holy Scriptures alone contain all things necessary to our salvation, and that nothing ought to be received as an article of faith but what God hath revealed to us."* Wherever this principle is not only assented to in form, but also received with the heart, it expels superstition and idolatry. The worship of one God, through the one Mediator, and by the influence of one Holy Spirit, is practised sincerely. For the dreams of purgatory, the intercession of saints, the adoration of images, dependence on relics and austerities, cannot stand before the doctrine of Scripture. Salvation by grace, through faith in Christ alone, as it is the peculiar truth and glory of the Scriptures, so it is the boast and joy of

the Christian, who knows himself to be that guilty, polluted creature which the same Scriptures describe. How abominable to such a one is the doctrine of indulgences, and of commutation for offences, and the whole structure of the papal domination! The true love of God and of our neighbour, even the true holiness, which is the great end and aim of Christ's redemption, must be subverted by these human inventions. The Waldenses were faithful to the great fundamental principle of Protestantism. Enough appears on record to prove, that they were formed by the grace of God to show forth his praise in the world; and great as the resemblance appears between them and the reformed, if we had as many writings of the former, as we have of the latter, the resemblance in all probability would appear still more striking.

"They* affirm, that there is only one Mediator, and therefore that we must not invoke the Saints."

"That there is no purgatory; but that all those who are justified by Christ go into life eternal."

"They receive two Sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They affirm, that all masses are damnable, especially those which are repeated for the dead, and that therefore they ought to be abolished; to which they add the rejection of numberless ceremonies. They deny the supremacy of the pope, especially the power which he hath usurped over the civil government; and they admit no other degrees, except those of bishops, priests, and deacons. They condemn the popedom as the true Babylon, allow the marriage of the clergy, and define the true Church to be those who hear and understand the word of God."

Vignaux mentions old manuscripts extant among the Waldenses, containing catechisms and sermons, which demonstrate with what superior light they were favoured, in a time of immense darkness. A number of their old treatises evince, that for some hundreds of years the principles of the Gospel, which alone can produce such holiness of life as the Waldenses exhibited in their conduct, were professed, understood, and embraced by this chosen people, while Antichrist was in the very height of his power.

* Vignaux in his memorials of the Waldenses. See this principle expressed in a similar manner in the sixth Article of the Church of England.

* Vignaux.

They appear to have had all the essentials of Church-discipline among them; and their circumstances of distress, of poverty, and of persecution, however disagreeable to flesh and blood, favoured that spirit of submission and subordination, which ever promotes a salutary exercise of discipline; through the want of which, among ourselves, Church-rules are too commonly treated as insignificant. A state of refinement, of wealth, of luxury, and of political speculation, was unknown to the Waldenses: how subversive such a state is of the most wholesome ecclesiastical authority, the experience of our own age demonstrates.

In a book concerning their pastors we have this account of their vocation:

“All, who are to be ordained as pastors among us, while they are yet at home, entreat us to receive them into the ministry, and desire that we would pray to God, that they may be rendered capable of so great a charge. They are to learn by heart all the chapters of St. Matthew and St. John, all the canonical epistles, and a good part of the writings of Solomon, David, and the prophets. Afterwards, having exhibited proper testimonials of their learning and conversation, they are admitted as pastors by the imposition of hands. The junior pastors must do nothing without the license of their seniors; nor are the seniors to undertake anything without the approbation of their colleagues, that everything may be done among us in order. We pastors meet together once every year, to settle our affairs in a general synod. Those whom we teach afford us food and raiment with good-will, and without compulsion. The money given us by the people is carried to the said general synod, is there received by the elders, and applied partly to the supply of travellers, and partly to the relief of the indigent. If a pastor among us shall fall into a gross sin, he is ejected from the community, and debarred from the function of preaching.”

Such was the manner of choosing the Barbs, and such was the plan of Church-government.

To transcribe their confessions of faith would be tedious; let it suffice to mention the most interesting points. They unquestionably received the Apostles' Creed, and that commonly ascribed to Athanasius. They acknowledged the same canon of Scripture, which the

Church of England does in her sixth Article; and, what is very remarkable, they give the same account of the Apocryphal books, accompanied with the same remark of Jerom, which the reader will find in the same sixth article. They say, “these books teach us, that there is one God, Almighty, wise and good, who in his goodness made all things. He created Adam after his own image. But through the malice of the devil, and the disobedience of Adam, sin entered into the world, and we became sinners in and by Adam. That Christ is our life and truth, and peace and righteousness, our shepherd and advocate, our sacrifice and priest, who died for the salvation of all who should believe, and also rose again for our justification.”

The confession of the Bohemian Waldenses, published in the former part of the sixteenth century, is very explicit on these articles. They say, that men ought to acknowledge themselves born in sin, and to be burdened with the weight of sin; that they ought to acknowledge, that for this depravity, and for the sins springing up from this root of bitterness, utter perdition deservedly hangs over their heads, and that all should own that they can no way justify themselves by any works or endeavours, nor have anything to trust to but Christ alone. They hold, that by faith in Christ, men are, through mercy, freely justified, and attain salvation by Christ, without human help or merit. They hold, that all confidence is to be fixed in him alone, and all our care to be cast upon him; and, that for his sake only God is pacified, and adopts us to be his children. They teach also, that no man can have this faith by his own power, will, or pleasure; that it is the gift of God, who, where it pleaseth him, worketh it in man by his Spirit.* They teach also the doctrine of good works as fruits and evidences of a lively faith, much in the same manner as the Church of England does in her twelfth Article, and more largely in her homilies.†

The Waldenses in general express their firm belief, that there is no other Mediator than Jesus Christ: they speak with great respect of the Virgin Mary, as holy, humble, and full of grace; at the same time that they totally discountenance that senseless and extravagant

* Morland, p. 48.

† Id. 49.

admiration, in which she had been held for ages. They assert, that all, who have been and shall be saved, have been elected of God before the foundation of the world: and that whosoever upholds free-will, absolutely denies predestination and the grace of God.* I use their own term free-will, not that I think it strictly proper. But what they meant by an upholder of free-will, is not hard to be understood, namely, one who maintains that there are resources in the nature of man sufficient to enable him to live to God as he ought, without any need of the renewal of his nature by divine grace.

“We honour,” say they, “the secular powers with subjection, obedience, promptitude, and payment of tribute.” On this subject they are repeatedly explicit, and mention the example of our Lord, “who refused not to pay tribute, not taking upon himself any jurisdiction of temporal power.”

They give a practical view of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, perfectly agreeable to the faith of the orthodox in all ages. Let it suffice to mention what they say of the Holy Ghost. “We believe, that he is our Comforter, proceeding from the Father and from the Son; by whose INSPIRATION we pray, being RENEWED by him WHO FORMETH all good works within us, and by him we have knowledge of all truth.” Of the nature and use of the sacraments, they speak the common language of the Protestant Churches. The difference, indeed, between real good men in all ages, even in point of sentiment, on fundamental questions, is much smaller than what many believe. Trifling differences have been exceedingly magnified, partly through ignorance, and partly through malevolence. Through the course of this history the uniformity of faith, of inward experience, and of external practice, has appeared in the different ages of the Church. For it is the SAME GOD WHO WORKETH ALL IN ALL in his real Saints.

It is remarkable that an ancient confession of faith, copied out of certain manuscripts bearing date 1120, that is, forty years before Peter Waldo, contains the same articles in substance, and in many particulars in the same words, as those, an abridgment of which has been given, and which were approved of in

the sixteenth century. The conclusion from this fact is, that though Waldo was a most considerable benefactor to the Waldensian Churches by his translation of the Scriptures, his other writings, his preaching, and his sufferings, he was not properly their founder. Their plan of doctrine and Church establishment, particularly in Piedmont, was of prior date, nor can any other account of the existence and light of a Church so pure and sound, in ages so remarkably corrupt, be given than this, that the labours of Claudius of Turin in the ninth century had, under God, produced these effects. Men, who spend, and are spent for the glory of God, and for the profit of souls, have no conception of the importance of their efforts. While the schemes and toils of an ambitious conqueror, or an intriguing politician, which, at the time, fill the world with admiration, often vanish like smoke, the humble and patient labours of a minister of Christ, though, during his own life, derided and despised by the great ones of the earth, remain in durable effects to succeeding generations, and emancipate thousands from the dominion of sin and Satan. God will work, AND WHO SHALL LET IT? In one article, indeed, these professors of pure religion seem to have carried their zeal beyond the bounds of Christian discretion. “We have,” say they, “always accounted as unspeakable abominations before God, all those inventions of men, namely, the feasts and the vigils of the Saints.” To these they add the idolatrous corruptions of the popedom. They either did not know, or did not consider, that the anniversaries of the martyrdoms of primitive Saints were of very high antiquity, and were observed in the purest times, even in the second century. As they were at that time observed, they seem not to have had any superstitious alloy, and might be productive of the best consequences, much less do they deserve the title of “unspeakable abominations.” But the adoration and canonization of Saints, with other practices, which deserve the name of abominations, being incorporated with these festivals, in the twelfth and some preceding centuries, naturally account for the zealous and unreasonable indignation of these reformers.

The ancient catechism for the instruction of their youth, contains the same vital truths in substance, which form the

* Morland, p. 40.

catechisms of Protestant Churches. I shall mention two or three particulars, which are most strikingly peculiar.

Q. Wherein consists your salvation?

Ans. In three substantial virtues, which do necessarily belong to salvation.

Q. How can you prove that?

Ans. The Apostle writes, 1 Cor. xiii. now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three.

Q. What is faith?

Ans. According to the Apostle, Heb. xi. 1, it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Q. How many sorts of faith are there?

Ans. There are two sorts, a living and a dead faith.

Q. What is a living faith?

Ans. It is that which works by love.

Q. What is a dead faith?

Ans. According to St. James, that faith which is without works, is dead. Again, faith is nothing without works. Or, a dead faith is to believe that there is a God, and to believe those things which relate to God, and not believe in him."

This last clause seems happily descriptive of the point. To believe in Christ is by himself, in John vi. illustrated by coming to him or trusting in him, being an exercise of heart toward Christ, which always works by love. Whereas a bare unoperative assent to certain doctrinal truths, implies no reception of Christ in the heart, though it is all that thousands look on as necessary to constitute a genuine believer. That the composers of this catechism had in view this important distinction between speculatively believing a person to exist, and cordially believing in that person, appears from another question and answer.

Q. Dost thou believe in the Holy Catholic Church?

Ans. No; for it is a creature; but I believe that there is one."

They then proceed to show that the real Church consists "of the elect of God from the beginning to the end of the world, by the grace of God, through the merit of Christ, gathered together by the Holy Spirit, and foreordained to eternal life."

The Waldensian Churches had also an exposition of the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. So remarkably has the Spirit of God, in all ages, led the

real Church, in a similar manner, to provide for the instruction of her children, by comments on the most necessary fundamentals! The Protestant Churches, in their original construction, all followed the same plan. An excess of ceremonies, and a burdensome round of superstitions, filled all the dominions of the papacy, while here and there an inventive genius, like Peter Abelard, endeavoured to swell the minds of men by philosophical refinements. In the mean time the genuine Christians were feeding on the bread of life, which was supplied by the Divine Word, and was communicated through the medium of catechetical and expository tracts, adapted to the plainest understandings. At this day true Christians are employed in the same manner; and a diligent observer may distinguish them from those of the superstitious or the self-sufficient east. In our times, indeed, there does appear one remarkable difference of circumstances from the state of religion in the thirteenth century, namely, that the self-sufficient sceptical spirit predominates extremely above the superstitious.

I have examined the Waldensian expositions, which, together with the Scripture-proofs annexed to them, must at that day have formed a very salutary body of instruction. But the numerous modern treatises which are extant on the same subjects, render it superfluous for me to give them in detail. A few of the most striking thoughts shall be mentioned.

It deserves to be noticed, that in their exposition of the Apostles' Creed, the Waldensian reformers give us the well-known text in 1 John. v. 7, as a proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. They were, it seems, perfectly satisfied of its authenticity, and most probably at that time had never heard of any suggestions to the contrary.

"The Son of God, by the commandment of God the Father, and by his own free-will, was lifted up upon the altar of the cross, and was crucified, and bath redeemed mankind with his own blood; which work being accomplished, he arose from the dead the third day, having diffused through the world a light everlasting, like a new sun; that is, the glory of the resurrection, and of a heavenly inheritance, which the Son of God hath promised to give to all those who serve him in faith."

Hear, in a few instances, how, in

common with all evangelical expositors, they understand the spiritual meaning of the commandments. For "the first degree to salvation is the knowledge of sin; and therefore, acknowledging our fault, we approach with confidence to the throne of grace, and confess our sins."

"All that love the creature more than the Creator, observe not the first commandment. If a man shall say, I cannot tell whether I have a greater love to God, or to that which he forbids me to love, let him know, that what a man loves least, in a case of necessity, is that which he is most willing to lose, and that which he loves the most, he preserves. Men cast their merchandise into the sea, to preserve their lives; which shows that they love life more than property. By such rules thou mayest try, whether thou lovest God more than all persons and things beside, or, whether thou art an idolater."

On the second commandment they are soundly argumentative and judiciously exact, because of the abominations with which they were surrounded, and with which all Europe was infected, except themselves.

"In the third commandment we are forbidden to swear falsely, vainly, or by custom. An oath acknowledgeth that God knows the truth, and it confirmeth a thing that is doubtful: it is an act of divine service, and therefore they, who swear by the elements, do sin."

"Those who will observe the sabbath of Christians, that is, who will sanctify the day of the Lord, must be careful of four things: 1st. to cease from earthly and worldly labours; 2d. to abstain from sin; 3d. not to be slothful in regard of good works; and 4th. to do those things which are for the good of the soul." They support their assertion by the case of the sabbath-breaker in the book of Numbers, who was stoned to death.

In the rest of the commandments, they extend the meaning to the desires of the heart, and vindicate their interpretation by the well-known passages in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. How could serious persons, who thus see the spirituality of the law, ever find rest to their consciences but in the blood of Christ? How common is it for self-righteous persons on the other hand to curtail the demands of the law, and make light of sin, that they may justify themselves!

On the Lord's Prayer, in a very sensi-

ble introduction, they observe, that "God, who seeth the secrets of our hearts, is more moved by a deep groan or sigh, with complaints and tears, that come from the heart, than by a thousand words." In opposition to the formal rounds of repetition at that time so fashionable, they say, "there is no man, who can keep his mind attentive to prayer a whole day or a whole night together, except God give the special assistance of his grace. God hath therefore appointed to his servants other exercises, sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, which are to be performed for the good of themselves or of their neighbours, with their hearts lifted up to God." "To pray much is to be fervent in prayer." "No prayer can be pleasing to God, which refers not some way or other to the Lord's prayer. Every Christian ought to apply himself to understand and learn it."

There is among the records of this people a very ancient confession of sin, which was commonly used, and which shows that they taught every person to apply to himself that hideous picture of human depravity which St. Paul delineates,* "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." If no more could be said for this people, than that they hated the gross abominations of popery, and condemned the vices of the generality of mankind, they might have been ostentatious Pharisees, or self-sufficient Socinians. But though, no doubt, there were unsound professors among them, as among all other bodies of Christians, yet, in their community, there were a number of real Christians, who knew how to direct the edge of their severity against the "sins that dwelled in them," and who, being truly humbled under a piercing sight of native depravity, betook themselves wholly to the grace of God in Christ for salvation. Hear how they speak: "Excuse myself I cannot; for thou, O Lord, hast showed me both what is good and evil. I have understood thy power; I have not been ignorant of thy wisdom; I have known thy justice; and have tasted of thy goodness. Yet all the evil which I do proceeds from my own depravity. I have committed many evils from the beginning of my life; covetousness is rooted in my

* Rom. iii. 10—20.

heart; I love riches, I seek after applause, and bear little love to those who have obliged me by their kindness. If thou do not pardon me, my soul must go down to perdition. Anger likewise reigns in my heart, and envy gnaws me; for I am naturally without charity. I am slow to do good, but industrious to do evil. I have blinded myself, and have had many evil thoughts against thee. I have cast mine eyes on vain delights, and have seldom lifted them up to thy face. I have leant an ear to empty sounds, and to many evil speakings; but to hear and understand thy laws hath been grievous and irksome to me. I have taken more pleasure in the noisome sink of sin, than in divine sweetness; I have even worshipped sin; I have endeavoured to conceal my own guilt, and to lay it upon another. My mind and body are wounded; my heart hath been delighted with evil things; with many foolish and unprofitable objects. I have turned aside into by-paths, and, by my levity, have given an ill example to others. I have slandered my neighbour, and have loved him only because of my temporal interest."

There is not, in any age, a truly humble and serious Christian, who will not acknowledge himself guilty in all these respects before God, even though his conduct has, comparatively speaking, been blameless before men. It is the want of self-knowledge which keeps men ignorant of their ill desert before God; and, in truth, nothing is so much unknown to men in general as the propensity of their own hearts. This knowledge, however, was found among the Waldenses; and hence they were a humble people, prepared to receive the Gospel of Christ from the heart, to walk in his steps, to carry his cross, and to fear sin above all other evils.

Some ancient inquisitorial memoirs describing the manners and customs of this people, speak to this effect: "kneeling on their knees, they continue in prayers with silence, so long as a man may say thirty or forty Paternosters. This they do daily with great reverence, when they have no strangers with them, both before dinner and after; likewise before supper and after, and when they retire to rest, and in the morning. Before they go to meat, the elder among them says, God, who blessed the five barley loaves and two fishes before his disciples in the wil-

derness, bless this table and that which is set upon it, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And after meat he says, The God which has given us bodily food, grant us his spiritual life, and may God be with us, and we always with him. After their meals they teach and exhort one another."

Reinerius, their adversary, declares, "that a certain Waldensian heretic, with a view of turning a person from the Catholic faith, swam over a river in the night and in the winter, to come to him and teach him the novel doctrines."

Hear what a character an ancient inquisitor gives of this people: "The heretics are known by their manners and words; for they are orderly and modest in their manners and behaviour. They avoid all appearance of pride in their dress, they neither wear rich clothes, nor are they too mean and ragged in their attire. They avoid commerce, that they may be free from falsehood and deceit: they live by manual industry, as day-labourers or mechanics; and their preachers are weavers and taylors. They seek not to amass wealth, but are content with the necessaries of life. They are chaste, temperate, and sober; they abstain from anger. They hypocritically go to the Church, confess, communicate, and hear sermons, to catch the preacher in his words. Their women are modest, avoid slander, foolish jesting, and levity of words, especially falsehood and oaths."*

Their directions to pastors in visiting the sick are full of evangelical simplicity. The afflicted person is exhorted to look to Christ as the great pattern of patient sufferers, "who is the true Son of God, and yet hath been more afflicted than we all, and more tormented than any other.—Let the sick man consider with himself, that he is grievously afflicted as his Saviour was, when he suffered for us; for which thanks should be returned to God, because it hath pleased him to give this good Saviour to death for us, and at the same time mercy should be implored at his hands in the name of Jesus. And we Christians ought to have a perfect confidence and assurance, that our Father will forgive us for his goodness sake. Let the sick person commit himself wholly to the Lord. Let him

* Allix, p. 235.

do to his neighbour, as he would have his neighbour do to him, making such arrangements among his relations, that he may leave them in peace, and that there may be no suits or contentions after his death. Let him hope for salvation in Jesus Christ, and not in any other, or by any other thing, acknowledging himself a miserable sinner, that he may ask mercy of God, finding himself in such a manner culpable, that of himself he deserveth eternal death. If the pastor find the sick person alarmed and terrified with a sense of the divine displeasure against sinners, let him remind the distressed soul of those comfortable promises which our Saviour hath made to all those who come to him, and who from the bottom of their heart call upon him; and how God the Father hath promised forgiveness, whensoever we shall ask it in the name of his Son. These are the things in which the true preacher of the Word ought faithfully to employ himself, that he may conduct the party visited to his Saviour."

"And whereas, in former times, it hath been the custom to cause the disconsolate widow to spend much money on singers and ringers, and on persons who eat and drink, while she weeps and fasts, wronging her fatherless children; it is our duty, from motives of compassion, to the end that one loss be not added to another, to aid them with our counsel and our goods, according to the ability which God hath bestowed on us, taking care that the children be well instructed, that they may labour to maintain themselves, as God hath ordained, and live like Christians."

The directions which they gave to new converts, were, to study the epistolary instructions of St. Paul, that they might know how to walk in such a manner as not to give occasion of falling to their neighbours, and that they might not make the house of the Lord a den of thieves.

They were zealous in directing the education of children. "Despair not," say they, "of thy child, when he is unwilling to receive correction, or if he prove not speedily good; for the labourer gathereth not the fruits of the earth, as soon as the seed is sown, but he waits till the due season. A man ought to have a careful eye over his daughters. Keep them within, and see they wander not. For Dinah, the daughter of Jacob,

was corrupted by being seen of strangers."

In ecclesiastical correction, they were directed by our Lord's rule, in first reproving a brother in private; secondly, in the presence of two or three brethren; and last of all, and not till other methods failed, in proceeding to excommunication. Private correction, they observe, is sufficient for faults not made known to many; but in the case of open sins, they followed the apostolical rule, "Them that sin, rebuke before all, that others may fear. "Marriages are to be made according to the degrees of kindred permitted by God. The pope's dispensations are of no value, nor deserve the least regard. The band of holy matrimony must not be made without the consent of the parents of both parties; for children belong to their parents."

Against the disorders of taverns, and the mischiefs of dancing, they are exceedingly severe. Remark one sentence; "They who deck and adorn their daughters, are like those who put dry wood to the fire, to the end that it may burn the better. A tavern is the fountain of sin, and the school of Satan." For conversing with those, that are without, they give rules full of Christian simplicity; and they direct their people also in Christian morals after a style and manner much superior to the spirit and taste of the thirteenth century.†

It may be proper to observe here, that Sir Samuel Morland, in his history of the evangelical Churches of the valleys of Piedmont, bears the strongest testimony to the truth of Perrin's narrative. He gives us the attestation of Tronchin, the chief minister of Geneva, which attestation, he tells us, is, together with other original papers, in the public library of the University of Cambridge. The substance of the attestation itself is, that Tronchin declares that Perrin, coming to Geneva to print his history, communicated to him his work, and divers original manuscripts, from which he (Perrin) had extracted the ancient doctrine and discipline of the ancient Waldenses, which manuscripts Tronchin then saw and perused. Tronchin's testimony is dated in 1656. We have here the united testimony of Perrin, Tronchin, and Morland, to the authenticity of the history before

* 1 Tim. v. 20.

† Morland, p. 86.

us. And it appears that the same Tronchin, at the distance of thirty-eight years, corresponded both with Perrin and Morland. There is also a book concerning Antichrist in an old manuscript, which contains many sermons of the pastors; it is dated 1120, and therefore was written before the time of Waldo. The existence, therefore, of these Churches is still further proved to have taken place before the days of that reformer. The treatise concerning Antichrist was preserved by the Waldenses of the Alps; and a brief summary of it is as follows: "He is called Antichrist, because, being covered and adorned under the colour of Christ and his Church, he opposes the salvation purchased by Christ, of which the faithful are partakers by faith, hope, and charity. He contradicts the truth by the wisdom of the world, and by counterfeit holiness. To make up a complete system of religious hypocrisy, all these things must concur; there must be worldly-wise men, there must be religious orders, pharisees, ministers, doctors, the secular power, and lovers of this world. Antichrist, indeed, was conceived in the Apostles' times, but he was in his infancy, unformed and imperfect. He was therefore the more easily known and ejected, being rude, raw, and wanting utterance. He had then no skill in making decretals, he wanted hypoeritical ministers, and the show of religious orders. He had none of those riches, by which he might allure ministers to his service, and multiply his adherents: he wanted also the secular power, and could not compel men to serve him. But he grew to a full age, when the lovers of the world, both in Church and State, did multiply and get all the power into their hands: Christ had never any enemy like to this, so able to pervert the way of truth into falsehood, insomuch that the Church with her true children is trodden under foot. He robs Christ of his merits, of justification, regeneration, sanctification, and spiritual nourishment, and ascribes the same to his own authority, to a form of words, to his own works, to saints, and to the fire of purgatory. Yet he has some decent qualities, which throw a veil over his enormities; such as an external profession of Christianity, tradition, and catalogues of episcopal succession, lying wonders, external sanctity, and certain sayings of Christ himself, the administration of the sacraments,

verbal preaching against vices, and the virtuous lives of some who really live to God in Babylon, whom, however, Antichrist, so far as in him lies, prevents from placing all their hope in Christ alone. These things are a cloak, with which Antichrist hides his wickedness, that he may not be rejected as a pagan. Knowing these things we depart from Antichrist, according to express Scriptural directions. We unite ourselves to the truth of Christ and his spouse, how small soever she appear. We describe the causes of our separation* from Antichrist, that if the Lord be pleased to impart the knowledge of the same truth to others, those who receive it, together with us, may love it. But if they be not sufficiently enlightened, they may receive help by our ministry, and be washed by the Spirit. If any one have received more abundantly than we ourselves, we desire the more humbly to be taught, and to amend our defects. A various and endless idolatry marks the genius of Antichrist, and he teaches men by that to seek for grace, which is essentially in God alone, exists meritoriously in Christ,

* Hence it appears, that, in 1120, there were a body of the Waldenses, who had perfectly separated from the Roman Church. Yet, it is evident from Bernard's account, that those of whom he had some knowledge, were not Separatists. This may be one instance of their differences among themselves, of which Evervinus speaks. And it is very conceivable, that men equally sincere, might not be, for a time, unanimous in this point. The dread of schism on the one hand, and of idolatrous contagion on the other, would afford no contemptible argument on both sides of the question. The Albigenses, however, a branch of the Waldenses, in the year 1200, were so exceedingly numerous, that they then formed a distinct Church, and were openly separated from the whole Romish system. In truth, though it seems to have been the fault of some Protestant historians to give too early a date to the reign of Antichrist, and, on that account, to condemn unjustly several Romish pastors, whom I have attempted to vindicate, yet the man of sin doubtless did appear, at length, in all that enormity which the most vehement of the Protestant writers have described. Therefore it became absolutely necessary for real Christians to depart from Babylon. The several bodies of the Waldenses did so, though, I think, successively and gradually. —They are properly the first of the Protestant Churches.

and is communicated by faith alone through the Holy Spirit." They then proceed to confute distinctly the various abominations of popery, on which points it is, at this day, unnecessary to enlarge. Suffice it to say, that to see and argue as they did in that dark age, required a wonderful light, and strength of judgment. It is more to my purpose to mention some testimonies of the offices of Christ, which are interwoven in their arguments. "He is our advocate: he forgives sins. He presents himself in some measure to us, before we bestir ourselves. He knocks, that we may open to him: and, to obstruct all occasions of idolatry, he sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven, and desires that every faithful soul should have recourse to his Redeemer alone. For all the care of the faithful should be directed toward Christ, imitating him that is above. He is the gate: whosoever entereth by him shall be saved. He alone hath the prerogative to obtain whatever he requests in behalf of mankind, whom he hath reconciled by his death. To what purpose should we address ourselves to any other Saint as mediator, seeing he himself is far more charitable and far more ready to succour us than any of them?"

There is also a short treatise on tribulation, a subject highly needful to be studied by all Christians, by those more particularly, who, like the Waldenses, live in the flames of persecution.

The Noble Lesson, written in the year 1100, has already, in part, been given to the reader,* and it closes the account of Waldensian monuments, collected by Perry of Lyons.

Some of the thoughts, which I have transcribed from this author, on account of their extreme simplicity, may appear almost childish, to persons whose taste has been formed purely by modern models and maxims; and it must be confessed that we discover no person of superior capacity or uncommon genius among this people. Their means of knowledge were ordinary, their situation confined, and their circumstances perhaps universally poor. Even so FATHER, FOR SO IT SEEMED GOOD IN THY SIGHT.† The excellency of the power was therefore of God and not of man. How happened it, that they should possess so sound a portion of evangelical truth, so ably and

judiciously confute established errors, so boldly maintain the truth as it is in Jesus, so patiently suffer for it, live so singularly distinct from the world, and so nobly superior to all around them; while princes, dignitaries, universities, and all that was looked on as great, splendid, and wise among men, wandered in miserable darkness? It was of the Lord, who is wonderful in council and excellent in work; and his preservation of a goodly seed in the earth, in such circumstances, is a pledge that he never will forsake his Church, and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

We have seen the most satisfactory proofs of the genuine apostolical doctrine, connected with holy practice by the influence of the Holy Spirit, as subsisting among this people. At the Reformation, some fundamental doctrines, particularly that of original sin, and of justification by faith in Christ, were indeed more distinctly and explicitly unfolded. But every candid and intelligent reader has seen that these, with all other fundamental truths, were understood and confessed by the Waldenses. The principal defect of these records is, that invectives against Antichrist and its abominations make up too great a proportion of their catechetical instructions; and the general vital truths of the Gospel are not so much enlarged on as the reader, who seeks edification, would wish. How far this defect might be less obvious, or even disappear, could we see the many sermons of their pastors, I know not. But these Churches were in perpetual trouble and danger; and their distressed circumstances form, in some measure, an apology for the imperfection of their writings.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE WALDENSES.

THIS is the only subject relating to the Waldenses, which has not passed under our review. Their external history is, indeed, little else than a series of persecution. And I regret, that while we have some large and distinct details of the cruelties of their persecutors, we have very scanty accounts of the spirit with which they suffered; and still less of the internal exercises of holiness, which

* See page 24 of this Vol.

† Luke x. 21.

are known only to the people of God. But this is not the first occasion which we have had to lament, concerning the manner in which Church-history has been transmitted to us.

In 1162, two years after Waldo had begun to preach the Gospel in Lyons, Lewis VII. of France, and Henry II. of

Remarkable humiliation of our Henry II. and of Lewis VII. of France.

A. D. 1162.

England, on foot, holding the bridle of the horse of Pope Alexander VII. walking one on one side of him, the other on the other, conducted him to his habitation;

says Baronius,* a spectacle most grateful to God, to angels, and to men! The princes of the earth, as well as the meanest persons, were now enslaved to the popedom, and were easily led to persecute the children of God with the most savage barbarity. We are astonished in reading the details of persecution. That which raged against the Waldenses in the former part of the thirteenth century, was indeed an assemblage of everything cruel, perfidious, indecent, and detestable. But we are not to imagine, that contemporaries beheld such scenes with the same horror with which we do: the "god of this world," with consummate dexterity, infatuates his slaves by a successive variety of wickedness adapted to circumstances. The scenes of villany, meanness, indecency, hypocrisy, and barbarity, which, for several years, have been carrying on in France, under the mask of philosophy, liberty, and rationality, have found, in our own country, many defenders, or at least apologists. The reason is, that irreligious scepticism or atheistic profaneness is the darling of these times, as superstition was that of the thirteenth century. And if men will not learn the all-important lesson, to obey the divine oracles, there seems no end of the deceits by which the prince of darkness will impose on mankind.

In 1176 some of the Waldenses, called heretics, being examined by the bishops, were convicted of heresy. They were said to receive only the New

Testament, and to reject the Old, except in the testimonies quoted by our Lord and the Apostles.† This charge

Waldensians accused of heresy.

A. D. 1176.

is confuted by the whole tenor of their

authentic writings, in which they quote the Old Testament authority as divine, without reserve or hesitation. Being interrogated concerning their faith, we are told that they said, "we are not bound to answer." Other accusations against them were as follow, namely, that they asserted the truth of the Manichean doctrine of two independent principles, that they denied the utility of infant baptism, that the Lord's body was made by the consecration of an unworthy priest, that unfaithful ministers had any right to the exercise of ecclesiastical power, or to tithes and first-fruits, or that the faithful ought to attend their pastoral services, or that auricular confession was necessary, or that oaths were in any case lawful. The reader who has attentively considered the foregoing accounts of the Waldenses, will know how to separate the falsehood from the truth contained in these charges. "All these things," says Baronius, "the wretched men asserted that they learned from the Gospels and Epistles, and that they would receive nothing, except what they found expressly contained there; thus rejecting the interpretation of the doctors, though they themselves were perfectly illiterate. "They were confuted," he adds, "at a conference before the bishop of Albi, from the New Testament, which alone they admitted; and they professed the Catholic faith, but would not swear, and were therefore condemned."

From this account, however imperfect, and in several instances palpably injurious, some further light may be collected of the state of the Waldenses at that time.

In 1178, the same Lewis and Henry, who had sixteen years before, in so unkingly a manner, given their "power and strength to the

beast,"* hearing that the Albigenses grew in numbers, determined

Henry II. and Lewis VII. endeavour to bring back the Albigenses to the Papal Church, A. D. 1178.

to attack them by the sword, but afterwards thought it more prudent to employ preachers.† They sent to them several

* Rev. xvii. 13.

† Baron. Cent. XII.

It is evident, that the term Albigenses, or rather Albienses, employed by our author, was taken from the town of Albi, where the Waldenses flourished. And, indeed, through the dominions of Raymond, earl of Toulouse,

* Baronius Annals, Cent. XII.

† Baron. Cent. XII.

bishops and ecclesiastics; and they employed Raymond of Toulouse and other noblemen to expel the refractory. The Commissioners arriving at Toulouse, exacted, by an oath, of the Catholics there, that they should give information of the heretics whom they knew. Great numbers were hence discovered. Among these was a rich old man called Peter Moranus, who had pretended to be John the Evangelist.* This person, denying the bread to be the body of Christ, was condemned: his goods were confiscated: his castles, the conventicles of heretics, were thrown down. Peter abjured his heresy, and was brought naked and barefoot into the Church before all the people; the bishop of Toulouse and a certain abbot beating him on each side from the entrance of the building to the steps of the altar, where the cardinal legate celebrated mass. There, being reconciled to the Church, he again abjured his heresy, anathematized heretics, and submitted to another penance, which was this, namely, after forty days to leave his country, to serve the poor at Jerusalem three years; and, during the forty days, each Sunday to go round the Churches of Toulouse naked and barefoot, disciplined by rods, and to make various restitutions. It was ordered, however, that if he should return after three years from Jerusalem, then the rest of his property, till that time held in sequestration, should be restored to him. Many others abjured their heresies; but some refusing to take the oaths of submission were excommunicated, with candles publicly lighted; and princes were ordered to expel them from their dominions. Roger, prince of the Albiensian diocese, was excommunicated.

The account of our English historian Hoveden† is similar to this of Baronius. It is remarkable, that the former calls the doctrine of the Albigenses the Arian heresy. But Arian or Manichee, or any other term of reproach, sufficiently an-

swers the design of determined persecutors. It seems proper to give the account of the barbarous treatment of the rich old gentleman of Toulouse, who, though he recanted, was punished, because it confirms the truth of Perrin's narrative of the like persecutions, and demonstrates, from the testimony even of Roman writers, that the horrors of papal tyranny have not been misrepresented in general by protestant authors. And, on this occasion, I cannot but disapprove of the rashness or the prejudices of an able historian, who has already fallen under our notice.* He says, that the Albigenses, being examined, denied the Manichean doctrine of the two principles, though charged on that account with falsehood by their enemies: and this author believes these same enemies, who gave no proof of sincerity, that we know of, and accuses the Albigenses of dissimulation, though such numbers of them were suffering continually for their principles. The man, who undertakes to be an historian, ought to be acquainted with the writings and evidences which are produced on both sides of a controverted subject, so far as materials can be procured. If the author before us had read with the least attention the Waldensian records, he would never have asserted, that the Waldenses were legitimate descendants of the sect of Manes.

The subjects of Raymond, earl of Toulouse, and of some other great personages in his neighbourhood, so generally professed the Waldensian doctrines, that they became the peculiar object of papal vengeance. The inhabitants of Toulouse, Carcassone, Beziers, Narbonne, Avignon, and many other cities, who were commonly called the Albigenses, were exposed to a persecution as cruel and atrocious as any recorded in history. Reinerius, indeed, owns that the Waldenses were the most formidable enemies of the Church of Rome, "because," saith he, "they have a great appearance of godliness; because they live righteously before men, believe rightly of God in all things, and hold all the Articles of the Creed; yet, they hate and revile the Church of Rome; and, in their accusations, they are easily believed by the people."

It was reserved to Innocent the third, than whom no pope ever possessed more

and through the south of France, including the territories of Avignon, their doctrines, at that time, spread with great rapidity. All these were called, in general, Albigenses, and, in doctrine and manners, were not at all distinct from the Waldenses.

* It should be recollected, that this is the account given by Baronius, a very determined enemy of the Waldenses.

† P. 327.

* Berington's Hist. of Henry II. p. 305.

ambition, to institute the Inquisition;* and the Waldenses were the first objects of its cruelty. He authorized certain monks to frame the process of that court, and to deliver the supposed heretics to the secular power. The beginning of the thirteenth century saw thousands of persons hanged or burned by these diabolical devices, whose sole crime was, that they trusted only in Jesus Christ for salvation, and renounced all the vain hopes of self-righteous idolatry and superstition. Whoever has attended closely to the subjects of the two Epistles to the Colossians and the Galatians, and has penetrated the meaning of the Apostle, sees the great duty of HOLDING THE HEAD, and of resting for justification by faith on Jesus Christ alone, inculcated throughout them as the predominant precept of Christianity, in opposition to the rudiments of the world, to philosophy and vain deceit, to will-worship, to all dependence for our happiness on human works and devices of whatever kind. Such a person sees what is genuine protestantism, as contrasted to genuine popery; and, of course, he is convinced, that the difference is not merely verbal or frivolous, but that there is a perfect opposition in the two plans; and such as admits of no coalition or union; and that therefore the true way of withstanding the devices of Satan, is to be faithful to the great doctrine of justification, "only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith; and not by our own works or deservings."† Hence the very foundation of false religion is overthrown; hence troubled consciences obtain solid peace: and faith, working by love, leads men into the very spirit of Christianity, while it comforts their hearts, and establishes them in every good work.

Schemes of religion so extremely opposite, being ardently pursued by both parties, could not fail to produce a violent rupture. In fact, the Church of Christ and the world were seen engaged in contest. Innocent, however, first tried the methods of argument and persuasion. He sent bishops and monks, who preached in those places where the Waldensian

doctrine flourished. But their success was very inconsiderable. In the neighbourhood of Narbonne two monks were employed, Peter de Chateaufort, and Dominic.* The former of these was certainly murdered; and, it seems probable, by Raymond, count of Toulouse, because he had refused to remove the excommunication which he had denounced against that prince. Raymond himself strongly protected his Waldensian subjects, though there seems no evidence that he either understood or felt the vital influence of the protestant doctrines. But he was provoked at the imperious and turbulent measures of the monk, and saw the extreme injustice of the papal domination. He was also a witness of the purity of life and manners of his own subjects, and heard with indignation the calumnies with which they were asspersed by their adversaries, who proclaimed to all the world their own hypocrisy, avarice and ambition. Incensed at these proceedings, Raymond seems to have taken a very unjustifiable method of extricating himself from the distresses to which the papal tyranny exposed him. But the event was disastrous; Innocent obtained what he wished, namely, a decent pretence for his horrible and most iniquitous persecution; and thousands of godly souls were unrighteously calumniated as accessory to the crime.

I need not dwell on the insidious customs of the Inquisition; they are but too well known. From the year 1206, when it was first established, to the year 1228, the havoc made among helpless Christians was so great, that certain French bishops, in the last-mentioned year, desired the monks of the Inquisition to defer a little their work of imprisonment, till the pope was advertised of the great numbers apprehended; numbers so great, that it was impossible to defray the charge of their subsistence, and even to provide stone and mortar to build prisons for them. Yet so true is it, that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, that in the year 1530 there were in Europe above eight

Murder of Peter de Chateaufort.

There were said to be 800,000 Waldenses in Europe. A. D. 1530.

* Some chronologists place the commencement of the Inquisition in 1204.

† Eleventh Article of Religion.

* This is the famous founder of the Dominicans, of whom I shall speak more distinctly in a separate article, and show how far the censures of Perrin concerning him, as author of the Inquisition, are founded in fact.

hundred thousand who professed the religion of the Waldenses.

When the Albigenses saw that the design of the pope was to gain the reputation of having used gentle and reasonable methods of persuasion, they agreed among themselves, to undertake the open defence of their principles. They therefore gave the bishops to understand, that their pastors, or some of them in the name of the rest, were ready to prove their religion to be truly scriptural, in an open conference, provided the conference might be conducted with propriety. They explained their ideas of propriety, by desiring that there might be moderators on both sides, who should be vested with full authority to prevent all tumult and violence; that the conference should be held in some place to which all parties concerned might have free and safe access; and, moreover, that some one subject should be chosen, with the common consent of the disputants, which should be steadily prosecuted, till it was fully discussed and determined; and that he, who could not maintain it by the word of God, the only decisive rule of Christians, should own himself to be confuted.

All this was something more than specious: it was perfectly equitable and unexceptionably judicious: so much so, that the bishops and monks could not with decency refuse to accept the terms. The place of conference agreed upon was Montreal near Carcassone, in the year 1206. The umpires on the one side were the bishops of Villeneuve and Auxerre; on the other, R. de Bot, and Anthony Riviere.

Several pastors were deputed to manage the debate for the Albigenses, of whom Arnold Hot was the principal. He arrived first at the time and place appointed. A bishop named Eusus, came afterwards on the side of the papacy, accompanied by the monk Dominic, two of the pope's legates, and several other priests and monks. The points undertaken to be proved by Arnold, were, that the mass and transubstantiation were idolatrous and unscriptural; that the church of Rome was not the spouse of Christ, and that its polity was bad and unholy. Arnold sent these propositions to the bishop, who required fifteen days to answer him, which was granted. At

the day appointed, the bishop appeared, bringing with him a large manuscript, which was read in the conference. Arnold desired that he might be allowed to reply by word of mouth, only entreating their patience, if he took a considerable time in answering so prolix a writing. Fair promises of a patient hearing were granted him. He discoursed for the space of four days with great fluency and readiness, and with such order, perspicuity, and strength of argument, that a powerful impression was made on the audience.

At length, Arnold desired that the bishops and monks would undertake to vindicate the mass and transubstantiation by the word of God. What they said on the occasion we are not told: but the cause of the abrupt conclusion of the conference, a matter of fact allowed on all sides, showed which party had the advantage in argument. While the two legates were disputing with Arnold at Montreal, and at the same time several other conferences were held in different places, the bishop of Villeneuve, the umpire of the papal party, declared, that nothing could be determined, because of the coming of the crusaders. What he asserted was too true; the papal armies advanced, and, by fire and fagot, soon decided all controversies. If the conferences had been continued, an historian of the real Church might have had much to relate. As the matter stands, he must withdraw: it is the business of the secular historian to relate the military achievements: some circumstances, however, which tend to illustrate the merit and conduct of the Church of Christ, must be the objects of our attention.

Arnold and his assistants were, doubtless, of the number of those, who "did truth, and therefore came to the light, that their deeds might be made manifest, that they were wrought in God." And their adversaries were of those who "hated the light, and would not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd:"* Amidst the darkness and uncertainty in which, independently of revelation, every fundamental truth of salvation must be involved in a world like this, and among creatures so depraved as mankind, a readiness to abide by the decisions of the divine oracles, or an un-

* John iii.

A conference between the Papists and the Albigenses at Montreal. A. D. 1206.

willingness to stand the test of Scripture, demonstrates who are right and who are wrong. In all ages this has appeared to be the case: but we seldom meet with so striking an instance as this which we have reviewed. "In the sacrifice of the mass, it was commonly said, that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt." This the Church of England* calls "a blasphemous fable and a dangerous deceit," asserting that "there is none other satisfaction for sin, but the offering of Christ once made for all the sins of the whole world." This was one question in the controversy between the two parties, for the decision of which the Scriptures were surely very competent. The recourse, which the popish party had to arms, in the room of sober argumentation, what was it but to pour contempt on the word of God itself, and to confess that its light was intolerably offensive to them? The approach of the crusaders, who, in the manner related, put an end to the conference, was not accidental; for Innocent, who never intended to decide the controversy by argument, on occasion of the unhappy murder of the monk before mentioned, had despatched preachers throughout Europe, to collect all who were willing to revenge the innocent blood of Peter of Chateaufort; promising Paradise to those who should bear arms for forty days, and bestowing on them the same indulgences as he did on those who undertook to conquer the Holy Land. "We moreover promise," says he, in his bull, "to all those who shall take up arms to revenge the said murder, the pardon and remission of their sins. And since we are not to keep faith with those, who do not keep it with God, we would have all to understand, that every person, who is bound to the said earl Raymond by oath of allegiance, or by any other way, is absolved by apostolical authority from such obligations; and it is lawful for any Roman Catholic to persecute the said earl, and to seize upon his country," &c.

Who is this, that forgiveth sins except God only? and, who is this, that also dispenses with the most solemn moral obligations? Is he not Antichrist, showing himself that he is God? On this and some other occasions I choose to give the very expressions of the papal bulls,

as a sufficient confutation of the sophisms by which some modern writers have endeavoured to palliate or do away the crimes of the popedom. The language, indeed, of our early protestant writers against popery is severe beyond measure; but it hardly could be equal to the desert of those whom they opposed. The most material error of the modern Protestants, as I have before observed, on these subjects, seems to be, that they have been too hasty in fixing the date of the MAN OF SIN. But after he really appeared in the horrors of his maturity, he was all which the most impassioned declaimer can say against him.

The tyrant proceeds in his bull: "we exhort you, that you would endeavour to destroy the wicked heresy of the Albigenses, and do this with more rigour than you would use towards the Saracens themselves: persecute them with a strong hand: deprive them of their lands and possessions: banish them, and put Roman Catholics in their room." Such was the pope's method of punishing a whole people, for a single murder committed by Raymond. Philip Augustus, king of France, was at that time too much engaged in wars with Otho the emperor, and John, king of England, to enter upon the crusades. But the French barons, incited by the motives of avarice, which Innocent suggested, undertook the work with vigour.

Bull of Innocent III. against the Albigenses.

Raymond of Toulouse was now struck with terror. Political motives had fixed him with the Protestant party, because his subjects and neighbours were very commonly on that side. But he himself seems to have wanted a divine principle of faith to animate his mind in the defence of the righteous cause. The other princes, his neighbours, seem equally destitute of the spirit of genuine religion. They might have resisted their enemies very vigorously by the aid of their subjects, whose loyalty was unalterably firm, and who knew it was a religious duty to be faithful to their temporal sovereigns. In those feudal times, Raymond, rather than Philip, was sovereign of the people of Toulouse: the spirit of the Protestants was strong and powerful; and even the Romanists, who were mixed with them, were perfectly disposed to unite in the common defence. But I find not in all the account of the war a single instance of a prince or leader, who was

* Article XXXI.

faithful to the cause of God, as such. No wonder then that the chiefs sunk under the load of oppression, and suffered themselves, repeatedly, to be the dupes of Roman perfidy. The Christians had then no other part to act, after having discharged the duty of faithful subjects and soldiers, but to suffer with patience the oppressions of Antichrist.

Three hundred thousand pilgrims, induced by the united motives of avarice and superstition, filled the country of the

Barbarities
of the Papal
party.

kind, can scarcely conceive the scenes of baseness, perfidy, barbarity, indecency and hypocrisy, over which Innocent presided; and

Particularly
of Simon of
Montfort.

it is more to our purpose to observe the spirit of the people of God in these grievous tribulations. The

Simon takes
the Castle of
Menerbe.

necessity of surrendering to the pope's legate. A certain abbot undertook to preach to those who were found in the castle, and to exhort them to acknowledge the pope. But they interrupted his discourse, declaring that his labour was to no purpose.

Earl Simon and the legate then caused a great fire to be kindled; and they burned a hundred and forty persons of both sexes. These martyrs died in triumph, praising God that he had counted them worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. They opposed the legate to his face, and told Simon, that on the last day, when the books should be opened, he would meet with the just judgment of God for all his cruelties. Several monks entreated them to have pity on themselves, and promised them their lives if they would submit to the popedom. But the Christians "loved not their lives to the death:"* only three women of the company recanted.

Another castle, named Termes, not far from Menerbe, in the territory of Narbonne, was taken by Simon in the year 1210. "This place," said Simon, "is

of all others the most execrable, because no mass has been sung in it for thirty years." A remark which gives us some idea both of the stability and numbers of the Waldenses: the very worship of popery, it seems, was expelled from this place. The inhabitants made their escape by night, and avoided the merciless hands of Simon.

A single act of humanity, exercised by this general on the principles of chivalry, toward several women, whose persons he preserved from military insult and outrage, is the only one of the kind recorded of him.

But the triumphing of the wicked is short: after he had been declared sovereign of Toulouse, which he had conquered, General of the armies of the Church, its Son and its darling, after he had oppressed and tyrannized over the Albigenes by innumerable confiscations and exactions, he was slain in battle in the year 1218.

Earl Raymond, whose life had been a scene of great calamity, died of sickness in the year 1222, in a state of peace and prosperity, after his victory over Simon. We are told, that, though political and humane motives at first alone

influenced his conduct, he at length saw the falsity of the popish doctrine. No man, surely, was ever treated with more injustice by the popedom,—not to mention that his memory is clouded with the suspicion of the murder before mentioned.* But I know no evidence of his religious knowledge and piety.

His persecutor, Innocent, died in 1216; and the famous Dominic, who, according to the assertion of our author Perrin, was active in the Inquisition, and was accustomed to the destruction which Simon had begun by arms, died in the year 1220.

Amalric of Montfort, the son of Simon, wearied out with the war, resigned to Lewis VIII. the son and successor of Philip, all his possessions and pretensions in the coun-

Simon takes
the Castle of
Termes,
A. D. 1210.

Simon slain,
A. D. 1218.

Earl Ray-
mond dies,
A. D. 1222.

Innocent
III. died,
A. D. 1216.

Dominic
died,
A. D. 1220.

Amalric, the son
of Simon of Mont-
fort, re-signs his
Albigensian pos-
sessions to the
French,
A. D. 1224.

* Rev. xii. 7.

* See page 65 of this Vol.

try of the Albigenses; in recompense of which, the French king made him constable of France, in the year 1224. This was the step which proved the ruin of the Albigenses. The French monarchy was now interested in their destruction; and though Lewis VIII. died soon after, and Lewis IX. his son and successor, was a minor, yet the capacity of the regent, the queen mother, was found equal to the work of aggrandizing the crown at the expense of the Albigenses. Raymond, the heir of his father's miseries, was treated with the most merciless barbarity; and, after a series of sufferings, died of a fever at Milan.

Alphonsus, brother of Lewis IX. was put into possession of the earldom of Toulouse. Joan, the only daughter of the late earl Raymond, had been delivered, when only nine years old, to the French court, that she might, when of age, be married to Alphonsus. Thus

Reinerius was inquisitor. A. D. 1250.

secular and ecclesiastical ambition united to oppress the Churches of Christ. The monk Reinerius, whom we have had occasion repeatedly to quote, acted as inquisitor in the year 1250. There is evidence of the extreme violence of persecution continued against the Albigenses, now altogether defenceless, to the year 1281. Long before this,

This persecution continued violent till about A. D. 1281.

in the year 1229, a council was held at Toulouse, one of the canons of which was, that the laity were not allowed to have the Old and New Testament in the vulgar tongue, except a psalter or the like; and it forbid men even to translate the Scriptures.

This is the first instance in the popedom which I meet with, of a direct prohibition of the books of Scripture to the laity. Indirectly the same thing had long been practised.

The first instance of a direct prohibition of the Scriptures to the Laity took place, A. D. 1229.

What an honour was this canon to the cause of the Albigenses! What a confession of guilt on the side of the Romanists! The people

of God were thus, at length, for the most part, exterminated in Toulouse, and found no other resource but, by patient continuance in well-doing, to commit themselves to their God and Saviour. Antichrist, for the present, was visibly triumphant in the south-west parts of France, and the witnesses, "clothed in sackcloth," there

consoled themselves with the hope of heavenly rest, being deprived of all prospect of earthly enjoyments.

It may not be improper to mention here, that our famous monkish historian, Matthew Paris, relates that the Albigenses set up a person named Bartholomew for pope, who resided in the neighbourhood of Toulouse, consecrated bishops, and governed their churches; and that in one battle the Albigenses lost a hundred thousand men, with all their bishops.

These stories easily confute themselves; nor is it necessary to observe, that the ignorance of M. Paris, in French history, is palpably glaring. The only use which I would make of this fiction is to show, how unsafe it is to rely on rumours, concerning subjects which affect the passions of mankind, published by persons who live in places very distant from the scene of action; and to guard the minds of those among ourselves, who hear stories concerning professors of godliness, propagated by men, who are unacquainted with the grounds of religious controversy.

Dauphiny is a province of France, which was very full of the Waldenses, who inhabited valleys on both sides of the Alps. On the Italian side, the valley of Pragela in particular had, in our author's time, in 1618, six churches,

The valley of Pragela had six churches, A. D. 1618.

each having its pastor, and every pastor having the care of several villages, which appertained to his church. The oldest people among them, Perrin observes, never remembered to have heard mass sung in their country. The valley itself was one of the most secure retreats of the Waldenses, being environed on all sides with mountains, into whose caverns the people were accustomed to retreat in time of persecution. Vignaux, one of their preachers, used to admire the integrity of the people, whom no dangers whatever could seduce from the faith of their ancestors. Their children were catechised with the minutest care; and their pastors not only exhorted them on the sabbaths, but also, on the week days, went to their hamlets to instruct them. With much inconvenience to themselves, these teachers climbed the steepest mountains to visit their flocks. The word of God was heard with reverence: the voice of prayer was common in private houses, as well as in the churches: Christian simplicity and zeal abounded; and plain

useful learning was diligently cultivated in the schools.

A monk inquisitor, named Francis Borelli, in the year 1380, armed with a bull of Clement VII. undertook to persecute the godly Waldenses.

Cruelties of the Inquisitor Borelli. In the space of thirteen years he delivered a hundred and fifty persons to the secular power, to be burned

at Grenoble. In the valley of Fraissiniere and the neighbourhood, he apprehended eighty persons, who also were burned. The monkish inquisitors adjudged one moiety of the goods of the persons condemned to themselves, the rest to the temporal lords. What efforts may not be expected, when avarice, malice, and superstition unite in the same cause?

About the year 1400, the persecutors attacked the Waldenses of the valley of Pragela. The poor people seeing their caves possessed by their enemies, who assaulted them during the severity of the winter, retreated to one of the highest mountains of the

Persecutions in the valley of Pragela. A. D. 1400.

Alps, the mothers carrying cradles, and leading by the hand those little children who were able to walk. Many of them were murdered, others were starved to death: a hundred and eighty children were found dead in their cradles, and the greatest part of their mothers died soon after them. But why should I relate all the particulars of such a scene of infernal barbarity?

In 1460, those of the valley of Fraissiniere were persecuted by a monk of the order of Friar Minors, or Franciscans,

Also in the valley of Fraissiniere. A. D. 1460.

armed with the authority of the archbishop of Ambrun. And it appears from documents preserved till the time of Perrin, that every method which fraud and calumny could invent, was practised against them.

In the valley of Loyse, four hundred little children were found suffocated in their cradles, or in the arms of their deceased mothers, in consequence of a great quantity of wood being

And in the valley of Loyse. placed at the entrance of the caves and set on fire. On the whole, above three thousand persons belonging to the valley were destroyed, and this righteous people were in that place exterminated. The Waldenses of Pragela and Fraissiniere,

alarmed by these sanguinary proceedings, made provision for their own safety, and expected the enemy at the passage and narrow straits of their valleys, and were in fact so well prepared to receive them, that the invaders were obliged to retreat. Some attempts were made afterwards by the Waldensians in Fraissiniere to regain their property, which had been unjustly seized by their persecutors. The favour of Lewis XII. of France, was exerted toward them; yet they could never obtain any remedy.

In Piedmont the archbishops of Turin assiduously laboured to molest the Waldenses, having been informed by the priests in those valleys, that the people made no offerings for the dead, valued not masses and absolutions, and took no care to redeem their relations from the pains of purgatory. The love of lucre, no doubt, had a principal share in promoting the persecutions; for the sums collected by the means of these and similar vanities, were immense. The princes of Piedmont, however, who were the dukes of Savoy, were very unwilling to disturb their subjects, of whose loyalty, peaceableness, industry and probity, they received such uniform testimony. A fact, which seems peculiarly to demonstrate their general innocence, must be noticed; their neighbours particularly prized a Piedmontese servant, and preferred the women of the valleys above all others, to nurse their children. Calumny, however, prevailed at length; and such a number of accusations against them appeared, charging them with crimes of the most monstrous nature, that the civil power permitted the papal to indulge its thirst for blood. Dreadful cruelties were inflicted on the people of God; and these, by their constancy, revived the memory of the primitive martyrs. Among them Catelin Girard was distinguished, who, standing on the block, on which he was to be burned, at Revel in the marquisate of Saluces, requested his executioners to give him two stones: which request being with difficulty obtained, the martyr, holding them in his hands, said, When I have eaten these stones, then you shall see an end of that religion for which ye put me to death. And then he cast the stones on the ground.

The fires continued to be kindled till the year 1488, when the method of military violence was adopted by the persecutors. Albert de Capitaneis, arch-

Military violence employed against the Waldenses, A. D. 1488.

deacon of Cremona, was deputed by pope Innocent VIII. to assault the sufferers with the sword. Eighteen thousand soldiers were raised for the service, besides many of the Piedmontese papists, who ran to the plunder from all parts. But the Waldenses, armed with wooden targets and crossbows, and availing themselves of the natural advantages of their situation, repulsed their enemies; the women and children on their knees entreating the Lord to protect his people, during the engagement.

Philip, duke of Savoy, had the candour to distinguish the spirit of resistance made by his subjects in this transaction, from a spirit of sedition and turbulence, being convinced that they had ever been a loyal and obedient people. He accepted, therefore, their apology, and forgave them what was past. But having been informed, that their young children were born with black throats; that they were hairy, and had four rows of teeth, he ordered some of them to be brought before him to Pignerol; where, having convinced himself by ocular demonstration, that the Waldenses were not monsters, he determined to protect them from the persecution. But he seems not to have had sufficient power to execute his good intentions. The papal inquisitors daily endeavoured to apprehend these sincere followers of Christ, and the persecution lasted

The persecution continued till about A. D. 1532.

till the year 1532. Then it was that the Piedmontese began openly to perform divine worship in their churches. This provoked the civil power, at length, against them to such a degree, that it concurred more vigorously with the papal measures of military violence.

The Waldenses, however, defended themselves with courage and success: the priests left the country: the mass was expelled from Piedmont; and, whereas

The Waldensians defend themselves manfully against both the civil and papal power. They expel the Mass, and print all the Bible, A. D. 1535.

the people had hitherto only the New Testament and some books of the Old translated into the Waldensian tongue, they now sent the whole Bible to the press; for, till 1535, they had only manuscripts, and those few in number. They procured at Neuf Châtel in Switzerland, a printed Bible from one, who publish-

God which was seen in France. They endeavoured to provide themselves also with religious books from Geneva, but their messenger was apprehended and put to death.

The persecutions were continued against this people by Francis I. king of France, with savage barbarity; and, in particular, Jeffery, who was burned in the castle-yard at Turin, made a strong impression on the minds of many, by his piety, meekness, and constancy.

It would be uninteresting to pursue circumstantially the story of the persecutions, which continued with more or less violence till the end of the sixteenth century, when Bartholomew Copin of the valley of Lucerne, being at Ast in Piedmont with merchandise for the fair, was apprehended for uttering some words against the papacy. He bore his sufferings with much firmness and constancy, and resisted various attempts of the monks to overcome his spirit. He wrote to his wife, professing his entire dependence on the grace of Jesus Christ for his salvation. But he died in prison, not without suspicion of having been strangled. After his death his body was consumed by fire.

Persecution and death of Bartholomew Copin.

The Christian rules of submission to governments, and the practice of the Waldenses in general, were at no great variance. Yet, it is certain, that the primitive Christians would have conscientiously refused to bear arms at all against their own sovereigns, however tyrannical and oppressive they might be. Whether, in some instances, these persecuted Christians of the valleys did not violate the apostolical precepts on this subject,* is not very easy to be decided, because it requires a minute acquaintance with their particular circumstances, to determine who was their sovereign. Sometimes they were under the king of France; at other times under the duke of Savoy; and, it is not to be doubted, but that, at all times, they had a right to resist the pope as a foreign enemy, and an enemy of uncommon ambition, injustice, and cruelty.

At the end of the sixteenth century, in consequence of some exchange made by virtue of a treaty between Henry IV. of France and the duke of Savoy, the Waldenses of the marquise of Saluces lost

* Rom. xiii. 1 Pet. ii.

ed the first impression of the Word of

the privileges which they had enjoyed under the French government: and, by the oppression of their new sovereign of Savoy, through the impertunity of the pope, were obliged to fly into France for security. Some of them, from the love of the world, renounced the faith; but the greatest part preferred exile with a good conscience, to an enjoyment of their native country. On this occasion, they declared, in a well written manifesto, their spirit of loyalty and peaceableness, the hardships of their case, and their perfect agreement in principle with all the reformed Churches. So certain is it, that the Waldenses were, in every substantial article, genuine protestants and witnesses of evangelical truth.

A number of Waldenses, who resided in the Alps, possessed several villages, and in particular, the city of Barcelonnette. These, being persecuted by the prince of Piedmont in the year 1570, in conjunction with some others, implored the protestant princes to intercede with their sovereign on their behalf. The prince palatine of the Rhine exerted himself with much zeal on the occasion. But the people of Barcelonnette being obliged to leave their settlements, amidst a choice of difficulties, were reduced to the extremity of attempting, in the midst of winter, to pass over a high mountain. The greatest part of them perished; the rest retired into the valley of Fraisinere.

About the year 1370 some of the Waldensian youths of Dauphiny sought in Calabria a new settlement, because their native country was too small for the number of the inhabitants. Finding the soil fertile, and the region thinly peopled, they applied to the proprietors of the lands, and treated with them concerning the conditions of dwelling there. The lords of the country gave them the most kind reception, agreed with them on fair and equitable terms, and assigned them parcels of lands. The new colonists soon enriched and fertilized their respective districts by superior industry: and, by probity, peaceable manners, and punctual payment of their rents, they gained the affections of their landlords, and of all their neighbours. The priests alone, who found that they did not act like others in religion, and that they contributed no-

thing to the support of the hierarchy by masses for the dead, or by other Romish formalities, were highly offended. They were particularly vexed to find, that certain foreign schoolmasters, who taught the children of these strangers, were held in high respect, and that they themselves received nothing from them except tithes, which were paid according to the compact with their lords. From these circumstances, the priests concluding that the strangers must be heretics, were tempted to complain of them to the pope. The lords, however, withheld them from complaining of the people. "They are just and honest," say they, "and have enriched all the country. Even ye priests have received substantial emolument from their labours. The tithes alone, which ye now receive, are so much superior to those which were formerly produced from these countries, that you may well bear with some losses on other accounts. Perhaps the country whence they came is not so much addicted to the ceremonies of the Roman Church. But as they fear God, are liberal to the needy, just and beneficent to all men, it is ungenerous anxiously to scrutinize their consciences. For are they not a temperate, sober, prudent people, and in their words peculiarly decent? And does any person ever hear them utter a blasphemous expression?" The lords admiring their tenants, who were distinguished from the inhabitants all around by probity and virtue, maintained and protected them against their enemies till the year 1560.

In all this the fruits of godliness among the Waldenses were apparent, even to those who knew not the nature of godliness itself. The lords, moved by temporal interest, behaved with candour, while the priests, who felt, or thought they felt, their interest undermined by these strangers, murmured and expressed their indignation. It is not to be wondered at, that the priests of idolatry should every where be the greatest enemies of true religion. It is nothing more than the natural effect of human depravity. Their passions, through the medium of interest, are more sensibly struck at than those of others; and the true use to be made of such events, is, for all men, laity, as well as priests, to learn the true doctrine of the fall of

Alpine Waldenses are persecuted. A. D. 1570.

There had been a Waldensian settlement in Calabria, A. D. 1370.

The lords of the country protected the settlement till A. D. 1560.

man, and its consequences. The Calabrian Waldenses sent to Geneva in the year 1560, to request a supply of pastors. Two, namely, Stephen Negrin and Lewis Paschal, were sent into Calabria; who endeavoured to establish the

public exercise of protestantism. Pope Pius IV. having notice of this, determined to extirpate a people who had presumed to plant Lutheranism,—so he called their religion,—so near to his seat. What follows of the history of this people, is a distressful scene of persecution. Numbers of them being murdered, by two companies of soldiers, headed by the pope's agents, the rest craved mercy for themselves, their wives and children, declaring, that if they were permitted to leave the country with a few conveniences, they would not return to it any more. But their enemies knew not how to show mercy; and the persecuted Christians at length

defended themselves from their invaders, and put them to flight. The viceroy of Naples, hearing of these things, appeared in person to prosecute the diabolical business of the pope; and, in a little time, the Calabrian Waldenses were entirely exterminated. The most barbarous cruelties were inflicted on many: some were tortured, in order to oblige them to own that their friends had committed the most flagitious incests; and the whole apparatus of pagan persecution was seen to be revived in the south of Italy.

A certain youth, named Samson, defended himself a long time against those who came to apprehend him.

But being wounded, he was at length taken, and led to the top of a tower. Confess yourself to a priest here present, said the persecutors, before you be thrown down. I have already, said Samson, confessed myself to God. Throw him down from the tower, said the inquisitor. The next day the viceroy passing below near the said tower, saw the poor man yet alive, with all his bones broken. He kicked him with his foot on the head, saying, Is the dog yet alive? Give him to the hogs to eat.

But I turn from a scene, where there is nothing but a repetition of enormities, which have often been exposed in the

course of this history, and which equally show the influence of the prince of darkness, and the enmity of the carnal mind against God: let it suffice to add, that Stephen Negrin was starved to death in prison, and that Lewis Paschal was conveyed to Rome, where he was burned alive in the presence of Pius IV. That tyrant feasted his eyes with the sight of the man in the flames, who had dared to call him Antichrist. Paschal, however, was enabled to testify, in his last scenes, from the word of God, many things which much displeased the pope; and, by the zeal, constancy, and piety, which he displayed in his death, he failed not to excite the pity and admiration of the spectators.

The Waldenses of Provence fertilized a barren soil by their industry, but, like their brethren elsewhere, were exposed to persecution. An attempt was made to prejudice the mind of Lewis XII. against them, about the year 1506, by such calumnies as those with which the primitive Christians were aspersed. The king, struck with horror, directed the parliament of Provence to investigate the charges, and to punish those who were found guilty. But afterwards, understanding that some innocent men were put to death, he sent two persons to inquire into the conduct of this people, by whose distinct information he was so thoroughly convinced of their innocence, that he swore they were better men than himself and his Catholic subjects; and he protected them during the rest of his reign. Thus the candour, humanity, and generosity of that monarch, who was deservedly looked on as the father of his people, was providentially instrumental in the defence of the Waldenses.

Some time after, these Provencal protestants wrote a letter to the reformer Ecolampadius of Basle, which, as a monument of Christian humility and simplicity, well deserves to be transcribed. "Health to Mr. Ecolampadius. Whereas several persons have given us to understand, that He, who is able to do all things, hath replenished you with his Holy Spirit, as it conspicuously appears by the fruits; we, therefore, have recourse to you from a far country, with a steadfast hope, that the Holy Ghost will enlighten our understanding by your means, and give us the knowledge of

In that year the Calabrian Waldenses sent for a supply of Pastors to Geneva.

Dreadful persecution ensued by Pope Pius IV.

Calumnies against the Waldenses of Provence, A. D. 1506.

The story of Samson.

several things in which we are now doubtful, and which are hidden from us, because of our slothful ignorance and remissness, to the great damage, as we fear, both of ourselves and of the people of whom we are the unworthy teachers. That you may know at once how matters stand with us, we, such as we are, poor instructors of this small people, have undergone, for above four hundred years, most cruel persecutions, not without signal marks of the favour of Christ; for he hath interposed to deliver us, when under the harrow of severe tribulations. In this our state of weakness we come to you for advice and consolation."

They wrote in the same strain to other reformers, and were, it seems, so zealous to profit by their superior light and knowledge, that they willingly exposed themselves, by this means, to a share of the same persecutions which at that time oppressed the Lutherans,—so the reformed were then generally called,—both in France and through all Europe.

Ecolampadius, in the year 1530, wrote to the Waldenses of Provence, to protest against the crime of attending the mass and bowing before idols, with which some of them were infected. He showed that such pretended satisfactions for the sins of

the living and the dead, implied that Jesus Christ had not made sufficient expiation, that he is no Saviour, and died for us in vain; and that, if it be lawful for us to conceal our faith under the tyranny of Antichrist, it would have been lawful to worship Jupiter or Venus. These admonitions were well adapted to the circumstances of the Waldenses; for they soon after had large occasion to practise them. Even one of the messengers, who brought the letters, was seized in his journey at Dijon, and condemned to death as a Lutheran. In the parliament of Aix, in the year 1510, one of the most inhuman edicts recorded in history was

Inhuman
Edict
against them
by the Par-
liament of
Aix,
A. D. 1510.

pronounced against the Provençal Christians. It was ordered that the country of Merindol should be laid waste, and the woods cut down, to the compass of two hundred paces around. The name and authority of king Francis I. was obtained by surprise, and the revocation of the edict, which he afterwards

sent to the parliament on better information, was suppressed by the persecutors. The murders, rapes, and desolations, were horrible beyond all description. In particular, a number of women were shut up in a barn full of straw, which was set on fire; and a soldier, moved with compassion, having opened a place for them, that they might escape, these helpless victims of papal rage were driven back into the flames by pikes and halberts. Other cruelties were practised on this occasion, so horrid, that they might seem to exceed belief, were not the authenticity of the accounts unquestionable; and he who knows what human nature is when left to itself and to Satan, knows that there is no evil of which it is not capable.

In justice, however, to Francis I., a prince in his temper by no means cruel and oppressive, it is proper to add, that being informed of the execution of this barbarous edict, to which he had with great precipitation given his name, he was filled with bitter remorse, being now at the point of death, and he charged his son Henry to punish the murderers. The advocate Guerin, however, was the only person who was punished on the occasion. He was, in truth, the most guilty, because it was he who had suppressed the king's revocation of the bloody edict.

Those who had escaped, afterwards by degrees recovered their possessions, and taking advantage of the edict of Nantes, enjoyed the protection of government, in common with the rest of the Protestants in France.

If we look into Bohemia, the country in which Waldo ended his days, we find that the Waldensian Churches existed there in the fourteenth century, but that they had been broken up as a professing people, when the Hussites,—of whom hereafter,—began to flourish. The Hussites were later than they by two hundred and forty years, and are allowed by their own writers to have agreed in principle with the Waldenses; none of whose writings, however, were extant in Bohemia at the time when the doctrine of Huss was received in that country. So completely had papal tyranny prevailed! But Providence raised up other witnesses.

In Austria, the number of Waldenses was exceedingly great. About the year 1167, the Hussites entered into

The Hussites correspond with the Waldenses,
A. D. 1467.

a Christian correspondence with them; in the course of which they gently rebuked them on account of the idolatrous compliances too visible in their churches. The Hussites also found fault with them, because they were too solicitous in amassing wealth. "Every day," say they, "has its cares and afflictions; but as Christians ought to look only for heavenly riches, we cannot but condemn your excessive attention to the world, by which you may gradually be induced to set your whole heart on the things of time and sense." This looks like the language of younger converts, who, having not yet forsaken their "first love,"* are apt to see the evils of a worldly spirit in a stronger light even than older and more experienced Christians, who may have sunk into lukewarmness. It should be remembered that the Hussites were, at this time, beginners in religion, compared to the Waldenses. These latter were, however, exposed soon after this to terrible persecutions; and those of them who escaped fled into Bohemia, and united themselves to the Hussites.

In Germany, in the year 1230, the papal inquisition oppressed the Waldenses

The German Waldenses grievously persecuted by the papal inquisition,
A. D. 1230.

tors publicly announced the pope to be Antichrist, affirming, that if God had not sent them into Germany to preach the Gospel, the very stones would have been raised up to instruct mankind. "We give not," say they, "a fictitious remission, but we preach the remission of sins

Very remarkable story of Echard, a Dominican monk,
A. D. 1330.

appointed by God himself in his Word." About the year 1330, Echard, a Dominican monk, an inquisitor, grievously oppressed them. At length, after many cruelties, he urged the Waldenses to inform him of the real cause of their separation from the Church of Rome, being convinced in his conscience of the justice of several of their charges. This was an opportunity not often vouchsafed to this people by their enemies, of using the weapons of Christian warfare. The event was salutary: Echard was enlightened, confessed the

faith of Christ, united himself to his people; like Paul he preached the faith which once he destroyed; and, in the issue, was burned at Heidelberg; and the Christians glorified God in him.

Raynard Lollard was another convert of the same kind, at first a Franciscan and an enemy to the Waldenses. He was taken by the inquisitors after he had diligently taught the Gospel, and was burned at Cologne. From him the Wickliffites in England were called Lollards; and he it was who instructed the English who resided in Guienne in the Waldensian doctrine. The connexion between France and England, during the whole reign of Edward III. was so great, that it is by no means improbable, that Wickliffe himself derived his first impressions of religion from Lollard. Princes and states may carry on wars and negotiations with one another: while HE, who rules all things, makes every event subservient to the great design of spreading the kingdom of his Son.

Flanders was also a violent scene of Waldensian persecution, though our author seems to know little of the particulars. From another writer* it appears,

that in 1163 some of the Waldenses retired from Flanders to Cologne. Here they were discovered and confined in a

Violent persecutions in Flanders,
A. D. 1163.

barn. Egbert, an abbot, disputed with them: three were burned; and a young woman whom the people would have spared, threw herself into the flames. In 1183, great numbers were burnt alive. A

Also in the year,
A. D. 1183.

person named Robert, first a Waldensian, afterwards a Dominican, was appointed inquisitor-general by the pope. This man, knowing the usual places of concealment, burned or buried alive about fifty persons in the year 1236. But he met

Robert, a Dominican, burnt or buried alive more than fifty persons,
A. D. 1236.

with that punishment in this life, which was calculated to convince him of his enormous sin. The pope suspended him for the abuse of his power, and condemned him to perpetual imprisonment.

Persecutors in Flanders tormented the Christians by means of hornets, wasps, and hives of bees. The people of God, however, were strong in faith and love. They turned the Scripture into Low

* Rev. ii.

* Brandt's Hist. of the Reform. in the Netherlands.

Dutch rhimes, for the edification of the brethren; and they gave this reason for the practice: "In Scripture there are no jests, fables, trifles, or deceits; but words of solid truth. Here and there, indeed, is a hard crust; but the marrow and sweetness of what is good and holy may easily be discovered in it." A peculiar regard for Holy Writ amidst ages of darkness, forms the glory of the Waldensian Churches.

England, because of its insular situation, knew less of all these scenes than the Continent. But the striking narrative of the sufferers, in the time of Henry II. which has been recorded, ought to be

One hundred and fourteen persons burnt alive at Paris. A. D. 1304.

added to the list of Waldensian persecutions. No part of Europe, in short, was exempt from the sufferings of these Christian heroes. Paris itself, the metropolis of France, saw, in 1304, a hundred and fourteen persons buried alive, who bore the flames with admirable constancy.

Thus largely did the "King of Saints"* provide for the instruction of his Church, in the darkness of the middle ages. The Waldenses are the middle link, which connects the primitive Christians and Fathers with the reformed; and, by their means, the proof is completely established, that salvation, by the grace of Christ, felt in the heart, and expressed in the life, by the power of the Holy Ghost, has ever existed from the time of the Apostles till this day; and that it is a doctrine marked by the Cross, and distinct from all that religion of mere form or convenience, or of human invention, which calls itself Christian, but wants the spirit of Christ.

CHAPTER V.

THE GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS CENTURY.

It was judged proper to give one unbroken Narrative of Waldensian transactions in Ecclesiastical matters, till the time of the Reformation.

That Narrative is contained in the four preceding Chapters; and though it does not belong to the thirteenth century exclusively, it is, however, as was before observed, ascribed to it, because in the

course of the thirteenth century, most extraordinary persecutions and conflicts took place among the Waldenses, and particularly excited the attention of Europe. Our immediate business must now be the continuation of that Century.

FROM the animosity of the Waldensian persecutions, and from the unanimity with which the powers of the earth, both secular and ecclesiastical, supported these persecutions, the Reader is prepared already to conclude, that, abstracted from the Churches of the valleys, and their connexions, there was scarcely in Europe, at that time, a visible Church of Christ to be found. But there were, as the Waldenses confessed, some "individual souls in Babylon," who loved the Lord, and served him with their spirit under all these disadvantages. I shall reserve to the two next Chapters the distinct account of these individuals.

In this Chapter I propose to give a view of the general state of Christendom, which, though it is an indirect method of illustrating the circumstances of the real Church of Christ, is yet the only one which the depravity of the times can afford us.

The gloom of ignorance was immensely great, nor was it abated, but, in some respects, rather increased, by the growing celebrity of the Aristotelian philosophy. For by it the understandings of men were furnished with polemical weapons, but by no means enlightened with useful truths. Endless questions were started; and as every disputant, by the very nature of the learning then in vogue, was much more engaged in confounding his adversary, than in explaining any one object of science, hence, every serious enquirer after truth must have been embarrassed beyond measure. The controversial combatants, while they raised and agitated the dust of contentions, suffocated each other, and gave no real light, either to themselves, or to the world in general. The unlettered part of mankind admired their "seraphic"* skill and ingenuity, little suspecting that these disputatious doctors were not, in their knowledge, many degrees removed above the most igno-

Celebrity of the Philosophy of Aristotle.

* Rev. xv. 3.

* Bonaventura was called, the seraphic doctor; Francis, the seraphic father.

rant and vulgar. Some few there were of superior genius and penetration, who saw through the sophistry of the fashionable learning, and cultivated a more reasonable mode of intellectual improvement.

Roger Bacon, the Franciscan Friar, stands distinguished among these. His knowledge of astronomy, optics, and mathematics, as well as of Greek and Oriental learning, was wonderful for those times.

Roger Bacon, the Friar.
But he and a very few others shone in vain, except to themselves, in the firmament of knowledge. All feared, scarcely any aided, and very few understood them. Bacon himself, the glory of the British nation, was many years confined in a loathsome prison, and was strongly suspected of dealing in magic. I know no evidence of his piety and love of evangelical truth; and therefore it is not pertinent to the design of this History to enlarge on his character. But a few words expressive of his contempt of the learning of his contemporaries deserve to be quoted.* "Never," says he, "was there so great an appearance of wisdom, nor so much exercise of study, in so many faculties and in so many countries, as within these last forty years. For doctors are every where dispersed, in every city and borough, especially by the two studious orders, when at the same time there never was so great ignorance. The herd of students fatigue themselves, and play the fool, about the miserable translations of Aristotle, and lose their time, their labour, and their expense. Appearances alone engage them; and they have no care to acquire real knowledge, but only to seem knowing in the eyes of the senseless multitude."

Bacon, by the two studious orders, means the Dominicans and Franciscans, who were almost the only orders which devoted themselves to study. These men had ample buildings and princely houses.† They attended the death-beds of the rich and great, and urged them to bequeath immense legacies to their own orders. The subtle jargon of the schools infected their whole semblance of learning. However, as they appeared more

knowing, and were certainly more studious than the other orders, they gained much ground in this century; and indeed till the time of the institution of the Jesuits, they were the pillars of the papacy. Persecution of heretics, so called, formed a great part of their employment.

The Dominicans* in particular were the founders of the Inquisition. These last came into England about the year 1221, and first appeared at Oxford. The Franciscans were first settled at Canterbury in 1234. They both cultivated the Aristotelian philosophy, and being the confidential agents of the pope, they, under various pretences, exacted large sums of money through the kingdom, and fleeced even the abbots of the monasteries. The bishops and secular clergy saw themselves excluded by these means from the confidence of the laity. For, in auricular confessions, and other superstitions of the times, the friars had, by the pope's authority, very much arrogated to themselves the power, which had formerly been possessed by the clergy.†

The Franciscans particularly undermined the influence of the secular ecclesiastics by popular practices: they preached both in towns and in the country: they pretended to no property: they lived on contributions of their audiences, and walked barefoot and in mean habits. On Sundays and holydays crowds were collected to hear them; and they were received as confessors in preference to the bishops and clergy: and thus, when the credit of the other monastic orders was well nigh exhausted, and the secular clergy, through immoralities, had been reduced to contempt, two new orders, having the semblance of worth, not the substance, revived the authority of the Romish church, supported the papacy, strengthened every reigning superstition, and, by deep-laid plans of hypocrisy, induced numbers to enrich both the papacy and the monastic foundations.

A remarkable instance of papal tyranny, exercised through their means in this century, will show the abject slavery and superstition under which this

The Dominicans came into England about A. D. 1221.

The Franciscans about A. D. 1234.

* Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 637. note (d).

† History of the Abbey of St. Alban's, by Newcombe,

* These were also called Jacobins, from their settlement in St. James's street, in Paris.

† Hist. Abbey of St. Alban's.

Remarkable instance of papal tyranny, A. D. 1247.

Island groaned. In 1247 Innocent IV. gave a commission to John the Franciscan, as follows: "We charge you, that if the major part of the English prelates should make answer, that they are exempt from foreign jurisdiction, you demand a greater sum, and compel them, by ecclesiastical censures, to withdraw their appeals, any privilege or indulgence notwithstanding."

This was the famous "non obstante clause," by which the pope, in the plenitude of his dominion, assumed to himself the same dispensing power in the church which King James II. did long after in the state. But the punishment of the former for his temerity and arrogance followed not so soon as in the case of the latter. For God had put into the hearts of princes and statesmen to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God should be fulfilled.* And thus the wickedness of men in neglecting his gospel was justly punished.

So shameless were the popes at this time in their exactions, and so secure was their hold on the abject superstition of mankind, that they grossly defrauded even the Franciscans themselves, and were not afraid of the consequences. Men, who received not the testimony of Jesus Christ, and refused submission to his easy yoke, were induced to kiss the iron rod of an Italian tyrant.

Two observations of Matthew Paris, taken from different parts of his history, and compared together, seem to me to illustrate in a good degree the nature of the subjection in which the spirits of men were held in those times. Speaking of the innumerable oppressions and corruptions of the popedom, which particularly prevailed during the long reign of King Henry III. the pusillanimous successor of King John, he breaks out in an animated apostrophe to the pope:—

"Holy father, why do you permit such disorders? you deserve the hardships you undergo: you deserve to wander like Cain through the earth.—I would know what preferment an Englishman ever obtains in Italy? What just reason can possibly be assigned, why foreigners should prey on the revenues of our church?—Our sins have brought

these calamities upon us."* The historian alludes to the residence of Innocent IV. at Lyons, where he was obliged to hide himself from the factions which had expelled him from Italy at that time. I observe also, that this is that same pope, who gave the imperious commission to John the Franciscan, mentioned above, which commission also was dated from Lyons. If the reader lay all these circumstances together, the unexampled tyranny of the papal measures, the shameless violation of every principle of equity and decorum in the conduct of the Italian legates and agents, the strong indignation expressed against these things by such learned men as Matthew Paris, and even the open opposition made to the pope in those times, he may be disposed to wonder why the Roman hierarchy was not destroyed by a combination of princes and states. If this be a difficulty, the consideration of another passage of Matthew Paris will sufficiently explain it. Though he himself has given us the plainest accounts of the enormities of King John, who was beyond question, in every light, one of the worst of princes, and one of the worst of men, yet he observes, "We ought to hope, and most assuredly to trust, that some good works, which he did in this life, will plead for him before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. For he built one abbey, and dying bequeathed a sum of money to another." So grossly ignorant was this ingenious and valuable historian of the all-important article of justification by the merit of Jesus Christ alone, through faith! It was the revival of this article, which subverted the foundation of the Roman religion at the time of the Reformation. For while men allow themselves to doubt of the sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour, so long as the conscience is harassed with doubts or perplexities, it will naturally betake itself to any superstitions which happen to prevail, in order to pacify the mind. And the popedom held out, by monastic institutions and a variety of other means, such a quantity of false reliefs to a guilty conscience, that even the shameless King John might seem to merit the kingdom of heaven by certain good works. M. Paris himself was entangled in the same nets of Pharisaiical religion. So were the greater part of mankind throughout

* Rev. xvii. 17.

* Collier's Ecc. Vol. I.

Europe at that time. We have seen, however, that the Waldenses could find peace and relief of conscience, and the expectation of heaven through Jesus Christ alone, by faith; and hence, were enabled to despise the whole popedom, with all its appendages; while others, who trembled in conscience for their sins, and knew not the holy wisdom of resting on Christ alone for salvation, might swell with indignation at the wickedness of the court of Rome, yet not dare to emancipate themselves from its bonds. It has been said by those who are willing to palliate the Romish abominations, that such a power as that of the pope was necessary at that time, to tame the ferocious spirits of men; and that the power of the pope preserved some order in society. It may be allowed that it was a cement, but it was a cement of iniquity. Men were held by it in the bonds of superstition, and were even encouraged to live in wickedness, by false hopes of heaven. Such hopes did not sanctify but corrupt their minds: whereas the faith of Christ at once gives peace to the conscience, and leads us to true holiness.

To do justice to the real protestant character, which began with Claudius of Turin,* and at length produced the Reformation, it ought to be known, that the idolatry, the encouragement of sin, and the self-righteous superstitions, subversive of the real merit of Christ, and the grace of the Gospel, were no less flagrant in the popedom than they have been represented, and were understood to be by our fathers. Therefore, against some modern attempts to give a specious colour to the Roman abominations, it may be proper, in addition to what has already been stated, to give two authentic facts, which will not need much comment.

In the year 1234, Pope Gregory IX. willing to revive the cause of the eastern crusades, which, through a series of disastrous events, was now much on the decline; and feeling the connexion between this cause and the credit of the popedom, by a bull directed to all Christendom invited men to assume the cross, and proceed to the Holy Land. "Notwithstanding," says he, "the ingratitude of Christians,

the goodness of God is not withdrawn from them. His* providence is still actively engaged to promote the happiness of mankind: his remedies suit their temper; his prescriptions are proportioned to the disease.—The service to which they are now invited is an EFFECTUAL ATONEMENT for the miscarriages of a negligent life: the discipline of a regular penance would have discouraged many offenders so much, that they would have had no heart to venture upon it: but the HOLY WAR is a compendious method of discharging men from guilt, and restoring them to the Divine favour. Even if they die on their march, the intention will be taken for the deed, and many in this way may be crowned without fighting."

As I have ventured to contradict some positions of Mosheim and other protestant writers, who seemed to me to date the gross corruptions of popedom too early, so the same regard for veracity, which is the capital quality of a real historian, requires me to bear witness to the strict truth of their representations of Romish evils, in the times in which they really did prevail. In opposition, therefore, to the glosses of those, who seem to maintain, that papal indulgences had no connexion with men's eternal state, but related only to their ecclesiastical privileges in this life, let it be submitted to the reader, whether every person who reads the bull of Gregory IX. must not have understood, that he pretended in the name of God to absolve crusaders from real guilt, and to ensure to them the kingdom of heaven: whether he did not in effect oppose the doctrine of the atonement of Christ, and teach men to ground their justification from God, in contempt of that atonement, on the merit of the performance of the military service, which he enjoined. It is easy to multiply futile distinctions; but to what purpose are they introduced at all, when the obvious practical sense of the bull could only be that which I have mentioned, when it was so understood, and when it induced men to act with such hopes and views as have been stated?

Indeed while severe penances had been in repute, and men were in the habit of

Corruptions
of the pope-
dom.

Gregory's
bull absolv-
ed men from
guilt.

Gregory IX.
invites men
to the Cru-
sades,
A. D. 1234.

* See Vol. II. Cent. IX. Chap. 3.

* Collier's Ecc. Vol. I.

submitting to undergo them, the atonement of Christ had long been rendered in effect insignificant; and self-righteous prospects of the Divine favour had been encouraged throughout the Christian world. But the evil was now multiplied

The doctrine of Penances.

exceedingly. The additional doctrine of commutation for penances, while it removed the mind still farther from the faith of Christ, and fixed its dependence more strongly on the popedom, opened the floodgates of wickedness and vice, taught men to gratify every disposition of corrupt nature, and to believe such gratifications consistent with the prospect of gaining Divine favour. It is then to no purpose for men to declaim with Matt. Paris against the corruptions of this or that pope, while with him they maintain the self-righteous principle of popery itself. Evils of the worst kind must prevail, while we think ourselves capable of making atonement for our sins by any kind of works whatever. Let us learn the true humility and the genuine faith of the Gospel, which works by the love of God and man; and then the practical evils will vanish for want of a foundation. Protestants will always have a strong temptation to embrace some self-righteous notions, as those of Popery or Socinianism, or perhaps they may ultimately have recourse to Atheism itself, when they neglect the real peculiarity of Christianity. These considerations merit a very serious attention: they evince the importance of the REFORMATION, and illustrate the nature of its fundamental principles.

The other fact, which demonstrates the genuine character of the religion which predominated in Europe, I have extracted from a work lately published.* John Maryns was abbot of St. Alban's about the end of the thirteenth century, whose dying words are recorded to have been to this effect: "O holy Alban, whom I have loved and addressed as my best aid! as I have existed and lived by thy help, so, O glorious Saint! defend me from the pains of hell." Who this same Alban was, or whether he ever existed at all, are questions not easily answered, nor is it material to our purpose to inquire whether he was a real or a fictitious saint; but it is evident that John

Maryns, by a solemn act of worship, placed the same confidence in him, which Stephen did in Jesus Christ, when he committed his departing spirit into his hands. The distinctions, it seems, insisted on by the Papists, between the higher and inferior kinds of worship, are futile evasions. Serious worshippers of their communion practically opposed the fundamental maxim of Christianity. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man."* The devotions of Maryns were perfectly analogous to those then in fashion. The idolatry of the Romish communion is evident; and, when the reader recollects what has been said of the doctrines of the Waldenses, he will see how far their representations of Antichrist are founded in fact.

That the ecclesiastical powers in these miserable times were not at all inclined to promote piety and virtue among their subjects, but that they studied chiefly their secular emoluments, appears from numberless evidences in this century. Let it suffice in this place to mention two. First, the Franciscans and Dominicans were employed in enlisting men into the service of the crusades by Gregory IX. the author of the impious bull mentioned above. They engaged in the business with much ardour: and as it often happened that persons, who in the warmth of zeal had taken the Cross, repented afterwards, when they began to think seriously of the difficulties of the enterprise, these friars were employed to release such devotees from their vows, on the payment of a fine. It may easily be conceived, that much wealth would be amassed by this dispensing power.†

Secondly, In 1242, Innocent IV. sent a provisional bull to king Henry III. of England, which informed him, that if he should happen to lay violent hands on an ecclesiastic, and to fall under the censure of the canons, he might be absolved on submitting to the customary penance!‡

At this time, during the prevalence of the Aristotelian philosophy, the doctrine of "grace of congruity" was in high repute: in other words, justification by men's own works, was insisted on: and while some decent show of respect was paid in

* History of the Abbey of Saint Alban's, by Newcombe, page 203.

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

† Collier, Vol. I.

‡ Collier, Vol. I.

Provisional Bull of Innocent IV. A. D. 1242.

Grace of Congruity.

WORDS to the merits of Christ, the real meritorious objects, on which men were taught to place their hope, were some performances, by which they might, in a lower sense, DESERVE grace, and purchase the application of it to themselves.* Thus, a religion prevailed, which accommodated all sorts of sinners. Those of a more decent cast were taught to expect the Divine favour by their own works, which deserved grace of congruity; and the most scandalous transgressors, by the doctrine of commutation for offences, might still obtain forgiveness: the exercise of munificence towards the hierarchy was sure to cover all crimes; but the humble and the contrite alone, who felt what sin is, and sighed for a remedy, found no relief to consciences, which could not admit the delusive refreshments provided by the papacy. These, either mourned in secret, and poured out their souls to that God, who says to his creatures, "seek and ye shall find," or if they united themselves in a body of faithful people, maintained the character of those, "of whom the world was not worthy," and suffered the extremities of persecution, under the name of Waldenses.

The Scripture in all this time was neglected: the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue was in a great measure lost; and, as if the prince of darkness, through the medium of ignorance and superstition, had not sufficiently blinded the minds of men in religious concerns, even the learning itself, which was reviving, became a powerful instrument of augmenting the general obscurity. For the schoolmen, admitting no first principles, reasoned on every subject, and thus involved every religious notion in sceptical intricacy. The word of God was not appealed to, but Aristotle and the fathers were considered as decisive.†

That sophistical kind of learning, which Roger Bacon censured, was thriving throughout all this period. And in

Institution of the Sorbonne at Paris.
A. D. 1252.

1252 the college of the divines at Paris, called Sorbonne, was erected by Robert De Sorbonne, a particular friend of Lewis IX.‡

With what difficulties men, who truly

feared God, in Europe at that day, had to grapple in working out their salvation, is abundantly evident from this review. Not even nobility of rank could secure such persons from the horrors of persecution. Some noblemen in Alsace had dared to reprehend the conduct of Innocent III. particularly his imposition of celibacy on the clergy. The bishops of that country had influence enough to oppress these innovators; and, in one day, they burnt in the flames a hundred of them or their associates. Individuals, however, there doubtless were, who, having no opportunity of Christian fellowship, worshipped God in secret, and found that UNCTION FROM THE HOLY ONE WHICH TEACHETH ALL THINGS.*

Of the Eastern Churches scarcely anything worthy of relation occurs: yet it may be proper to mention, that in the year 1299, Othman, in the East, was proclaimed sultan, and founded a new empire. The people afterwards, as well as the emperor, were called after his name. The mixed multitude, of which this people was composed, were the remains of four sultanies which had for some time subsisted in the neighbourhood of the river Euphrates. Thus, the four angels, which were bound in Euphrates, were loosed, and under the name of TURKS succeeded the Saracens both in the propagation of Mahometanism, and in diffusing the horrors of war.† Providence had destined them to scourge the people of Europe for their idolatry and flagitiousness; and Europe still repented not. But the Divine prophecies were fulfilled—and "he may run that readeth."

Othman proclaimed Sultan.
A. D. 1299.

CHAPTER VI.

AUTHORS AND EMINENT PERSONS IN THIS CENTURY.

On the subject of the propagation of the Gospel, scarce anything occurs in this age. The godly spirit of missionaries, which had been the glory of the declining Church, was by this time exhaust-

* Thirteenth Article of the Church of England.

† Preface to 13 Cent. Magdeburgh.

‡ Mosheim, 13 Cent. Pars. ii. cap. i. sect. 3.

* 1 John ii. 27.

† Rev. ix.—Newton, 3d Vol. Prophecies, page 116.

ed; so extensively had the papal corruptions prevailed. The only accession to the Christian name in Europe seems to have been the conversion, as it is called, of the Prussians, Lithuanians, and some adjoining provinces.

Prussia was one of the last regions of the North, which bowed under the yoke of the popedom. The ignorance, brutality, and ferocity of the inhabitants, were uncommonly great. The Teutonic knights, after they had lost their possessions in Palestine, took the cross against the Prussians, and, after a long and bloody war, forced them to receive the name of Christ; but I know no evidences of piety, either in the missionaries or in the proselytes. The destruction, however, of the old idolatry, and the introduction of something of Christianity, would eventually, at least, prove a blessing to this people.

Arsenius, bishop of Constantinople, will deserve a place in these memoirs. After that Constantinople was taken by

Arsenius, bishop of Constantinople.

the French and Venetians, the seat of the Greek empire had been transferred to Nice in Bithynia of

which metropolis, under the reign of Theodoros Lascaris, Arsenius was appointed bishop. He was renowned for piety and simplicity, and had lived a monastic life near Apollonia. Theodoros, a little before his death, constituted him one of the guardians of his son John, an infant in the sixth year of his age. But the integrity and virtue of the bishop were no security against the ambition and perfidy of the times. Michael Palæologus usurped the sovereignty; and Arsenius at length, with reluctance, overpowered by the influence of the nobility, consented to place the diadem on his head, with this express condition, that he should resign the empire to the royal infant when he should come to maturity.

Arsenius, after he had made this concession, had the mortification to find his pupil treated with perfect disregard; and, probably, repenting of what he had done, he retired from his See to a monastery. Some time after, by a sudden revolution, Palæologus recovered Constantinople from the Latins; but amidst all his successes, he found it necessary to his reputation to recall the bishop, and he fixed him in the metropolitan See. So great was the ascendancy of the character of a virtuous prelate over the politics

of an unprincipled usurper, though covered with secular glory! Palæologus, however, still dreaded the youth, whom he had so deeply injured, and to prevent him from recovering the throne, he had recourse to the barbarous policy of putting out his eyes. Arsenius hearing this, excommunicated the emperor, who then made some pretences of repentance. But the bishop refused to admit him into the Church; and Palæologus had the baseness to accuse him of certain crimes before an assembly of priests. Arsenius was convened before the vernal assembly, condemned, and banished to a small island of the Propontis. But, conscious of his integrity, he bore his sufferings with serenity and composure; and, requesting that an account might be taken of the treasures of the Church, he showed that three pieces of gold, which he had earned by transcribing Psalms, were the whole of his property. This same emperor, who had the meanness, by false accusation, to expel Arsenius from his See, still confessed, how much wickedness stands in awe of virtue, by soliciting him to repeal his ecclesiastical censures. The deprived prelate, however, who never had been fond of sacerdotal dignity, remained content with his obscurity, and, to his last breath, refused the request of the usurper, who still retained the wages of his iniquity.*

Gibbon relates this story with no material variation from the account, which I have given. But, in his usual manner, he ridicules and scoffs at the virtuous patriarch, and ascribes his professions of disinterestedness to sullenness and vain-glory. How must an ecclesiastic conduct himself, in order to procure the approbation of this historian? If the Christian hero before us (for so he seems to have truly feared God) had flattered and gratified the usurper in all his desires and demands, we should then have heard of his hypocrisy and ambition. Now that he voluntarily descends from a state of grandeur, to poverty, disgrace, and exile, for the sake of a good conscience, he must be suspected of sullenness and pride. But by their fruits men are to be known; and, by them, so far as they appear in this case, we may form a judgment of Arsenius, of Palæologus, and of Gibbon.

Prejudice of Gibbon.

* Cent. Magd. 461. Nicephorus.

We have given an instance of a bishop in the East, who feared God. Let us now behold a similar instance of uprightness in a bishop of the

Death of John Scot, an upright Bishop.
A. D. 1202.

West. John Scot, bishop of Dunkeld, died in the year 1202. He was an Englishman, who had been archdeacon of St. Andrew's, and thence was preferred to the See.* He was conspicuous in that corrupt age for pastoral vigilance and a conscientious conduct. The county of Argyle was part of his diocese, and, in that county, the people understood only the Irish tongue. Scot, unwilling to receive emoluments from a people, whose souls he could not edify, wrote to pope Clement III. desiring him to constitute Argyle a separate See, and to confer the bishopric on Evaldus his chaplain, who was well qualified for the purpose, and could speak Irish. "How," says he, "can I give a comfortable account to the Judge of the world at the last day, if I pretend to teach those, who cannot understand me? The revenues suffice for two bishops, if we are content with a competency, and are not prodigal of the patrimony of Christ. It is better to lessen the charge, and increase the number of labourers in the Lord's vineyard." His whole request

Death of Clem. III.

was granted; but the election appeared not to have been made till the year 1200. Clement the Third died in 1191. Sentiments such as these would have done honour to the purest ages. It seemed worth while to give some illustration to the opinion of the Waldenses, "who professed that there were pious men, who lived in Babylon;" and John Scot deserves to be regarded as a practical teacher of bishops and pastors in all ages.

Great Britain furnishes us with a similar instance. Seval, archbishop of York, wrote to pope Alexander IV. against his violent and oppressive conduct, and exhorted him to follow Peter,—to feed, not to devour, the sheep of Christ. The particular occasion of this letter was, that the pope had intruded a person named Jordan into the deanery of York.† The courage and integrity of Seval enraged the pope, who, on some pretence, excom-

municated him: he still however persisted, and withstood the intrusion of unworthy clergymen. The Romanists harassed him with their utmost malevolence; but he was honoured by the people. He died in 1258, in the fourth year of his archbishopric, of which he seems to have kept possession till his decease.

Death of Seval, archbishop of York.
A. D. 1258.

Henry of Gaunt, archdeacon of Tournay, called "the famous Teacher," wrote against ecclesiastical abuses: he maintained, that a prelate was subject to law, was no lord, and that evil became not good because the pope commanded or permitted it.*

William de St. Amour, doctor of the Sorbonne, and professor of divinity in the university of Paris, was one of the greatest ornaments of Christianity, which appeared in the Roman communion in this century. He had his name from St. Amour in Franche Comte,

Courage and piety of William St. Amour.
A. D. 1255.

the place of his nativity. The mendicant orders seldom met with a more vigorous and able adversary. The Dominicans in particular seemed desirous to engross all the power and influence of the university to themselves, while the doctors, resisting their unjust encroachments, excluded them from their society. In the year 1255 the debate was brought before pope Alexander IV. who, with intolerable arrogance, ordered the university not only to restore the Dominicans to their former station, but also to grant them as many professorships as they should require.† Thus the friars not only intruded themselves into the dioceses and churches of the bishops and clergy, and, by the sale of indulgences, and a variety of scandalous exactions, perverted whatever of good order and discipline remained in the Church, but also began to domineer over the seminaries of learning. And, in all this, as the pope was the principal leader, a despotism of the very worst nature was growing stronger and stronger in Christendom. The doctors of the university of Paris now loudly joined in the cry of the

* Collier.

† In this brief account of St. Amour, I have endeavoured to give the substance of the information contained in the Centuriators, in Du Pin, Mosheim, and Fox the Martyrologist.

* Collier, Vol. I. page 411.

† Cent. Magd. XIII. page 559.

secular clergy against the invasions of the mendicants; and indeed the papal power at this time ruled with absolute dominion. No pastor of a Church could maintain any due authority over the laity, if a Franciscan or Dominican appeared in his parish to sell indulgences, and to receive confessions; and the most learned body of men at that time in Europe, were now subject to the government of those agents of popedom. The magistrates of Paris, at first, were disposed to protect the university; but the terror of the papal edicts reduced them at length to silence; and not only the Dominicans, but also the Franciscans, assumed whatever power they pleased in that famous seminary, and knew no other restrictions, except what the Roman tyrant imposed upon them.

The genius and spirit of St. Amour were remarkably distinguished in this controversy. He wrote several treatises against

St. Amour
writes
against the
mendicant
orders.

the mendicant orders, and particularly a book published in the year 1255, concerning the perils of the latter days.

Persuaded as he was that St.

Paul's prophecy of the latter times* was fulfilling in the abominations of the friars, he laid down thirty-nine marks of false teachers. He might have reduced them to a much smaller number; for, unavoidably, many of his marks will involve and imply one another. He exposes, however, with much discernment and perspicuity, the selfishness, hypocrisy, flattery, and sordid artifices of the friars: he particularly inveighs against their intrusion into the folds of other pastors, and their attempts to alienate the affections of the flock from their lawful teachers. An unworthy practice too common even in the best times of the church!—and which, from the love of novelty and the instability so natural to mankind, has ever found but too much encouragement! St. Amour takes notice of this sort of opposition which St. Paul met with at Corinth, and shows that it is the mark of a true pastor, not to be fond of building on another man's foundation, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand.† This was to strike directly at the particular practices of the mendicants; who were also remarkably active in engaging the laity to enrich their orders, and omitted

no methods to amplify their possessions. St. Amour, with a discernment remarkably keen for these times, explains our Saviour's precepts concerning the selling of what a man has, and the giving of it to the poor, showing that the inward affection and practical preference in all cases of competition, are the things which Christ meant to inculcate, not the literally parting with all our property, of which generosity hypocrites boasted much.

A few years before the unrighteous decision of the pope in favour of the friars, a fanatical book, under the title of "Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel," was published by a Franciscan, which, by exalting Francis above Jesus Christ, and arrogating to his order the glory of reforming mankind by a new Gospel substituted in the room of that of Christ, attempted to exalt that mendicant tribe to the height of divine estimation in the eyes of mankind. The universal ferment excited by this impious book, obliged Alexander IV. to suppress it in the year 1255, and he ordered it to be burnt in secret, willing to spare the reputation of the mendicants. But the university of Paris, which in the same year, received that grievous injury from the pontiff, which has been mentioned, insisted upon a public condemnation of the book, and Alexander, mighty as he was in power, was constrained, for once, to give way to the feelings of mankind; and he publicly committed the Franciscan's performances to the flames. The next year, however, he revenged himself on St. Amour, by ordering his book on the perils of the latter days to be also committed to the flames, and by banishing him out of France. The persecuted champion retired into Franche Compte, the place of his birth; but, under the pontificate of Clement IV. he returned to the metropolis, wrote against the abuses of popery with persevering ardour, and died esteemed and regretted by all in the Roman church, who retained any regard for Christian truth and piety. This seems the substance of all that is known concerning this extraordinary personage, who only wanted a more favourable soil, in which he might bring to maturity the fruits of those protestant principles, the seeds of which he nourished in his breast.

John* de Poliaco, a disciple of St.

* 2 Tim. iii. 1.

† 2 Cor. x. 16.

* Magd. Cent. 13.

Amour, trode in the steps of his master, and insisted on the rights of the parochial clergy to hear the confessions of the laity, and condemned the general license of discharging that function, which the pope gave to the mendicant orders. Both parties seemed involved in the superstition of auricular confession; but the mendicants evidently transgressed the bounds of justice. It may, perhaps, be doubted, what was the real character of John: this, however, is certain,—He was condemned by papal authority in the year 1277.

Francis of Assisium, founder of the Minor Friars, was doubtless an extraordinary character. He was born at Assisium, in the ecclesiastical state, and was disinherited by his father, who was disgusted at his enthusiasm. In 1209* he founded his order,

which was but too successful in the world. His practices of devotion were monstrous, and he seems ever to have been the prey of a whimsical imagination. Pride and deceit are not uncommonly connected with a temper like his, and he gave a memorable instance of both. It is certain that he was impressed with five wounds on his body, resembling the wounds of Christ crucified. It is certain also, that he pretended to have received the impression as a miraculous favour from heaven. To describe the particulars of such a story, would be to descend beneath the dignity of history. Let it suffice to have mentioned in general what is authentic, whence the reader may form some notion of the truth of St. Paul's prediction concerning the man whose coming was to be after the working of Satan with lying wonders.† The papacy indeed was full of such figments at this time. Francis sought for glory among men by his follies and absurdities, and he found the genius of the age so adapted to his own, that he gained immense admiration and applause. He died in 1226, in the forty-fifth year of his age.‡ Posterity saw his order splendid in secular greatness, though under the mask of poverty; and we have

already recounted the dreams of one of his disciples, who was no mean imitator of his master.* The serious and intelligent follower of Jesus will not be staggered at such disgusting counterfeits of Christian virtues. He will recognize in them the hand of Satan, deluding with fictitious holiness men, who had despised that holiness which was genuine. And thus they, who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, were justly given over to diabolical infatuations.† Nothing has happened but according to scriptural revelation; and the duty of humbly and seriously attending to the divine oracles, as our true wisdom and felicity, is made evident.

Let us dwell a moment on his contemporary, Dominic, the founder of the Dominicans. He was a Spaniard, born in the year 1170. In fictitious miracles and monstrous austerities he resembled Francis.‡ We have seen how he laboured among the Waldenses. Butler observes, that he had no hand in the cruelties of the crusades, and asserts, that he was not connected with the inquisition; though he owns that the project of this court was first formed in a council of Toulouse in 1229, and that in 1233 two Dominican friars were the first inquisitors. Let us exercise as much candour as possible on a subject very much controverted, and admit with a learned historian,§ that

Dominic was an inquisitor, but not in the most offensive sense of the word: Let it be remembered, however, that candour is due also to the Waldenses, whom the learned Roman Catholic, to whose industry I am repeatedly obliged, describes, from Le Gendre's history of France, as a combination of shocking banditti, and whom he accuses of holding the unlawfulness of oaths, and of putting men to death. These charges have been sufficiently confuted by what we have seen from their own memoirs. The biographer, who found it so very easy to acquit Dominic, should not have condemned the Waldenses on such erroneous information.

The Minor
Friars
Founded
A. D. 1209.

Dominicans
Founded.
A. D. 1170.

The first
inquisitors
were two
Dominican
friars,
A. D. 1233.

Their
Founder
died,
A. D. 1226.

* Alban Butler.

† 2 Thess. ii. 9.

‡ Alban Butler, Vol. X.—Cave, Vol. I. page 704.

* Viz. The author of "Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel." See p. 171.

† 2 Thess. ii.

‡ Butler, Vol. VIII.

§ Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 698

Butler also commends the piety of Simon Montfort, the persecutor of the Albigenses, and the father of the famous malcontent earl of Leicester, who flourished in the reign of king Henry III.—And though he condemns the barbarities of the crusades, he represents the Waldenses as the enemies of public peace, and the laws of civil society. In this the learned author speaks against the concurrent testimony of the princes under whom they lived, and who owned them to be the best of subjects.

To return to Dominic. He seems to have shown no one evidence of genuine humility, or of evangelical piety. In religious pride he lived; and, it is much to be feared, he died in the same temper and in the greatest ignorance. For in his last hours he promised his brethren, that he would never forget them, when he was gone to God. If persons, who inquire into the nature of true religion, examined with more precision the true marks of pride on the one hand, and of humility on the other, they would not be so easily imposed on by false pretensions.

This same Dominic constituted the Rosary, or the Psalter of the Virgin Mary. To illustrate this subject, which, though egregiously trifling in its own nature, deserves a few moments consideration, as tending to give a just view of the religious taste then in fashion, it is to be observed, that the old Anchorets counted the number of their prayers by grains, or such like marks.* Those who could not read, nor recite the Psalter by heart, supplied that deficiency by repeating the Lord's prayer. And thus, illiterate persons, at canonical hours, performed devotions corresponding to those of the Psalter recited by the clergy and others; and they were taught, no doubt, that their simple performances would be equally meritorious with the religious exercises of the more learned. On these principles Pater-nosters were counted by the studs of the belts; and Peter the Hermit, famous for promoting the first crusades, instructed the illiterate laity to say a number of Pater-nosters and Ave Mary's in lieu of each canonical hour of the church-offices. And thus, I imagine, he attempted to qualify his enthusiastic crusaders for the kingdom of heaven. But to Dominic the glory of completing

the scheme of MECHANICAL devotion belongs. He directed men to recite fifteen decads of Hail Mary, &c. and one Pater-noster before each decad. Thus men were taught to repeat a hundred and fifty times the angel's salutation of the Virgin, interlarded with a number of Pater-nosters, and to believe that this practice would be as acceptable as the recital of the hundred and fifty Psalms. I suppose very zealous devotees would go through all this work at one time: perhaps others, less laborious, might perform it at successive intervals.—But is this the spirit of GRACE AND SUPPLICATION* promised to the Christian Church? Is this the spirit of adoption, whereby men cry Abba, Father? What is it but the spirit of bondage and miserable superstition, the religion of the lips, a self-righteous drudgery of so much devotional work, with a view to purchase the remission of sins, and to ease the consciences of men, who lived without either understanding the doctrines, or practising the precepts of Scripture?—Observe hence, with how much propriety the Waldenses, as we have seen, taught men the true nature of prayer; and, what a dreadful vacuum of all true piety was now the portion of nominal Christians, who had departed from the grace of Christ Jesus!

No powerful, however, is the genuine operation of the Divine Spirit, that it can purify a humble soul by faith in Christ, and exhibit a brief assemblage of Christian virtues, even in the gulf of superstition. This seems to have been the case with a great personage of this century, whose character deserves particular illustration. This was Character of Lewis IX. or St. Lewis. Louis IX. commonly called St. Lewis, the son of Lewis

VIII. who invaded England in the reign of king John. His mother Blanche brought him up with much religious care.† “I love you, my son, said she, with all the tenderness of which a mother is capable; but I would infinitely rather see you fall dead at my feet, than that you should commit a mortal sin.” Lewis felt a daily impression of this thought on his mind. In his minority, Blanche completed the reduction of the Albigenses, a dreadful work, which has already engaged our painful attention. How far Blanche herself might be imposed on by

* Butler, Vol. X.

* Zech. xii. 10.

† Alban Butler, Vol. VIII.

the slanders so copiously poured on the supposed heretics, it is not easy to say. As to Lewis, however, a minor, it may fairly be presumed, that he understood not the merits of the cause. As he grew up, his devotional spirit appeared consistently strong and equally fervent. He often invited men of a religious character to his table; and, when some objected to him, that he spent too much time at his devotions, he answered, "If that time were spent in hunting and gaming, I should not be so rigorously called to account for the employment of my vacant hours." He lived a life of self-denial: he banished from the court all diversions prejudicial to morals. No man, who broke the rules of decorum in conversation, could find admission into his presence. He frequently retired for the purpose of secret prayer. So comprehensive were the powers of his understanding, and so well qualified was he to excel in a variety of employments, that he, personally, administered justice to his subjects, with the greatest attention and impartiality. The effect was long remembered after his decease; and, those who were dissatisfied with the judicial processes of their own times, with a sigh expressed their wish, that justice might be administered as in the days of St. Lewis. Those, who were guilty of blasphemy, were, by his own order, marked on the lips, some say on the forehead, with a hot iron. A rich citizen of Paris was punished in this manner; and Lewis silenced the complaints of those, who murmured at his severity, by observing, that he would rather suffer punishment himself, than omit to inflict it on transgressors.

Uprightness and integrity have seldom more strongly marked the character of any prince, than they did that of Lewis. He suffered not the nobles to oppress their vassals; and the exercise of sovereign power was in his hands a blessing to mankind. A nobleman had hanged three children, for hunting rabbits: Lewis having investigated the fact, condemned him to capital punishment: a rare instance of the love of justice breaking through the forms of aristocratical oppression, which at that time dominated through Europe! It was not to be supposed, that the feudal lords would, without emotion, hear of a sentence so seldom pronounced on an offender of such rank. They earnestly interceded

for the nobleman's life; and Lewis so far prevailed on by the maxims of the times, as to mitigate the penalty. He, however, deprived the cruel oppressor of the greatest part of his estate.

Truth and sincerity seem to have pervaded the soul of Lewis. In all treaties and negotiations he was conscientiously exact; and foreign states frequently referred matters of dispute to his arbitration. In him it appeared, that wisdom and truth, sound policy and Christian sincerity, are not at variance in the nature of things. And whatever disadvantages he might seem to undergo by a generous and disinterested conduct, he found them to be amply compensated by the respect and veneration attached to his character, and the confidence reposed in his justice by all mankind.

With great pleasure I dwell a little on a character, so singularly excellent. An elegant historian* observes, that "he united to the mean and abject superstition of a monk, the magnanimity of the hero, the integrity of the patriot, and the humanity of the philosopher."—So cautiously does he abstain from praising Christianity, even while he gives a warm encomium to a most upright Christian! All the notice which he deigns to give of his religious principles, is an insinuation, that they were mere monasticism. I confess, the superstition of the times had deeply tintured Lewis; and it is to be regretted, that his eminent station gave him not that access to the protestants of his own dominions, who in those days adorned the real Gospel of Christ, which might, under God, have emancipated his soul from papal bondage, and enabled him to shine with a salutary light among the very best of Christian princes. Disadvantageously situated as he was, he could only acquire and maintain the spirit of a Christian for himself: the whole tenor of his life demonstrated the sincerity of his Christian faith and love: but, enslaved by papal domination, he could not emancipate his subjects. It is certain, however, that mere superstition could never have inspired so steady and consistent a piety as that of Lewis; and it seems no less certain, that mere philosophy, in whatever sense we may suppose the historian to have used that vague and ill-defined term, was equally incompetent to produce such a

* Hume, Vol. II. p. 190.

character as that of this prince, the Christian, the man of faith, humility and prayer. Let us attend a little to the FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT, which sprang from Christian principles in this monarch; for the course of our history gives us very seldom an opportunity of illustrating the power of the Gospel in national and political transactions.

The weak and distracted government of our king Henry III. gave to Lewis frequent occasions of exercising that secular chicane, and that spirit of artful intrigue, in which mere statesmen abound. The English were divided among themselves, and Henry held the balance of power among them with a tremulous hand. But Lewis took no advantage of their divisions, nor attempted to expel them from their provinces, which they still held in France. John, the father of Henry, by a sentence of attainder, seconded by the arms of Philip Augustus, the grandfather of Lewis, had been deprived of Normandy, and some other provinces in France. Lewis had scruples of conscience, that affected his mind, in regard to the detention of those provinces, which had fallen to him by way of inheritance. He even expressed some intention of restoring them, and was only prevented by reflecting on the justice of punishing John, as a felon and a murderer, who had barbarously slain his nephew prince Arthur.—He never interposed in English affairs, but with an intention to compose the differences between the king and his nobility; he recommended every healing measure to both parties; and exerted himself with all his might, to bring to a sense of duty the earl of Leicester, that same enterprising rebel, who, after a series of splendid crimes, was at last defeated and slain by Edward, Prince of Wales, the son of king Henry. He made a treaty with England, at a time when the affairs of the kingdom were at the lowest ebb: but took no advantage of his own superior situation in the terms of the treaty. He made some liberal concessions: he ensured to Henry the peaceable possession of Guienne; and only required him to cede Normandy, and his other provinces, which he had no prospect of ever regaining. Afterwards, when by a rare instance of confidence, the king of England and his barons agreed to refer the settlement of their differences to Lewis, that equitable monarch decided in a manner, which

showed his equal regard to the prerogatives of the crown and the rights of the people.

In his days, Gengis Kan, the Tartar, threatened to deluge Europe by his victorious arms. The consternation was general: but, Lewis said to his mother, "What have we to fear? we shall either live conquerors, or die martyrs."

The spirit of the crusades was adapted to the superstitious habits of Lewis, and he fell into the snare. From this quarter alone he, who in other respects was the father and friend of his people, was unhappily led into a conduct

prejudicial to society. Having been brought to the brink of the grave by an illness in 1211, when he was beginning

Lewis IX.
goes to the
Holy Land,
A. D. 1241.

to recover he took the vow of the Cross; and as soon as he was able, raised an army and made an expedition into the Holy Land. Before his departure he took care to make large restitution for injuries inadvertently committed throughout the kingdom; he took the most exact care of the morals of his soldiers, so far as he had opportunity and ability; and, in the whole course of his military measures, avoided the unnecessary effusion of blood, by saving the life of every infidel, whom he could take prisoner. It is a deplorable instance of the power of the "god of this world"* over our fallen race, that a monarch of so much good sense, and of so great virtue and piety, could yet be engaged in a cause so imprudent and chimerical. Good men, however, will act a consistent part even where they are evidently mistaken in their object. Lewis was still the same man; and the fear of God was his predominant principle of action. Let civil history relate his military prowess, the efforts of his prodigious valour, and the series of his calamities. When he was taken prisoner by the Saracens, and was menaced with death, he behaved with his usual fortitude, and concern for his soldiers. At length, being ransomed, he visited Palestine. Hearing of the death of his mother Blanche, he discovered much filial tenderness on the occasion. As he returned to Europe after a disastrous expedition, three sermons were preached every week on board his ship; and the sailors and soldiers were catechised and instructed, Lewis bearing

* 2 Cor. iv. 4.

a part in all the religious offices. He returned to Paris after an absence of almost six years. Here he was visited by our Henry III. to whom he said, "I think myself more happy that God hath given me patience in suffering, than if I had conquered the world." We are told, that many Saracens, induced by his piety, received Christian baptism; and that he sent two monks to preach to the Tartars:—but the vices of Christians were so flagrant, as to defeat all these good intentions.

Devoted as Lewis was to the popedom, he could not but see the enormous ecclesiastical abuses, which at that time prevailed. He, therefore, made laws against papal encroachments, and against simony; and prohibited the rapines of the Romish pontiff by an edict, in which he expresses himself to this effect; "the exactions and heavy impositions of money, imposed on our kingdom by the court of Rome, through which our territories are miserably impoverished, we will not suffer to be collected."* Words were no empty sounds with a prince of his steadiness and fortitude; and by the vigour and wisdom of his administration, France seems to have been much exempted from that intolerable oppression of the Roman tyrant, under which England at that time groaned. But Lewis undertook a second crusade, laid siege to Tunis on the coast of Africa, and died before that city. On the approach of death, he gave very salutary advice to Philip his eldest son. "Avoid wars," says he, "with Christians, and spare the innocent subjects of your enemy. Discountenance blasphemy, games of chance, drunkenness, and impurity. Lay no heavy burdens on your subjects. I pray our Lord Jesus Christ to strengthen you in his service, and always to increase his grace in you; and I beg that we may together see, praise, and honour him to eternity. Suffer patiently; being persuaded that you deserve much more punishment for your sins; and then tribulation will be your gain. Love and converse with the godly: banish the vicious from your company: delight to hear profitable sermons: wherever you are, permit none, in your presence, to deal in slanderous or indecent conversation. Hear the poor with patience: and where your own interest is concerned,

stand for your adversary against yourself, till the truth appear." As Lewis grew more feeble, he desired no mention whatever to be made to him of temporal things; and scarcely spake at all, except to his confessor. He prayed with tears for the conversion of infidels and sinners; and besought God, that his army might have a safe retreat, lest through weakness of the flesh, they should deny Christ. He repeated aloud, "Lord, I will enter into thine house; I will worship in thy holy temple, and give glory to thy name. Into thy hands I commend my spirit." These were his last words; and he ^{his death.} breathed out his soul in the ^{A. D. 1270.} year 1270, aged fifty-five years. In better times, and with clearer evangelical light, what might not have been expected from such a character? We have seen the most abject superstition combined with the most dignified uprightness. We have seen Christianity, degenerated indeed and disgraced with superstition, but still amiable and fruitful in good works; and in such good works, as no man of mere secular wisdom could ever pretend to. The character and fundamental truths of Jesus, exhibited to a mind like that of Lewis, humble and contrite through divine influence, a rare and an attractive assemblage of virtues. However he by no means rested in a bare approbation of holy doctrine and holy practice. One may challenge the most bigoted admirer of modern French philosophy and French republicanism, to produce a single person, who has taken an active part in the late revolutions of that infatuated nation, that can at all be compared to this prince, in sincerity, philanthropy, and modesty.

This century saw also a pope, who deserves to be commemorated in the annals of the Church of Christ. Peter Celestine was* born in Apulia, about the year 1215, and lived as a hermit in a little ^{Peter Celestine born,} cell. He was admitted into ^{A. D. 1215.} holy orders; but after that, he lived five years in a cave on Mount Morrone, near Sulmona. He was molested with internal temptations, which his confessor told him were a stratagem of the enemy, that would not hurt him, if he despised it. He founded a monastery at Mount Morrone, in 1274. The See of Rome having

* Cent. Magd. XIII. 329.

* Butler, Vol. V.

been vacant two years and three months, Celestine was unanimously chosen pope on account of the fame of his sanctity. The Archbishop of Lyons,* presenting him with the instrument of his election, conjured him to submit to the vocation. Peter, in astonishment, prostrated himself on the ground; and, after he had continued in prayer a considerable time, he rose up, and fearing to oppose the will of God, he consented to his election, and took the name of Celestine V.

Since the days of the first Gregory, no pope had ever assumed the pontifical dignity with more purity of intention. But he had not Gregory's talents for business and government; and the Roman See was immensely more corrupt in the thirteenth than it was in the sixth century.—Celestine soon became sensible of his incapacity: he was lost, as in a wilderness. He attempted to reform abuses, to retrench the luxury of the clergy; to do, in short, what he found totally impracticable. He committed mistakes and exposed himself to the ridicule of the scornful. His conscience was kept on the rack through a variety of scruples, from which he could not extricate himself; and, from his ignorance of the world, and of canon-law, he began to think he had done wrong in accepting the office. He spent much of his time in retirement: nor was he easy there, because his conscience told him, that he ought to be discharging the pastoral office. Overcome with anxiety, he asked Cardinal Cajetan, whether he might not abdicate? It was answered, yes. Celestine gladly embraced the opportunity of assuming again the character of brother Peter, after he had been distressed with the phantom

Abdication of
Celestine.

A. D. 1294.

of dignity for four or five months. He abdicated in 1294. The last act of his

pontificate was worthy of the sincerity of his character. He made a constitution, that the pontiff might be allowed to abdicate, if he pleased.† It is remarkable, that no pope, since that time, has taken the benefit of this constitution.

That same Cajetan, who had, in effect, encouraged his resignation, contrived to be elected his successor, and took the name of Boniface VIII. Though Peter had given the most undoubted proofs of

his love of obscurity, and desired nothing more than that he might spend the rest of his days in private devotion, yet Boniface, who measured other men by himself, apprehended and imprisoned him, lest he should revoke his resignation. Peter gave such proofs of sincerity, as convinced all persons, except Boniface himself, that nothing was to be dreaded from his ambition. The tyrant sent him into the castle of Fumone, under a guard of soldiers: the old hermit was shut up in a hideous dungeon; and his rest was interrupted by the jailors, who nightly disturbed his sleep. These insults and hardships he seems to have borne with Christian patience and meekness. He sent this message to Boniface, "I am content; I desired a cell, and a cell you have given me." But AMBITION IS MADE OF STERNER STUFF, than to yield to the suggestions of conscience or humanity. In the year 1296, after an imprisonment of ten months, Celestine died of a fever, most probably ^{Celestine dies.} contracted by the unworthy ^{A. D. 1296.} treatment which he received.

I have now mentioned the principal facts recorded concerning Celestine. There are no memorials of the internal exercises of his mind, but the discerning reader will be apt to rank him with those of whom "the world was not worthy."* After his decease the hypocritical Boniface, and all the Cardinals, attended his obsequies at St. Peter's. This is that Boniface, whose crimes disgraced the end of this century, and the beginning of the next: of whom it is said, that he entered the pontificate as a fox, lived as a lion, and died as a dog: and who, having tormented the Christian world for eight years, met at length with a punishment worthy of his crimes, dying in prison under the greatest agonies. This same man also published a decretal, "that the Roman pontiff ought to be judged by none, though, by his conduct, he drew innumerable souls with himself to hell!"

Thomas Aquinas, called, "the angelical doctor," filled the Christian world in this century, with the renown of his name. He was a Dominican, who, by his comments on four books of Peter Lombard, master of the sentences, and, particu-

Thomas Aquinas, a Dominican of Naples, A. D. 1243.

* Vertot's Knights of Malta, Vol. II.

† Platina.

* Heb. xi. 38.

larly, by his expositions of Aristotle, made himself more famous than most men of that time, on account of his skill in scholastic divinity. His penetration and genius were of the first order; but he excelled in that subtle and abstruse kind of learning only, which was better calculated to strike the imagination, than to improve the understanding. He maintained what is commonly called the doctrine of free-will, though he largely quoted Augustine, and retailed many of his pious and devotional sentiments. His Aristotelian subtleties enabled him to give a specious colour to the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation, which in him found a vehement defender. The new festival of the body of Christ was, by this divine, adorned with an idolatrous ritual, which strengthened the fashionable superstitions.* He was the great supporter of the doctrine of supererogation, which, at the same time that it established the most pernicious views of self-righteousness, by leaving the disposal of the superfluous treasure of the merits of saints to the discretion of the papal see, added one strong link to the chain, which dragged the nations into ecclesiastical slavery. Nor were his voluminous writings much calculated to instruct mankind. For he supposed, that whatever sense any passage of Scripture could, possibly, admit in grammatical construction, it was the real sense intended by the Holy Spirit: whence the imaginations of every sportive genius were regarded as of divine authority. And thus the Scriptures were perverted and exposed to the ridicule of profane minds. Nor were they rescued from this miserable abuse, till the æra of the Reformation. His sentiments on the all-important doctrine of justification, were deplorably corrupt; and that †“good works deserve grace of

congruity,” was one of his favourite axioms. His notions of the nature of repentance were egregiously trifling. On the other hand, there are in his writings, and particularly in the account of his discourses during his last sickness, traces of great devotion, and a strain of piety very similar to that of Augustine. But I confess, that interlarded as they are with Romish idolatry, and an unbounded attachment to the pope as the infallible guide of the Church, I feel no inclination to transcribe them; because I am thoroughly convinced of the frauds by which the Dominicans supported the popedom; and because some glare of solemn devotion seemed necessary to be employed by the agents of that See, in order to maintain the reputation of a system intolerably corrupt.—The works of Aquinas were printed at Rome in seventeen volumes folio, A. D. 1570.

Bonaventura, a Franciscan doctor, may be briefly dismissed with similar observations. He also held the same corrupt sentiments concerning justification, with Thomas Aquinas. Nor does there appear in the whole Roman Church, in this century, a single divine, who could give to a serious inquirer the scriptural answer to the question, “What shall I do to be saved?”* Hence all, who felt trouble of conscience, were led to betake themselves to salvos with which the blind leaders of the blind supplied them.—Among these the delusive invention of purgatory was the most remarkable; and in the Romish Church it upholds its credit to this day. Before the true Scripture doctrine of justification it cannot stand for a moment; and whoever applies this doctrine with unfeigned faith to a guilty conscience, such a one will find relief, and will be led into the paths of true peace and genuine holiness. He may, indeed, and ought to pity those who are deluded by so unscriptural and superstitious a notion as that of purgatory, but he himself will never be led captive by it. It may be worth while to state the reasons on which the advocates of the papacy support the doctrine of purgatory, in their own words. † “Some part of the debt which the penitent owes to the divine justice, may remain uncan-

Bonaventura
became a
Franciscan,
A. D. 1243.

* I have consulted the Centuriators, Mosheim, Du Pin, and Butler, concerning the tenets and writings of this doctor, and, on the whole, can find but little matter, which may properly belong to this history.—A similar observation may be made concerning Bonaventura.

† See Article XIII. of the Church of England. The peculiar care with which the Church of England protects the great doctrine of justification, merits the attention of every sincere member of our Establishment.—The dangerous notion of meriting grace of congruity, implies a world of mischief.

* Acts, xvi. 30, 31.

† Butler, Vol. XI. page 27.

celled. Certainly some sins are venial, which deserve not eternal death; yet, if not effaced by condign penance in this world, they must be punished in the next. The smallest sin excludes a soul from heaven, so long as it is not blotted out. But no man will say, that a venial sin, which destroys not sanctifying grace, will be punished with eternal torments. Hence there must be a relaxation of punishment in the world to come. Venial sins of surprise are readily effaced by penance, as we hope, through the divine mercy. Venial sins of malice, or those committed with full deliberation, are of a different nature, far more grievous and fatal. They are usually sins of habit, and lead even to mortal sin."

Thus, by the help of certain distinctions of sins, conclusions no where warranted in Scripture were drawn, and mankind were led to look on purgatory as a relief to troubled consciences. If they had not effaced their guilt by penance in this life, it was hoped that purgatory, assisted by the prayers and donations made in behalf of the deceased, would release them afterwards from damnation. How strongly men were hence encouraged to live in sin all their days, is but too plain. And it seems wonderful, that so learned and sensible an author as A. Butler should build a doctrine of such practical importance on mere conjectures, without the least scriptural ground. But on the other hand, whoever sees the real guilt and defilement of sin, of all sorts of sin, and rests wholly and entirely for acceptance with God on the righteousness, atonement, and intercession of Jesus Christ, finds at once the power of superstition and of licentiousness subdued; and he knows how to possess his soul in PERFECT PEACE; and to serve his heavenly Father "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of his life."* The instruction, which lays open this secret, is given by every real protestant teacher of divinity; instruction,—which, we see, the two great admired doctors and supposed luminaries of the thirteenth century were unable to give.

It is much to be wished that we could know more of Hugo the Burgundian, a Roman cardinal, who wrote comments on the whole Scriptures, and honestly ex-

posed the impiety and wickedness of the ecclesiastics of his time. He is said to have been the inventor of concordances. He died at Rome, in the year 1262.*

Guilhelmus,† bishop of Paris, flourished about the year 1230. On Christian justification, and other fundamentals, he thought more justly than many of his contemporaries. He wrote on various religious subjects, and particularly on the collation of benefices; on which point he held, that no man could be a pluralist, without the loss of his soul, unless the value of his preferment was exceedingly small. He was a man of learning and piety.

On this question the care of the Church had been remarkable. In the fourth general council of Chalcedon, by the tenth canon, pluralities were condemned; also at the second council of Nice, in the eighth century. In the sixth council of Paris, held in the year 829, the same practice was pronounced unlawful. And so strongly did the voice of natural conscience, and the common sense of propriety and decorum prevail against the torrent of fashionable corruptions, in speculation at least, that even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the possession of scandalous pluralities was condemned in a papal council, namely, the fourth council of the Lateran.‡

Christianus, bishop of Mentz, was accused before the pope, as a person incapable of governing the Church. For he

* *Ladvoat.*—Cent. Magd. X. 1020.

† Cent. Magd. X. 1033.

‡ See Burnet's Pastoral Care, Chap. V. and Labb. Concil. Lat. IV.

N. B. Our historian, in the concise notice which he takes of this council, does not mention the dispensing power given to the pope by the twenty-ninth canon. But this can scarcely be deemed a blameable omission by any one who observes, that the dispensing power of the pope under the arrogant form of *NON OBSTANTE*, is strongly reprobated in three distinct places of this Vol., and these at no great distance from this very page, viz. pp. 158. 194. & 196.

The twenty-ninth canon concludes in these words, "*Circa SUBLIMES TAMEN & LITERATAS personas, quæ majoribus sunt beneficiis honoranda, cum ratio postulaverit, per sedem apostolicam poterit dispensari.*"—The words *sublimes & literatas* were soon understood to include all persons in any way dependent on great men, and all graduates in any uni-

Hugo the
Burgun-
dian died,
A. D. 1262.

Care of the
ancient
Church
respecting
Pluralists.

had refused to be concerned in military and secular employments, and had given himself up to the pastoral care. In these times such a conduct was deemed contemptible at least, if not criminal; after two years residence at Mentz, he resigned; and, not long after, he died, in the year 1251.*

CHAPTER VII.

GROSSETESTE, BISHOP OF LINCOLN.

ROBERT GROSSETESTE† was born probably about the year 1175; he seems to have been a person of obscure parentage, at Stradbrook in Suffolk. He studied at Oxford, where learning was very zealously cultivated; and there he laid the foundation of his skill in the Greek tongue, the knowledge of which had been introduced from France and Italy. Hence he made himself master of Aristotle, whose works, though idolized, had hitherto been only read through the medium of translation; and at Oxford also he studied the sacred language of the Old Testament. He afterwards went to Paris, the most renowned seminary then in Europe, where he still prosecuted the study of the Hebrew and the Greek, and became a perfect master of the French language. Here also he became, according to the ideas of the age, a consummate theologian and philosopher. Knowledge was then very rude and inaccurate: but Grosseteste, doubtless, possessed all which Europe could furnish. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that he should have been looked on as a magician; the same thing happened to the famous Roger Bacon, who flourished something later.

Grosseteste was a divine of principal note in the University of Oxford. He associated with both the mendicant orders, and was the first lecturer in the Franciscan school of that seminary. He seems to have been always serious in re-

ligion, according to the degree of light which he had: and, as his views were very indistinct, it is not surprising that he was, for a time at least, captivated by the appearance of sanctity in those de- ceivers of mankind.

In the year 1235, he was elected, by the dean and chapter, bishop of Lincoln; and King Henry III. confirmed their choice. That see was then much more extensive than it is at this day: and the new bishop, who was of an ardent and active spirit, immediately undertook to reform abuses. For this end he usually went through the several archdeaconries and deaneries, requiring the attendance of the clergy, and admonishing the people likewise to attend, that their children might be confirmed, that they might make their confession, and hear the word of God. Robert himself usually preached to the clergy; and some Friar of the Dominican or Franciscan order lectured the people. The friars of these orders were now his particular favourites; and he encouraged them to hear the confessions of the laity, and to enjoin them penance. The secular clergy were naturally enough offended at this predilection of the bishop: they thought that their own rights were invaded. In the mean time the friars themselves gradually brought the new orders into disrepute, by exercising an unlimited dominion over the consciences of the laity, and by enriching themselves at their expense. But Robert, who measured the minds of others by his own honesty and simplicity, and who was pleased with the superior learning, zeal and activity of these new instruments of the papacy, saw not as yet the evil tendency of their measures, and therefore, he encouraged their labours. The days were evil: the zealous bishop could not think of giving countenance to the secular clergy, who were ignorant and vicious, in preference to the friars; and, in his zeal for promoting godliness, of which his notions were confused and indigested, he was glad of those assistants, who seemed most cheerfully to co-operate with his own benevolent intentions.

But though he was far more disposed to favour the two new orders than they deserved, he was severe in his censures of the other more ancient orders, and was very strict in his visitations of them. In both parts of his conduct he was in-

Grosseteste elected bishop of Lincoln, A. D. 1235.

versity, provided they could afford to go to Rome and pay for their dispensations.—Labb. XI. page 181.

* Cent. Magd. X. 1052.

† I am obliged principally to Mr. Pegge's late valuable publication of the life of this distinguished prelate, for the following account: but I have also consulted Fox, the martyrologist, Fascic. rer. expetend: and other authors.

fluenced by the same upright principle: the hypocrisy indeed of the Dominicans and Franciscans escaped his penetration; but he could not be deceived by the gross ignorance and dissolute manners of the more ancient orders. Such were the methods by which the prince of darkness seems to have prolonged the reign of Antichrist. The orders of the ancient times, having filled up their season in supporting the MAN OF SIN by a specious appearance of holiness, when this was gone, other orders arose, who undertook the same task, and defended the system of iniquity by a severer course of life and manners. Even such men as the bishop of Lincoln, rigidly conscientious and upright, were seduced, undesignedly, to lend their aid in imposing on mankind. In the mean time, the true cure of these evils, namely, the light of Scripture and of its genuine doctrines, was generally unknown in Christendom.

One of the most salutary offices of the art of criticism is to distinguish the genuine works of the ancients from the spurious. This was unknown in Grossesteste's time: and hence the laborious bishop was induced to employ his learning in translating "the Testaments of the twelve Patriarchs" out of Greek into Latin. He thought that he had, by this means, enriched Europe with a valuable monument of sacred antiquity. It is amazing that the bishop should place so contemptible a performance on an equal footing with the Holy Scriptures. It scarcely seemed worth while to mention such a circumstance, except as a demonstration that the ignorance of the times was exceedingly great, and that the difficulties of acquiring divine knowledge were then immense beyond our conception.

Let it suffice to mention in general, that the bishop of Lincoln was, partly through his love of justice, and partly through the excessive warmth of his temper, frequently engaged in quarrels with convents, and with other agents of the pope. At one time he was even excommunicated by the convent of Canterbury: but this ecclesiastical sentence was so frequently prostituted to the basest purposes, and was so often pronounced on frivolous occasions, that it had, in a great measure, lost its influence on the minds of men. Grossesteste treated it, in his own case, with scorn and contempt, and continued to labour in

the promotion of piety, and in the redress of abuses, with unwearied vigour and activity, but at the same time, under all the disadvantages, which the darkness of the times and an eager and vehement temper may be supposed to occasion. So long a course of consistent steadiness, integrity, and so much fear of God, attended with so small a degree of spiritual light, as in the case of this bishop, is not a common phenomenon in the Church of God. But the work of the Holy Spirit in religion is diversified with an endless variety of operations. The instance before us deserves attention. The holy soul of Robert Grossesteste, which was favoured with so much discernment, as just to understand and receive the essentials of godliness, and no more, could not endure with patience the manifold corruptions of the times. He took pains in his diocese to reform various gross abuses, among which was the practice of clergymen acting plays, and maintaining connexion with Jews. The friars were still his favourites: and he rebuked the rectors and vicars of his diocese, because they neglected to hear them preach, and because they discouraged the people from attending and confessing to them. His devoted attachment to the popedom appears hence in a striking light, and still more so in some other transactions, which it is not necessary to particularize. He continued to patronize the friars. These were his most intimate companions: with these he used to hold conferences on the Scriptures; and at one time he had thoughts of entering into the Franciscan order himself. But however defective he was in doctrine, he was exceedingly strict in his views of morality: and, like all reformers of the merely active class, who labour to promote external good conduct, with low and inadequate ideas of Christian principle, he excited great offence and disgust, and produced very little solid benefit to mankind.

Events, however, occurred, which in some measure unfolded to the eyes of the bishop the real character of the friars.

In 1217, two English Franciscans were sent into England with credentials to extort money for the pope. They applied to the prelates and abbots, but seem, at this time at least, to have met with little success. Grossesteste was amazed at the in-

Grossesteste resists the pope's attempts to extort money from the English, in
A. D. 1247.

solence and pompous appearance of the friars, who assured him that they had the pope's bull, and who earnestly demanded six thousand marks for the contribution of the diocese of Lincoln: "Friars, answered he, with all reverence to his holiness be it spoken, the demand is as dishonourable, as it is impracticable. The whole body of the clergy and the people are concerned in it equally with me. For me then to give a definite answer in an instant to such a demand, before the sense of the kingdom is taken upon it, would be rash and absurd." The native good sense of the bishop suggested this answer: but the true Antichristian character of the pope was as yet unknown to Grosseteste.—The blood of our Saviour was about the same time pretended to be brought into England, and he had the weakness to vindicate the delusion.

The bishop continued still to exert himself with the most upright intentions for the good of the Church. But, it was his usual infelicity to "labour in the fire for very vanity,"* because he had no distinct perception of the fundamental truths of Christianity. The value of solid and perspicuous views of Evangelical truth was never more forcibly exhibited than in this case. Most bishops or pastors, who have been possessed of this advantage though inferior to Grosseteste in magnanimity, industry, and activity, have yet, if truly pious, far exceeded him in promoting the real good of the Church. He translated the works of John Damascenus, and of the spurious Dionysius the Areopagite, and illustrated them with commentaries: the former author was learned indeed, but was the great patron of image worship; and the latter was a contemptible visionary.

It was in the case of practical evils, not of doctrinal errors, that the bishop of Lincoln showed the strength of his discernment: In regard to

In
A. D. 1248.
he attempts to
reform the religious
orders.

these he never failed to act with sincerity and vigour. In 1248, he obtained, at a great expense, from Innocent IV. letters to empower him to reform the religious orders. If he had understood at that time the real character of Antichrist, he would have foreseen the vanity of all attempts to reform the Church, which were grounded on papal authority. The rectitude however of his

own mind was strikingly apparent in the transaction. He saw with grief the waste of large revenues made by the monastic orders; and being supported by the pope, as he thought, he determined to take into his own hand the rents of the religious houses, most probably with a design to institute and ordain vicarages in his diocese, and to provide for the more general instruction of the people. But the monks appealed to the pope; and Grosseteste, in his old age, was obliged to travel to Lyons, where Innocent resided. Roman venality was now at its height, and the pope determined the cause against the bishop. Grieved and astonished at so unexpected a decision, Grosseteste said to Innocent, "I relied on your letters and promises, but am entirely disappointed." "What is that to you," answered the pope, "you have done your part, and we are disposed to favour them: IS YOUR EYE EVIL, BECAUSE I AM GOOD?" With such shameless effrontery can wicked men trifle with scriptural passages. The bishop, in a low tone, but so as to be heard, said with indignation, "O money, how great is thy power, especially at the court of Rome!" The remark was bold and indignant, but perfectly just. It behoved Innocent to give some answer; and he used the common method of wicked men in such cases, namely, to retort the accusation. "You English," said he, "are always grinding and impoverishing one another. How many religious men, persons of prayer and hospitality, are you striving to depress, that you may sacrifice to your own tyranny and avarice!"—So spake the most unprincipled of robbers to a bishop, whose unspotted integrity was allowed by all the world.

All that the bishop could do was to leave his testimony at the court of Rome; and he delivered three copies of a long sermon, one copy to the pope, the other two copies to two of the cardinals. In this discourse he sharply inveighed against the flagitious practices of the court of Rome, particularly the appropriation of churches to religious houses, the appeals of the religious to the pope, and the scandalous clause* in the bulls of *NON OBSTANTE*, which was the great engine of the pope's dispensing power.

* See an account of the effect of this clause, in page 196. See also the note in p. 188.

He observes, that the Son of God submitted to a most ignominious death for the redemption of human souls, which, without mercy, were delivered to wolves and bears. His uprightness and magnanimity were evidenced by this step, but no good effect appeared. To explain and enforce the doctrines of the Gospel, and to prove the whole structure of the papacy perfectly inconsistent with those doctrines, would have been a far more likely method of promoting the edification of the Church; but to this task the light and knowledge of the bishop were unequal. He was for some time so dejected with the disappointment which he had met with, that he formed intentions of resigning his bishopric. But, recollecting what ravages of the Church might be the consequence of such a step, he felt it his duty to remain in his office, and to do all the good, which the infelicity of the times would permit.

The bishop often preached to the people in the course of his perambulation through his diocese; and he required the neighbouring clergy to attend the sermons. He earnestly exhorted them to be laborious in ministering to their flocks; and the lazy Italians, who, by virtue of the pope's letters, had been intruded into opulent benefices, and who neither understood the language of the people, nor wished to instruct them, were the objects of his detestation. He would often with indignation cast the papal bulls out of his hands, and absolutely refuse to comply with them, saying, that he should be the friend of Satan, if he should commit the care of souls to foreigners. INNOCENT, however, persisting in his plan, peremptorily ordered him to admit an Italian, perfectly ignorant of the English language, to a very rich benefice in the diocese of Lincoln; and Grosseteste, refusing to obey, was suspended.

Grosseteste
suspended.

Whether the sentence of suspension was formally repealed, or not, does not appear. Certain it is, that the bishop continued to exercise his episcopal functions; and shortly we shall advert to facts, which prove in a still more striking manner, with what impunity he despised the papal mandates.

Observing that churches appropriated to religious houses had not always stated vicars, and that where vicarages existed, they were often meanly

endowed, he obtained at length, in 1250, a bull from Innocent to empower him to regulate these matters.

He obtains a
bull for the
regulation of
the Churches:
A. D. 1250.

The evil was indeed enormous; but the persevering zeal of the bishop, supported by the extensive influence of his character, prevailed at length in some degree over the pope's usurpations; and a considerable number of vicarages in his diocese were at length regulated. A pious and upright perseverance in the reformation of abuses, amidst many vexatious disappointments, is seldom altogether in vain; and this wise and encouraging order of the divine government is extremely worthy of the attention of dignitaries of the Church in all ages.

Grosseteste united the labours of his pen to those of the episcopal office. He began a comment on the Psalter, though he lived not to finish the work; and he seems to have known no other recreation, than what naturally arose from the variety of his religious employments.

In January 1253, Innocent was desirous of preferring his nephew, an Italian youth, in the cathedral of Lincoln; and for this purpose, he, by letter, directed the bishop of the diocese to give him the first canonry that should be vacant. This

The pope appoints
his nephew to a
canonry by Provi-
sion: A. D. 1253.

was to be done by PROVISION; for that was the decent term employed by the pontiff when he undertook to provide a successor to a benefice beforehand, under pretence of correcting the abuse of long vacancies. INNOCENT seems to have been determined in this instance to intimidate the bishop into submission. He declared, that any other disposal of the canonry should be null and void; and that he would excommunicate every one who should dare to disobey his injunction. He wrote to two Italians, his agents in England, ordering them to ensure and complete the appointment, with his usual clause of NON OBSTANTE; a clause pregnant with the most intolerable abuses; for it set aside all statutes and customs, and obliged them to give way to the present humour of the pope.*

Grosseteste resolute in his disobedience, wrote an EPISTLE on this occasion, which has made his name immortal. As he advanced in years, he saw more clearly the

Grosseteste
opposes the
Pope with
great spirit.

corruptions of the popedom, which, however, he still looked on as of divine authority. But if we set aside this remnant of the prejudices of education, he argues altogether on Protestant principles. Some extracts of the epistle may deserve the reader's attention.* "I am not disobedient to the Apostolical precepts.—I am bound by the divine command to obey them. Our Saviour Christ saith, who-soever is not with me, is against me.—Our lord the Pope appears to be his type and representative. It is impossible then that the sanctity of the apostolical see can be repugnant to the authority of Jesus Christ. *THE NON OBSTANTE* clause overflows with uncertainty, fraud, and deceit, and strikes at the root of all confidence between man and man. Next to the sin of Antichrist, which shall be in the latter time, nothing can be more contrary to the doctrine of Christ, than to destroy men's souls, by defrauding them of the benefit of the pastoral office. Those, who serve their own carnal desires by means of the milk and pool of the sheep of Christ, and do not minister the pastoral office to the salvation of the flock, are guilty of destroying souls. Two enormous evils are in this way committed. In one respect they sin directly against God himself, who is essentially good; in another against the image of God in man, which, by the reception of grace, is partaker of the divine nature.—For the holy apostolical see to be accessory to so great wickedness, would be a horrible abuse of the fulness of power, an entire separation from the glorious kingdom of Christ, and a proximity to the two princes of darkness.† No man, faithful to the said see, can, with an unspotted conscience, obey such mandates, even if they were seconded by the high order of angels themselves; on the contrary, every faithful Christian ought to oppose them with all his might. It is therefore in perfect consistence with my duty of obedience, that I withstand these enormities, so abominable to the Lord Jesus Christ, so repugnant to the holiness of the apostolical see, and so contrary to the unity of the catholic faith. I say then, this see cannot act but to edification; but your PROVISIONS are destruc-

tion. The holy see neither can nor ought to attempt any such thing; for flesh and blood, and not the Heavenly Father, hath revealed such doctrines."

It is not clear whether this epistle was written to the pope directly, or to some of his agents. It was meant, however, for his inspection; and it affords a marvellous instance of that Christian boldness and honesty for which Grosseteste is so justly renowned.—Sullied, indeed, were the qualities of this good man with much doctrinal error, but ever animated by a true zeal for the honour of God, and by the deepest sense of the worth of souls.

Innocent, on receiving the positive denial, accompanied with such warm remonstrances, was incensed beyond measure: and "Who," said he, "is this old dotard, who dares to judge my actions? By Peter and Paul, if I were not restrained by my generosity, I would make him an example and a spectacle to all mankind. Is not the king of England my vassal, and my slave? and, if I gave the word, would he not throw him into prison, and load him with infamy and disgrace?" In so low a light did the bishop of Rome behold the monarch of this island! But king John had reduced his kingdom into a state of subjection to the pope; and the same vassalage continued all the days of his pusillanimous successor. The cardinals, however, who saw the danger which the pope incurred by his arrogance and temerity, endeavoured to moderate his resentment. Giles, in particular, a Spanish cardinal, said,* "It is not expedient for you to proceed against the bishop in that violent manner. For what he saith is certainly true, nor can we with decency condemn him. He is a holy man, more so than we ourselves are; a man of excellent genius, and of the best morals; no prelate in christendom is thought to excel him. By this time, it is possible, that the truths expressed in this epistle are divulged among many; and they will stir up numbers against us. The clergy, both of France and England, know the character of the man, nor is it possible to cast any stigma upon him. He is believed to be a great philosopher, an accomplished scholar in Latin and Greek literature, zealous in the administration of justice, a reader of theology in

* See Fox, Vol. I. p. 365. and M. Paris, p. 870. Fascic. rer. Vol. II. 400.

† He seems to mean the Devil and Antichrist.

* Fox, Vol. I. p. 366. Pegge, p. 248.

the schools, a popular preacher, a lover of chastity, and an enemy of simony." Others joined with Giles in the same sentiments. On the whole, the cardinals advised the pope to connive at these transactions, lest some tumult might arise in the Church, for they said, it was an evident truth, that a revolt from the Church of Rome would one day take place in Christendom. It seems there were even then some discerning spirits who could foresee, that so unrighteous a domination would in time be brought to a close. Yet the prevalence of ambition and avarice induced them to support their domination, though they were convinced of its iniquity.

But the fury of Innocent was not to be allayed. He pronounced the sentence of excommunication against Grosseteste; and nominated Albert, one of his nuncios, to the bishopric of Lincoln. The bishop appealed to the tribunal of Christ, and paid no regard to the decree. What the cardinals foresaw, came to pass; the pope's commands were universally neglected; and the bishop continued in quiet possession of his dignity.

In the latter end of the summer of the same year 1253, he was seized with a mortal disease at his palace at Buckden; and he sent for friar John de

St. Giles, to converse with him on the state of the Church. He blamed Giles

and his brethren the Dominicans, and also the Franciscans, because, though their orders were founded in voluntary poverty, they did not rebuke the vices of the great. "I am convinced," said he, "that both the pope, unless he amend his errors, and the friars, except they endeavour to restrain him, will be deservedly exposed to everlasting death." We may hence collect what was the foundation of that respect which the bishop was wont to pay to the friars; it was the eclat of their voluntary poverty, which he hoped would have enabled them to be faithful dispensers of the Word of God, as by it they seemed to be removed above the temptations of avarice. If a man of his understanding was deceived by their feigned sanctity, it ought to be less matter of surprise that the world at large was imposed on by the same cause; and that the institution of these orders proved so convenient a sup-

port to the popedom for several generations. The mind of Grosseteste was always more clear in discerning the END of true religion than it was in discovering the MEANS of promoting it. Upright, intrepid, disinterested, and constantly influenced by the fear of God, he yet failed to bring about the good which he had conceived in his heart, because he had too little acquaintance with "the mystery of godliness," and because he too much relied on moral and prudential plans for that reformation of mankind, which is sought in vain from everything, except from the knowledge and application of the Gospel.

But the bishop was rapidly advancing towards eternity: and he seems now to have had more powerful manifestations of divine truth from the Spirit of God, than any with which he had hitherto been favoured. His zeal evidently arose from the purest charity. Superior to selfish considerations, he was absorbed in meditations concerning the Church; and we have from a contemporary historian* an account of his last conversations with his chaplains, in which there was probably something still more evangelical than what they or the historian could understand. It is, however, our duty to report it as it is delivered to us; and clergymen at least will find it worthy their attention.

"In October, the bishop, oppressed with a fatal distemper, whatever it was, sent for some of his chaplains, and conversed with them. Christ, said he, with a sigh, came into the world to save souls; ought not he, then, who takes pains to ruin souls, to be denominated Antichrist? Our God built the universe in six days, but he laboured more than thirty years to restore man when fallen. Is not then the destroyer of souls, the Antichrist and the enemy of God? The pope is not ashamed impudently to disannul, by his clauses of *NON OBSTANTE*, the decrees of the holy pontiffs, his predecessors. Many other popes have afflicted the Church; this INNOCENT has enslaved it more than they." He then recounts their usurious and fraudulent proceedings in England, and inveighs against the arts of amassing money practised by the friars on account of the crusades. I have seen, said he, an instrument, in which it was inserted, that those,

* Matt. Paris.

who, in their wills, devised money for the use of the crusades, should receive indulgence in proportion to the sum they gave. He then exposed the scandalous practice of disposing of ecclesiastical benefices, and lamented that the friars, the devotees of poverty, were now converted into tax-gatherers to the pope, belying the habit they wore, while they were made more secular than ever. The bishop, indignant at these and other horrible proceedings, observed, "The Church can never be delivered from this Egyptian bondage, but by the edge of the sword;" and while he was scarcely able to speak for sighs and tears, his breath and his voice failed him. He might be sharpened by his accusations by the personal ill treatment which he himself had received; but it must be owned, that he had a distinct knowledge of facts, and a most just abhorrence of hypocrisy and iniquity. And it is only to be lamented, that he had lived so long a time, and remained so little acquainted with the only Christian armour of doctrine, which can cut down the powers of Antichrist. He

Grosseteste
dies at Buck-
den,

A. D. 1253.

died at Buckden, October 9, 1253. INNOCENT heard of his death with pleasure; and said with exultation, "I rejoice, and let every true son of the

Roman church rejoice with me, that my great enemy is removed." He ordered a letter to be written to king Henry, requiring him to take up the bishop's body, to cast it out of the church, and to burn it. The cardinals, however, opposed the tyrant; and the letter was never sent, probably on account of the decline of Innocent's health; for he died the succeeding year.

M. Paris, though most superstitiously attached to the Roman see, and prejudiced against the bishop of Lincoln, on account of his severity towards the ancient monastic orders, was, however, a man of probity and honour; and he has left such a testimony to the character of Grosseteste, as deserves to be presented to the reader.*

"The holy bishop Robert departed this world, which he never loved, and which was always to him as a place of banishment. He was the open reprover both of my lord the pope, and of the king, and the censurer of the

prelates, the corrector of monks, the director of priests, the instructor of the clergy, the supporter of scholars, the preacher to the laity, the punisher of incontinence, the diligent investigator of various writings, and lastly, he was the scourge of lazy and selfish Romans, whom he heartily despised. In the supply of the temporal table, liberal, copious, polite, cheerful and affable. In the spiritual table, devout, humble, and contrite. In the episcopal office, diligent, venerable, and indefatigable." The historian adds to this, "that even in those instances of discipline, in which he seemed to bear the hardest on the monks, he was allowed to have acted always with the purest intentions."

Grosseteste appears to have had no great turn for public business; he neglected it for the most part: nor did he frequent the court. The salvation of souls was perpetually in his thoughts and in his mouth; and it is devoutly to be wished, that many, whose evangelical light is far superior to his, resembled him in tenderness of conscience, in unwearied activity and zeal, and in genuine humility and modesty of spirit, with which, notwithstanding the disadvantage of a temper plainly irascible in a great degree, he was very eminently endowed.

In one of his letters he shows the idea which he had formed of the importance of the pastoral office.* "I dare not, for the love of God," says he, "confer the care of souls on any person, who will not sedulously discharge the office in person. The office itself is of the last importance; it requires a governor always RESIDENT, who applies himself to it with vigilance, prudence, diligence, and fervour; who preaches the word of the Lord in season and out of season; who exhibits himself an example of good works; who, when he gives salutary admonition and is not regarded, can grieve and lament; who shakes his hands from holding bribes; who so evidently applies to pious uses the pecuniary fines, which he receives for the punishment of faults, that he is perfectly free from all suspicion of selfishness and avarice on that account; who is delighted, when he can with a good conscience acquit the accused; whom no prejudice, passion, intreaty, or gift, or partiality, can divert from the path of rectitude; who delights in labour, and

His charac-
ter by
M. Paris.

* Matt. Paris, p. 876. Edit. Lond. 1640.

* Pegge.

whose whole desire is to profit souls." He, who in an age of superstition, which afforded so many temptations to venality and corruption, could act according to the spirit of these rules, must have been possessed of the Spirit of Christ, and have been superior to the spirit of the world.

To have so much enlarged on the character and transactions of a man so little distinguished, in regard to evangelical knowledge, as bishop Grosseteste was, from the common herd of papists in his time, might seem to need an apology, were I not sensible, that the eminence of his PRACTICAL godliness demonstrates, that he must have been in possession of the fundamentals of Divine Truth; and, that the candid and intelligent reader may receive edification from a light which burned with steadiness in the Church of God, though in much obscurity.

The evidence, however, of the bishop's knowledge of fundamental truths is not only to be collected by fair inferences,

*Sermons of
Grosseteste.*

but is also direct and positive. A number of his sermons in manuscript are still extant.* I have examined one of these throughout, which was preached from our Saviour's words in the sixth chapter of St. Luke, "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Let it suffice to condense the ideas contained in this sermon into a narrow compass, by a very short abridgment, which to the best of my power shall be faithful to the sentiments of the author, though I have not thought it worth while to translate accurately the barbarous Latin of the original.

He undertakes to describe the poverty recommended in the text, which, by comparison with another evangelist,† appears to be poverty in spirit. This poverty, he observes, is wrought in the heart of the elect by the Holy Spirit. Its foundation, he tells us, is laid in real humility, which disposes a man to feel, that he has nothing, except what he has received from above. But this is not all; for humility in this view belonged to Adam before he fell. But the humility of a sinner has a still deeper root. The humble man not only sees that he has nothing in himself, but he is also stripped of all desire to possess in himself the

springs of self-exaltation. Condemned in himself, and corrupt before God, he despairs of help from his own powers, and in seeking he finds HIM, who is the true life, wisdom, and health, who is all in all, even the Incarnate Son of God, who descended into our vale of sin and misery, that he might raise us from their depths. By leaning on HIM alone, every true Christian rises into true life, and peace, and joy. He lives in HIS life, he sees light in HIS light, he is invigorated with HIS warmth, and he grows in HIS strength, and leaning upon the Beloved, his soul ascends upwards. The lower he sinks in humility, the higher he rises toward God. He is sensible that he not only is nothing in himself, but that he has also lost what he had gratuitously received,—has precipitated himself into misery, and so subjected himself to the slavery of the devil; and lastly, that he has no internal resources for recovery. Thus he is induced to place his whole dependence on the Lord; to abhor himself, and always to prefer others, and "to take the lowest seat" as his own proper place.—The humble soul is called on by our author, solicitously to examine himself, whether he really demonstrates in his temper and practice this grace of humility; and to beware lest, even if he do find some evidences of it in his soul, he be inflated with the discovery, because he ought to know, that it is from the Lord alone that he is what he is; and that he ought no more to boast of himself than the shining colours in the glass should glory in that splendour, which they derive entirely from the solar rays. He observes, that the temptations to self-complacency are the effect of Satanic injections; and that it behoves him, who would be found unfeignedly humble, to see whether he has the genuine marks of humility in practice; whether, for instance, he can bear to be rebuked by an inferior, whether he is not rendered insolent by honours, whether he is not inflated by praise, whether among equals he is the first to labour, and the last to exhort himself, whether he can render blessings for curses, and good for evil. By such methods of self-examination he is to check the ebullitions of vain-glory, with which the tempter is apt to inspire those, who seem to have made some proficiency in grace. If that proficiency be real, let them take care never to conceive of it as something separate from Christ: HE

* They are preserved in the Cathedral of St. Peter at York.

† Matt. v.

the faith of this good prelate, seem to have suppressed such expressions as did not well accord with their own views. The historian endeavours to avoid controversy; yet he may be allowed to remark, that on the subjects of grace, free-will, and justification, bishop Grosse- teste does not always preserve an inva- riable consistency. The wonder, how- ever, as hath been justly observed, ought to be, that he should have seen so well as he did. In general, he was eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures; fervent in spirit, speaking and teaching boldly the things of the Lord;—though, like Apol- los, he sometimes needed an “Aquila and Priscilla to expound to him the way of God more perfectly.”

CENTURY XIV.

CHAPTER I.

THE GENERAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THIS CENTURY.

THE same ignorance and superstition, the same vices and immoralities, which predominated in the last century, discoloured the appearance of the Church in this. Real Christians were still to be found either only among the Waldenses, or else they worshipped God in obscurity, under the unspeakable disadvantages of the general corruption. There arose indeed in this century, various sectaries, besides the Waldenses, who were cruelly persecuted, both by popes and emperors; of whom, therefore, at first sight, we are ready to conclude, that they must have been the real people of God. I cannot, however, find positive evidence, that any of them professed the real doctrines, or were influenced by the real Spirit, of Jesus. Some of them were the disgrace of human nature, both in their principles and their practice; and I mean not to detail the narratives of fanaticisms, with which most ecclesiastical histories abound. The term Lollard was affixed in general to all those, who professed, whether on solid principles of godliness or not, a greater degree of attention to acts of piety and devotion, than the rest of mankind. Of these, Walter Raynard, a Dutchman, was apprehended and burnt at Cologne. This is he, whom I have already called Raynard Lollard, in the account of the Waldenses, and from whom the Wickliffites are supposed to have acquired the name of Lollards. I have carefully attended to Mosheim's account of the origin of the term,* and am convinced from his reasonings, that Lollard was a general name of reproach given to professors of

piety, and not the proper name of any particular person. But it by no means thence follows, as Mosheim contends, that Walter Raynard always belonged to some sect of the Romish communion. The accounts of the most eminent German authors constantly represent him as a protestant, and the common use of the term Lollard in England, as applied to the followers of Wickliffe and of Walter Raynard, could scarcely have obtained, if the latter had continued a papist till his death.*

The Church of God, therefore, considered as a society, seems only to have existed among the people, whose history has been related above.† Of other sects the detail would be as insipid as it would be obscure and perplexed; and whoever has remarked the confusion of terms, which negligence, obloquy, or artifice, have introduced into the ecclesiastical accounts of sects and parties, will find little reason to acquiesce in the arrangements of their classes, which writers in different ages have made. Let us attend to facts rather than to terms. It is certain, that there were many societies of persons in this century called Beghards, Beguines, Lollards, Brethren of the Free Spirit, Flagellants, &c., who suffered extremely from the iron hand of power. Among all these, the people called Waldenses, and called also Lollards,—with what propriety is a question of little importance,—seem perfectly distinguished, by their solid piety, sound scriptural judgment, and practical godliness; and therefore they may justly be

* On the contrary, as it has been mentioned already, Walter Raynard, from a Franciscan and an enemy, became a Waldensian, preached the Gospel, and suffered on that account at Cologne.—Page 75 of this Vol.

† Waldenses.

* See Mosheim, Vol. I. pp. 747. 757.

accounted to have suffered for righteousness sake; while the rest, as far as certainly appears, were the martyrs of folly, turbulence, or impiety.

In the East, the profession of Christianity still pervaded that contracted empire of the Greeks, of which Constantinople was the metropolis. But no Christian records are come down to us of any thing like the primitive Gospel. Even the profession of Christianity, which had existed in China, was extirpated through the jealousy of the reigning powers; and the famous Tamerlane, the Tartar, cruelly persecuted all who bore the Christian name, being persuaded, as a Mahometan, that it was highly meritorious to destroy them. Thus even the form of godliness declined in Asia: the power of it, alas! had vanished long before. Nor were the attempts, which were made in Europe, to renew the crusades, by means of indulgences, calculated to revive the light of the Gospel in the East, even if they had succeeded.

Holy Land lost: The Holy Land had been lost in 1291; and an army was collected in 1363, under the auspices of pope Urban V. commanded by John, king of France, that same monarch, who had been taken prisoner by Edward the Black Prince, at the battle of Poitiers. But John departed this life, and Urban's hopes from the crusades were blasted.

In the mean time the boundaries of Christianity had been gradually extended in Europe.* Jagello, duke of Lithuania, was now almost the only pagan prince in that quarter of the world. And he, influenced by secular views, became a Christian in name and profession, and by this means acquired the crown of Poland. The Teutonic knights continued also the military methods of obliging the Prussians and Livonians to profess the Gospel, and completed in this century, what they had begun in the last.

The maxims and examples of the court of Rome were unspeakably prejudicial to the cause of godliness in this century. The practice of provisions, which had so much inflamed the zeal of bishop Grosse-teste, was now reduced into a system by the popes who resided in France, and all Europe complained of their impositions. In England, in the beginning of the reign of Edward III., almost upon every

vacancy the court of Rome pretended to fill the sees in this way.* Indeed its ambition and avarice were unbounded: it claimed a right to dispose of all offices in the Church both great and small, and in that way amassed considerable sums. That same Boniface VIII. whom we left in the pontifical see at the close of the last century, filled the Christian world with the noise and turbulence of his ambition. He followed the steps of Hildebrand, and attempted to be equally despotic in civil and ecclesiastical matters. He it was, who forbade the clergy to pay anything to princes without his permission.† He also instituted a jubilee, which was to be renewed every hundred years, by which he granted plenary indulgences to all strangers, who should visit the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome.‡ This unprincipled pontiff died in extreme misery in 1303, in the ninth year of his papacy.

The schism which afterwards took place in the popedom was providentially a blessing to mankind. While, for the space of fifty years, the Church had two or three heads at the same time; and, while each of the contending popes was anathematizing his competitors, the reverence of mankind for the popedom itself was insensibly diminished; and the labours of those, whom God raised up to propagate divine truth, began to be more seriously regarded by men of conscience and probity.

In this century flourished the celebrated John Duns Scotus. Whether he was born in England, Scotland, or Ireland, has been disputed. That he was a famous schoolman is well known. But in the light of true religion, I know nothing concerning him. The same thing may be said of Raymund Lully, William Oekham of Surrey, in England, and of Petrarch, that great reviver of polite literature in Italy. These were some of the most famous men in their age; but they helped not the Church of God. Toward the close, however, of this period,—for the most part one of the most uninteresting in Church history,—there arose

Death of Boniface VIII. A. D. 1303.

Duns Scotus.

* Collier.

† Du Pin.

‡ The successors of Boniface, finding that the jubilee augmented the revenue of the Roman church, fixed its return to every twenty-fifth year.

* Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 713.

in England a Luminary,* whose principles, conduct, and writings will require a distinct consideration, and whom I reserve to the third chapter. The same country furnishes us also with another equally rare and excellent, though much less celebrated character, I mean BRADWARDINE, archbishop of Canterbury, of whom an account will be given in the next chapter.—In the remainder of this it will be worth while to add a few particular circumstances, which may show in what sort of an age Bradwardine lived.

The accounts of individuals in this century, who truly feared God and wrought righteousness, are extremely scarce. One person, I find on the Continent, who seems not unworthy of a

place in these memoirs, I mean Eleazar, Count of Arian in Naples, born in 1295. At the age of twenty-three he succeeded to his father's estate. That this youth, in very affluent circumstances, and at a time of life when the passions are usually strong, could support a constant tenor of devotion and religious seriousness to his death, which took place about five years after, seems scarcely to have originated from principles lower than those of real Christianity. The regulations of his household are very remarkable; some of which are as follows:

"I cannot allow any blasphemy in my house, nor anything in word or deed which offends the laws of decorum.

"Let the ladies spend the morning in reading and prayer, the afternoon at some work.

"Dice and all games of hazard are prohibited.

"Let all persons in my house divert themselves at proper times, but never in a sinful manner.

"Let there be constant peace in my family; otherwise two armies are formed under my roof, and the master is devoured by them both.

"If any difference arise, let not the sun go down upon your wrath.

"We must bear with something, if we have to live among mankind. Such is our frailty, we are scarcely in tune with ourselves a whole day; and if a melancholy humour come on us, we know not well what we would have.

"Not to bear and not to forgive, is diabolical; to love enemies, and to do good for evil, is the mark of the children of God.

"Every evening, all my family shall be assembled at a godly conference, in which they shall hear something of God and salvation. Let none be absent on pretence of attending to my affairs. I have no affairs so interesting to me as the salvation of my domestics.

"I seriously forbid all injustice, which may cleave itself under colour of serving me.

"If I feel impatience under an affront," said he, on one occasion, "I look at Christ. Can anything, which I suffer, be like to that which he endured for me?"

We are told that his conduct in life corresponded to these maxims. I could not prevail on myself to pass over in silence such a character as this, whom general history, full of the intrigues and ambitious enterprises of popes and princes, neither knows nor regards. God has his secret saints in the dullest seasons of the Church, and Eleazar seems to have been one of these. But he was soon removed from this vale of sorrow; for he died in the twenty-eighth year of his age. His behaviour in his last sickness was of a piece with his life. The history of our Saviour's passion was read to him daily, and his mind was consoled by this means amidst the pains with which he was afflicted.*

But whoever, in these times, had any serious impressions of religion, could scarcely meet with the least solid instruction. For the preaching of the Word was so much disused, that it is remarked as a singular commendation of Thomas De la Mare, abbot of St. Alban's in the time of our king Edward III. that he preached in the priory of Timmoush, where he presided before he was elected abbot of St. Alban's, and employed many secular clergy and mendicants to do the same, perceiving the function of preaching to be wholly omitted in monasteries, † little practised by the seculars, and engrossed by the mendicants. If "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God," we may venture to affirm, that whenever Christian preaching is disused or despised, whether through the

* WICKLIFF.

* Butler, Vol. IX.

† Newcombe's History of St. Alban's.

influence of superstition or of refinement, then godliness is at a low ebb, and the principles of Christianity are almost unknown. A pious Eleazar may in some measure supply the want to his own family; but what must be the state of knowledge in the world at large? The truths of the Gospel are by no means obvious; they require study, attention, meditation; all the prejudices of our fallen nature oppose them when brought into full prospect; how dark then must be the minds of those who never hear of them! The formalities of monasticism may give a false peace to the conscience, but they cannot enlighten the understanding, nor regulate the heart. Hence, amidst the most splendid appearances of religion, wickedness abounded, and a cumbersome mass of superstitions was a poor substitute for the love of God and man. In the abbey of St. Alban's the superiors decked themselves with excess of pompous attire. They wore vestments as rich as art and money could make them; and though they changed their attire every day, they could not bring them all into use. Such was the state of things during the presidency of Thomas De la Mare, an abbot, who was looked on as the mirror of piety.

Some attempts were, however, made in England to stem the torrent of ecclesiastical corruption. Even in the preceding century, about the year 1265,* a national Synod, held at London under Othobon, the pope's legate, undertook to reform the abuses, of which the whole nation loudly complained. This synod, in which Welch, Scotch and Irish clergymen were present as well as English, was looked on as of great authority, and as a rule of ecclesiastical discipline to the Church. Several of its canons are still in force, make part of the canon law.† The ninth canon provides against the evil of non-residence, obliges the clergyman presented to a benefice, to resign his other preferments, and swear to reside. The twentieth provides against commutations for offences, and forbids the archdeacon ever to receive money on such accounts; for, "such practices," say the synod, "amount, in effect, to the

grant of a licence to sin." Severe, but just censure of the whole papal doctrine of indulgences! How little room was there to hope, that this canon would be strictly observed in archdeaconries, or in any other limited district, while the supreme rulers of the Church were breaking it continually!

In a council held at Lambeth in 1281,* a canon was enacted, which lays down rules of preaching concerning the fundamental articles of religion. It contains some wholesome truths, but mixed with much superstition. But the worst part of the canon is, that the parish-priest was obliged to explain these fundamental articles only once a quarter. One is almost tempted to think, that the dignitaries of the Church formerly prohibited some abuses, merely to save appearances, and were afraid, lest frequency of preaching might prove the means of a complete reformation. In this same council at Lambeth they allow the BLOOD of Christ in the lesser churches, only to the priest, and the WINE which they granted to the laity, they said, was merely wine. It was expressly declared, that the whole body and blood of Christ was given at once under the species of bread; though sometimes a cup of wine was given to the people.‡ And thus the innovation of denying to the laity communion in both kinds was gradually introduced. This was one of the latest, and at the same time, one of the most shameless and absurd corruptions of popery, destitute of every ground of argument, either from Scripture or common sense; nor is it easy to conceive how it could ever have found its way into Christendom. Was it, that those who invented it, intended to strengthen men's minds in the belief of transubstantiation, and also by sensible marks to impress on the imaginations of the people the superior dignity of the clergy? Be this as it may, we certainly find, that in the century, which we are at present reviewing, superstition has advanced some steps farther.

In the reign of Edward I. one of the wisest and most vigorous of our princes, it was natural for those who groaned under Romish oppressions, to expect some relief. But the pusillanimous conduct of

* Collier.

† Several of these canons are only Othobon's constitutions confirmed and enforced with further penalties.

* Collier.

† Spelman, Concil. p. 329. Henry's Hist. Book V.

his father, Henry III. had, during a very long reign, enabled the popes to enslave the nation completely, and unless the successor had felt himself the spirit of godliness, of which there are no evidences, it was not to be expected, that he would exert himself for the good of the Church. Edward indeed was very great in the arts both of war and of peace; but in ecclesiastical matters he did but little for his country. He paid, though with reluctance, the tribute imposed on king John, which had been remitted to Rome all the days of Henry III. He would not, however, allow it to be called a tribute; and he constantly maintained that he was not a vassal of the Roman see. His weak son and successor, Edward II. cannot be supposed to have been capable of relieving the nation; but under Edward III. something was done to restrain the encroachments of the popedom. This great prince resolutely refused to pay the annual stipend to Rome, and procured a parliamentary declaration, that king John had no right to reduce the English realm to a state of vassalage. By the statute of provisors he secured the rights of patrons and electors of livings against the claims of the papal see, and outlawed those who should dare to appeal to Rome.

On the Continent also the papal tyranny met with some opposition. The emperor Lewis was excommunicated by pope Clement VI. because he had dared to exercise the imperial authority, which had been conferred on him by the electors, without waiting for the confirmation of the pope; and so prevalent was the reign of superstition, that Lewis was obliged to renounce the imperial dignity. There was not wanting, however, some learned men, who protested against these papal usurpations, and particularly Marsilius of Padua, who published a defence of the emperor's authority against the encroachments of the pope, and maintained some protestant positions, not only in regard to ecclesiastical government, but also in support of that which is infinitely more important, the pure doctrine of the Gospel. In substance he appears to have held* that leading article of Christianity, justification before God, only for the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings; and he affirmed that good works are not the

efficient cause of our acceptance with God, but that on the contrary, they are the fruits of faith, and follow after their justification, which, in effect, never exists for any length of time without them. Distinctions, nice indeed, and in the eyes of superficial thinkers in religion always apparently frivolous, though they are inseparably connected with the true relief of burdened consciences, and though they directly tend not only to undermine the whole system of papal fallacy, but also to promote true holiness of heart and life.—But of this same Marsilius, who saw so clearly an essential branch of Evangelical truth, I rather conjecture than affirm, that he had the spirit of a wise and holy reformer.

About the same time, that is, about the middle of this century, Conrad Hager, in the city of Herbipoli,* taught for the space of twenty-four years together, that the Mass was not properly a sacrifice for sin; and of consequence was of no avail either to the living or to the dead for their acceptance with God; and therefore that the money bestowed on the priests for masses in behalf of the deceased, was pregnant with superstitious abominations. It is probable, that he taught also good doctrine, as well as opposed that which was evil. He was condemned as a heretic, and imprisoned; but history is silent concerning the issue of his afflictions.

In general, however, the great defect of those who withstood the reigning corruptions of these times, was this; they distinctly complained of the fashionable abominations, but were very scanty in describing the real evangelical doctrines, which alone can relieve and sanctify the souls of men. This remark is but too applicable to the very best of the Reformers, who appeared in Europe from this time till the era of the REFORMATION. That was a work, which well deserved its name, because it builded up as well as pulled down, and presented the church with a new fabric, as well as demolished the old. It was a work, in which the characters of a Divine influence appeared far more completely than in any of the former attempts against popery; and therefore its effects were lasting.—They remain to this day.

BUT THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS IS NOT TO BE DESPISED. †

* Fox, Acts and Monum. Vol. I. p. 443.

* Fox, Acts and Monum. p. 445.

† Zech. iv.

In this century, and probably towards the close of it, the Ploughman's Complaint appeared in England; a tract, which, with much zeal and energy, described the reigning abuses, and which, probably, was not without effect.

Richard Fizraf* was one of the most eminent confessors in this age. He was brought up at Oxford, and promoted by Edward III. to the archbishopric of Armagh in Ireland. He distinguished himself by opposing the pretensions of the Mendicant orders; who, armed with papal authority, encroached on the rights of the secular clergy, and prevented them from the exercise of godly discipline. "I have," said he, "in my diocese of Armagh, about two thousand persons, who stand condemned by the censures of the church, denounced every year against murderers, thieves, and such like malefactors, of all which numbers scarcely fourteen have applied to me or my clergy for absolution. Yet they all receive the sacraments, as others do, because they are absolved, or pretend to be absolved, by friars."

Nor was this the only point in which Fizraf opposed the Mendicants. He withstood their practice of begging; and maintained, that it is every man's duty to support himself by honest labour;—that it forms no part of Christian wisdom and holiness for men to profess themselves Mendicants,—that to subsist by begging ought to be matter of necessity, never of choice,—that the Son of God, as he never taught such doctrine, so he never practised it in his own person,—and that, though he was always poor when on earth, he never was a beggar. This was to strike at the root of the pretended sanctity of the friars, who were enraged to find the very practice in which they gloried as matter of extraordinary virtue, represented as in its own nature unlawful. Fizraf was therefore cited by the friars to appear before pope Innocent VI. and to give an account of the doctrine, which he had broached and maintained both in the pulpit and in conversation. The archbishop obeyed; and, in the presence of the pope, defended at large the rights of parochial ministers against the intrusion of the Mendicants, and exposed the various enormities of the

latter. What effect his defence had on the mind of the pope does not distinctly appear. It is certain, however, that this confessor was persecuted both by civil and ecclesiastical powers, and underwent a variety of hardships. In a certain confession or prayer which our martyrologist* saw, and intended, as he tells us, to publish, Fizraf describes the history of his own life, and particularly declares how the Lord had instructed him, and brought him out of the vanities of Aristotelian subtilty to the study of the Scriptures. The beginning of the prayer in Latin is given us by Fox, and deserves to be translated: "To Thee be praise, glory, and thanksgiving, O Jesus most holy, most powerful, most amiable, who hast said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life;' a way without aberration, truth without a cloud, and life without end. For thou hast shown to me the way; thou hast taught me the truth; and thou hast promised me life. Thou wast my way in exile, thou wast my truth in counsel, and thou wilt be my life in reward."

This holy person was seven or eight years in banishment, and died in that situation, having defended his tenets by words and by writings to his death. Of his refutation of the reigning abuses the account is large, but to us, at least at this day, tedious and unnecessary; of his Christian spirit, doctrine and sufferings, the account is very brief, but I think sufficient to show, that God was WITH HIM.

About the year 1372, pope Gregory XI. despatched a bull to the archbishop of Prague, in which he commanded him to excommunicate Militzius, a Bohemian. This man had belonged to some religious order at Prague, and having forsaken it, had given himself to preaching, and had certain congregations following him. Among these were several harlots, who being converted from their wickedness, now led a godly life. Militzius was wont to say of them, that in religious attainments they were superior to all the nuns in Christendom. Another of his assertions, which provoked the indignation of pope Gregory was, that Antichrist was already come. In his writings, he declared, that he was moved by the Holy Spirit, to search out by the Scriptures, concerning the coming of Antichrist. Little more is recorded

Militzius
excommunicated:
A. D. 1372.

* Fox, p. 464, &c.

* Fox.

concerning this confessor, than that he was at length silenced and imprisoned by the archbishop of Prague.

There were others who opposed the corruptions of the times; but the account is too obscure and scanty to be interesting. He who loves to see the practical power of Divine truth, would wish, not only that opposition should be made to Antichrist, but much more that the positive marks of Christian godliness should be manifest. Both in private and in public life there were, doubtless, some sincere servants of God and his Christ; and I wish I could gratify the mind of the pious reader with an instructive relation of them. But of such men history is almost silent. APPARENT RARI NANTES IN GURGITE VASTO.—However, in the dearth of faithful and intelligent Christians, a brief review of the character and writings of Thomas Bradwardine will not only afford gratification, but excite surprise.—He appears to have been an extraordinary man; and has left behind him unequivocal marks of real holiness.

CHAPTER II.

THOMAS BRADWARDINE.

THIS learned and pious person is supposed to have been born about the middle of the reign of king Edward I. He was of Merton College, Oxford, and was one of the proctors of that university in 1325. He excelled in mathematical knowledge, and was in general distinguished for his accurate and solid investigations in divinity. There was a depth in his researches, which entitled him to the name of "the profound."* He seems to have been so devoted to a reclusive and sedentary life, that very little has come down to us concerning his conduct and transactions. He was confessor to king Edward III. and attended that monarch in his French wars. It is observed that he often preached before the army. On occasion of a vacancy in the see of Canterbury, the monks of that city chose him archbishop; but Edward, who was fond of his company, refused to part with him. Another vacancy happening soon after, the monks elected him

a second time, and Edward yielded to their desires. The modesty and innocence of his manners, and his unquestionable piety and integrity, seem to have been the principal causes of his advancement. He was, however, by no means adapted to a court; and soon found himself out of his element. His personal manners and deportment were the object of derision to the courtiers; and when he was consecrated at Avignon, cardinal Hugh, a nephew of the pope, ridiculed the prelate, by introducing into the hall a person habited as a peasant riding on an ass, petitioning the pope to make him archbishop of Canterbury.* This was one of "the spurs which patient merit of the unworthy takes." But the jest was found not to answer the ungenerous views of him who made it. It appeared to the assembly, that solid learning and understanding, though destitute of exterior accomplishments, when clothed with piety and humility, as in Bradwardine's case, were by no means proper subjects of ridicule and contempt. The pope and his cardinals resented the indignity, and frowned on the insolent contriver.

Bradwardine was consecrated in 1349, in the twenty-third year of Edward III.; but not many weeks after his consecration, and only seven days

after his return into England, he died at Lambeth. His departure out of life seems to

Bradwardine consecrated, A. D. 1349.

have been a providential mercy to himself. For we may well doubt whether his elevation would have increased either his comfort or his reputation. He, who, before his promotion, was judged of all men the most worthy to preside in the Church, would in all probability, partly on account of the habits of a studious life, and partly on account of the complexion of the times, have soon been deemed unequal to the office. In the early periods of the Church he might have shone with distinguished lustre; but a pious archbishop, of simple manners, could have done little service to the Church in that age.

His great work was "Concerning the Cause of God against Pelagius." An admirable performance! whether one considers the force of his genius, the solidity of his reasoning powers, or the energy of his devotion. In reviewing it,

* Bradwardine's Life, prefixed to his Works.

* Henry's Hist. of England, Fourteenth century.

it gave me great satisfaction to observe, that the Spirit of God had not forsaken the Church; but, on the contrary, in one of the darkest periods had raised up a defender of divine truth, who might have done honour to the brightest. Abstracted from the spirit of the times in which he lived, Bradwardine gave himself up to the investigation of real gospel-truth; and he published to the world, in a large volume, the fruit of his researches. Some few extracts may give the reader a just idea of his doctrine and spirit; and may also throw some light on the state of religion in the age in which he lived.

In the preface he lays open his heart, and explains the exercise of his mind on the great subject of divine grace, which he attempts to defend against the supporters of the doctrine of free-will; a term which I have repeatedly observed to be improper; and which, as used by him, and by most, if not all, of the fathers, who really loved Evangelical truth, means much the same as self-sufficiency. Bradwardine had observed how very few in his days appeared to be conscious of their need of the Holy Spirit to renew their natures; and being himself deeply sensible of the* desperate wickedness of the human heart, and of the preciousness of the grace of Christ, he seems to have overlooked or little regarded the fashionable superstitious of his time, and to have applied the whole vigour and vehemence of his spirit to the defence of the foundations of the Gospel. But let us hear him speak for himself.

“As I am somewhat encouraged by the countenance of those who love the cause of God, so I own I am discouraged by the opposition of those who embrace the cause of Pelagius, who are, alas! far more numerous. For behold, I speak it with real grief of heart, as formerly 850 prophets, with the additional numbers of the populace without end, were united against one prophet of the Lord, so at this day, how many, O Lord, contend for free-will against thy gratuitous grace, and against St. Paul, the spiritual champion of grace! How many indeed in our times despise thy saving grace! and maintain, that free-will suffices for salvation! or if they use the term grace, how do they boast, that they deserve it by the strength of free-will; so that grace in their eyes appears to be sold at

a price, and not freely conferred from above! How many, presuming on the power of their own free-will, refuse thy influence in their operations, saying, with the ungodly, depart from us! How many, extolling the liberty of their own will, refuse thy service; or, if with their lips they own that thou co-operatest with them, how do they, like the proud disobedient angels of old, who hated thee, refuse that thou shouldst reign over them! Nay, prouder than Satan, and not content to esteem themselves thy equals, they most arrogantly boast, that they reign above thee, the King of kings. For they fear not to maintain, that their own will in common actions goes before as the mistress, that thine follows as a handmaid; that they go before as lords, that thou followest as a servant; that they as kings command, that thou as a subject obeyest. How many support Pelagianism with clamour, raillery, and derision! Almost the whole world has gone after Pelagius into error. Arise, O Lord, judge thy own cause: Sustain him who undertakes to defend thy truth; protect, strengthen, and comfort me. For thou knowest, that, no where relying on my own strength, but trusting in thine, I, a weak worm, attempt to maintain so great a cause.”

From the vehemence of his complaints it appears, that together with the triumphant progress of superstition, the Christian world had made rapid advances in self-sufficiency. The scholastic learning, which was ardently cultivated, had enlisted itself on the side of Pelagianism, or at least of semi-Pelagianism. Those who were not hardy enough to maintain the merit of condignity, yet strenuously held the merit of congruity, which was indeed the favourite theme of the fashionable divines. By its assistance they arrogated to themselves the merit of doing certain good actions, which would render it meet and equitable that God should confer saving grace on their hearts.* This is that grace of congruity which the Church of England condemns in her 13th Article; and it was precisely one of those contrivances, by which the natural pride of a

* Condignity implies merit; and, of course, claims reward on the score of justice. Congruity pretends only to a sort of imperfect qualification for the gift and reception of God's grace.

* Jerem. xvii. 9.

heart unacquainted with its own total apostasy endeavours to support its dignity, and to prevent an ingenuous confession of helplessness and of complete unworthiness. History shows this sentiment to be perfectly semi-Pelagian. "Inward preventing grace, say that sect, is not necessary to form in the soul the first beginnings of true repentance and amendment; every one is capable of producing these by the mere power of his natural faculties, as also of exercising faith in Christ, and of forming the purposes of a holy and sincere obedience." But they acknowledge also, that "none can persevere or advance in that holy and virtuous course, without the perpetual support and the powerful assistance of grace."*

Something like this seems to be the religion natural to man as a fallen creature, when he "leans to his own understanding," and derives not his creed from divine revelation; and when at the same time he is not advanced by a more uncommon degree of hardihood into the pride of perfect Pelagianism. On this plan, Bradwardine thinks, that God is made the servant, man the master; and it is remarkable, that a poet of our own who seems to have embraced this scheme, admits the same thought, when he says,

Heaven but persuades, Almighty man decrees;
Man is the maker of immortal Fates.†

I am sensible, how much has been said, and may be said with great plausibility, in support of the poet's doctrine. But it is perfectly foreign to the design of this history, to enter into so boundless a field of controversy. Suffice it once more to refer the reader to Edwards' treatise on the Freedom of the Will, for a full and complete confutation of the scheme. I shall only add, that all truly humble souls, whose consciences have felt the force of Christian doctrine, are assuredly persuaded that their salvation is altogether of grace from first to last, by the certain testimony not only of Scripture,‡ but also of their own expe-

rience, though they may never have formally discussed the controversy before us. Such a soul, if I mistake not, was that of Bradwardine; and as he was conscious of the pernicious tendency of SELF-SUFFICIENCY, he writes from a heart inflamed with zeal for the divine glory, and labouring with charitable concern for the souls of men.

Bradwardine goes on in his preface to inform us, how he had prayed, and with what strength and consolation he had been favoured. His spirit appears to have been under the steady influence of humility and piety, while he was reflecting on the subject. After having described the opposition made to divine grace from age to age, he thus concludes: "I know, O Lord God, that thou dost not despise nor forsake those who love thee, but thou dost sustain, teach, cherish, strengthen, and confirm them. Relying on this thy goodness and truth, I undertake to war under thy invincible banners."

The treatise itself is worthy of him who was called the PROFOUND. The author appears to have been endowed with a strong argumentative mind; but the work is too metaphysical for the perusal of ordinary readers, nor would it answer any valuable purpose to present the reader with a regular abridgment of its contents. The mode of writing in that age was tedious and prolix beyond measure; and it must be ascribed to the infection of the scholastic turn of those times, that Bradwardine wrote against the errors of the schoolmen in their own style and manner. He possessed not the useful qualification of writing in a plain scriptural manner, and of making use of arguments equally capable of impressing all ranks of men. The popular talent of perspicuously displaying divine truths, and of happily illustrating them by proofs drawn from Scripture and experience, was at that time hardly known in Christendom.

Some concise observations, however, and a selection of a few remarkable passages, may give the reader an idea of the nature of the work.

He undertakes to lay before mourning

necessity and the efficacy of Divine Grace, shows at the same time, that the Holy Spirit nevertheless operates on the mind of man as a rational creature, possessed of will and understanding.

* Moshelm, Vol. I. p. 277.

† Young's Night Thoughts, Night 7.

‡ "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." Philipp. ii. 12, 13.—This very important passage of Scripture, while it demonstrates both the

penitents the consolations of the Gospel; and, particularly, to animate and cheer the hearts of those who are ready to despair on account of the greatness of their transgressions.* He tells us that some Jews once declared to him, that those who had sinned four times repeatedly, were entirely excluded from all possibility of pardon, grounding their notion on the expression several times repeated in the first chapter of Amos, "for three transgressions, and for four." Against this mean conceit, worthy of a rabbinical taste, he shows the immensity of the divine perfections of goodness and mercy, and represents them as far surpassing the limited evils of man, provided the sinner repent and humbly come to God.

"Josephus† tells us, says he, that the Sadducees thought it a glorious thing to contend against the renowned doctors of their nation in philosophical points: thus, at this day, I fear very many seek glory, by overturning or seeming to overturn the constructions and interpretations of others. They, who have not a single house or cottage‡ of their own erection, are peculiarly infected with the love of glory; they are indeed the bolder in dismantling the buildings of others, because they are in no fear of retaliation, as they have nothing of their own to lose." So exactly similar have skeptics been in all ages! for example, the Sadducees in the time of Josephus, the Pelagians in the time of Bradwardine, and those who at this day arrogate to themselves exclusively the credit of being RATIONAL in religion. Dubious and hesitating in regard to their own systems, vehement and decisive against the system of others, they even glory that they have not yet completed their own creed, while they condemn as bigots all who profess to have determinate articles of faith, as if the perfection of wisdom lay in reasoning against every thing, and in determining nothing; or as if the Scripture was not a form of sound words, to which we ought to hold fast without wavering, so far as it reveals to us the doctrines of God and the path of duty. Bradwardine observing,

* Book I. p. 20.

† P. 145.

‡ This metaphorical language is used by Bradwardine against the boasting critics of his own day, to denote their poverty of invention in religious subjects.

that a disputatious and sceptical spirit resulted from the pride of the heart, prays earnestly for a heaven-taught simplicity of mind; and while he takes notice, that God despises the proud, he thankfully owns that he visits, illuminates, and rejoices with the simple.

Sir Henry Savile, the learned editor of the principal work of Bradwardine, informs us, that this extraordinary man devoted his main application to the study of theology and mathematics; and that particularly in the latter he distanced, perhaps the most skillful of his contemporaries. In proof of these assertions the editor refers to several of Bradwardine's mathematical tracts, and to a large manuscript volume of astronomical tables, which Sir Henry had then in his own possession, and considered as a very elaborate and valuable performance. But in divinity, says he, "this single treatise which I now publish, will be a lasting monument of his superior talents. It was written in support of the cause of God against the Pelagian heresy, which experience shows to be a growing evil in every age. The substance of the work had been delivered in lectures at Oxford; and the author, at the request of the students of Merton College, arranged, enlarged, and polished them, while he was chancellor of the diocese of London. No sooner was this performance given to the public, than it was received with the greatest applause of all learned doctors, and found its way into almost every library throughout Europe. As Bradwardine was a very excellent mathematician, he endeavoured to treat theological subjects with a mathematical accuracy; and was the first divine, as far as I know, who pursued that method. Hence this book against Pelagianism is one regular connected series of reasoning, from principles or conclusions which have been demonstrated before.

"If, in the several lemmas and propositions, a mathematical accuracy is not on all occasions completely preserved, the reader must remember to ascribe the defect to the nature of the subject, rather than to the author."

This account of the extreme singularity of Bradwardine's taste appeared worthy of notice.

It has already been concisely observed,* that Bradwardine attended king

Edward the third in his French wars, and that he often preached before the army. His biographer, sir Henry, is more particular: he tells us, that some writers of that time attributed the signal victories of Edward, rather to the virtues and holy character of his chaplain and confessor Bradwardine, than to the bravery or prudence of the monarch or of any other person. "He made it his business to calm and mitigate the fierceness of his master's temper, when he saw him either immoderately fired with warlike rage, or improperly flushed with the advantages of victory. He also often addressed the army; and with so much meekness, and persuasive discretion, as to restrain them from those insolent excesses which are too frequently the attendants of military success."

Bradwardine's treatise against the Pelagians, which is so much extolled by Sir H. Savile, is a folio of almost nine hundred pages. It may not be disagreeable to the reader to peruse a few additional extracts, on account of the important matter they contain, and the mathematical accuracy of manner which this author constantly endeavours to support, and which is, in general, so unusual in the treating of such subjects.

OF THE DIVINE BEING.

Among the first positions which he undertakes to prove, are these. That God is not contingently, but necessarily perfect. That he is incapable of changing. That he is not liable, for example, to the emotions of joy, sorrow, anger; or, in any respect passive. Since, if he were, he would be changeable; whereas God is always the same, and never varies. He cannot change for the better, because he is already perfectly good. Neither can he change for the worse, because he is necessarily perfect, and therefore cannot cease to be so. Lastly, he cannot change to a state equally good, because such an alteration could answer no end, and would in reality imply some defect.*

He observes, that the DIVINE WILL is universally efficacious, which, he contends, is a mark of much higher perfection, than if his will could be frustrated, hindered, or miss of its intent. If it were possible for God to wish anything,

and yet not bring it to pass, he would and must from that moment cease to be perfectly happy; especially as it is impossible that he should choose anything but what is right.

CONCERNING MERIT.

Most powerfully he beats down the doctrine of HUMAN MERIT. He will not allow that men can merit at the hand of God, either antecedently or subsequently; that is, either prior to grace received, or after it. Is it not more bountiful to give than to barter? to bestow a thing freely, and for nothing, than for the sake of any preceding or subsequent desert, which would be a sort of price? Even a generous man often confers benefits on others, without any view to the previous or succeeding merit of the object. Much more does God do this, who is infinitely richer in bounty, than the most liberal of his creatures.*

Has not TRUTH itself declared, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And does not the Apostle of truth use the words, "In him we live, move, and have our being!"—I therefore repeat, That it must be manifest to every one, who has a sound understanding, 1. That no thing whatever can put any other thing into motion, unless God himself, by his own proper influence, give motion to the thing so moved. 2. That nothing whatever can put any other into motion, without God's being the immediate mover of it. And even, 3. That whatsoever is put in motion by any thing else, is more immediately moved by God himself than by the instrument which sets it in motion, be that instrument what it will. Now, if any person should cavil at this doctrine, and say, That this argument would make the Supreme Being the author of many actions, even wicked actions, which are not fit to be named, the answer is, The words which express those actions are not to be taken strictly or absolutely, but only as they relate to the creature, not as descriptive of the real essence of the actions, but only of their nature when viewed as the effects of human powers. . . . In every formation and in every motion there must be some unoriginated former; else the process would be endless.†

* Lib. I. cap. 1.

* Lib. I. cap. 1. † Ibid. cap. 4 & 5.

It should be remembered, that the historian never pretends to dictate to his reader, nor even to explain his own opinion on these intricate subjects. He only ventures to lay before him the judgment of an excellent christian, and a most acute metaphysician of the fourteenth century.

OF THE DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.

What Bradwardine delivers concerning the KNOWLEDGE of God is worthy of the utmost attention.

It is certain, that God hath a knowledge of all things present, of all things past, and of all things to come; which knowledge is, in the highest sense, actual, particular, distinct, and infallible. It may be considered as either simple, or approbative. His simple or absolute knowledge extends to everything. His knowledge of approbation, over and above the former, includes his good pleasure and complacency of will. He produces Scripture in support of this distinction of the divine knowledge, as Matt. xxv. 12. Verily I say unto you, I know you not. And 1 Cor. viii. 3. If any man love God, he is KNOWN of him.*

The fifteenth chapter of the first book is wholly taken up in proving, THAT THINGS KNOWN are not the foundation of the knowledge of God. Knowledge is a principal perfection in God. If, therefore, HIS knowledge were derived from the objects with which it is conversant, it would follow that a part of the perfection of God was derived from some other source than himself, in which case HE must cease to be self-perfect. He would moreover cease to be all-sufficient: he would stand in need of created help to render his knowledge complete. And how could his glory be unrivalled, if any portion of it were suspended on borrowed assistance? Add to this, if the things that are known by God, are verily the producing cause of his knowing them, they must be antecedent to his knowledge, either in the order of time, or of nature. But they are not prior to his knowledge in either of these respects; for they are all created in time; whereas God and his knowledge are eternal. Besides, if the Deity received any degree of his intelligence from the beings he has made, he would cease to be purely

active; he would be passive in that reception. Whence it would also follow that he must be susceptible of change. Nay, he would degenerate into a sort of inferiority to the things known; and being dependent on them for his knowledge, he would, so far, be less noble than they. The Divine Understanding would, like ours, be occasionally in a state of suspense and fluctuation. God might be said to possess rather the power or capability of knowing, than knowledge itself. He would only be disposed to know either this or that indifferently as the thing might turn, and would be actuated and determined by agencies and casualties extraneous to himself. And thus he would neither be the highest nor the first. For these reasons Aristotle and Averroes were right in affirming that the Divine knowledge is perfect as it exists in God himself, and neither is nor can be improved by any things that are known. In a similar manner, also, argues Peter Lombard. If the things, says he, which God knows, were the basis of the Divine knowledge, it would follow, that creatures contributed to improve their Maker's wisdom; and thus foolish man, or even the meanest beast of the field, would be exalted into an assistant, a counsellor, and a teacher of the all-wise God. Lastly, the testimony of Augustine is very much in point: God, says he, knows all his creatures, both corporeal and incorporeal, not because they exist; for he was not ignorant of what he intended to create; but they therefore exist, because he foreknew them. Amidst the innumerable revolutions of advancing and departing ages, the knowledge of God is neither lessened nor augmented. No incident can possibly arise, which THOU, THOU, who knowest all things, didst not expect and foresee; and every created nature is what it is, in consequence of thy knowing it as such.

Neither are we to understand our profound scholar, as though he were contending for the mere ABSTRACT KNOWLEDGE of God as a principle of causation. No: according to him the efficacy of the Divine knowledge depends on the sovereign irresistibility of the Divine will. The will of God, says he, in his tenth chapter, is universally efficacious, and invincible, and necessitates as a cause. It cannot be impeded, much less defeated, by any means whatever.

The following argument is expressed

* Lib. I. cap. 6 & 7.

in terms remarkably concise and nervous.

If you allow, 1. That God is ABLE to do a thing, and, 2. That he is WILLING to do a thing; then, 3. I affirm, THAT thing will not, cannot go unaccomplished. God either does it now, or will certainly do it at the destined season, otherwise he must either lose his power, or change his mind. He is in want of nothing to carry his purposes into execution. Hence the remark of the philosopher, Si potuit et voluit, egit. He that hath will and power to do a thing, certainly doth that thing. Again, if the will of God be frustrated, the defeat would arise from the created wills of men or angels; but we can never allow any created will, angelic or human, to be superior to the will of the Creator. Both the Divine knowledge and the Divine will are altogether unchangeable, since if either one or the other were to undergo an alteration, a change must take place in God himself.

OF FATE.

The sentiments of Bradwardine respecting FATE are evidently the result of profound thinking.

Many persons affirm the existence of fate; and many, particularly of the catholic doctors, deny there is any such thing. The Stoics are advocates for fate; on the contrary, Augustine reprobates the idea of it, as inconsistent with a sound faith. The truth seems to be this: If by fate is to be understood an inevitable, coercive necessity, arising from the influence of the heavenly bodies, such a notion is not to be maintained: but if the word be taken in a lower sense, as implying, for example, only a disposition, or propensity in men to certain actions, this sentiment, with certain explanations, may be supported; and most certainly the idea of a Divine fate must be admitted, whether we consider the word as derived from FIAT or from FANDO. Is it not written, that in the beginning of the creation God said, fiat lux, let there be light, and there was light? Is it not written again, HE SPAKE and it was done? Now this Divine fate is chiefly a branch of the Divine will, which is the efficacious cause of all things. Augustine was of the same mind. "All that connexion," says he, "and that train of causes, whereby everything is what it is, are by the Stoics called Fate; the whole of which

fate is to be ascribed to the will and power of the Supreme Being, who most justly is believed to foreknow all things, and to leave nothing unordained. The energy of the Divine will is unconquerably extended through all things. . . . We never reject that chain of causes, wherein the will of God has the grand sway. We avoid however giving it the name of fate; unless indeed you derive the word from fando, that is, from SPEAKING. For we cannot but acknowledge, that it is written in the Scriptures, God hath ONCE spoken, and these two things have I heard, that power belongeth unto God; and that mercy is with thee, for thou wilt render unto every man according to his works. Now when it is said, God hath SPOKEN ONCE, the meaning is, that he hath spoken unchangeably and irreversibly, even as he foreknew all things that should come to pass. The kingdoms of men are absolutely appointed by Divine Providence; which if any one is desirous for that reason to attribute to fate, meaning by that word, the will and power of God, let him hold fast the SENTIMENT and only correct the PHRASE." Bradwardine concludes his chapter on Fate with the following remarkable quotation from Augustine: "But though the Supreme Being is the undoubted origin of every determined train of causes, it by no means follows that nothing is in the power of the human will. For our wills themselves belong to those trains of causes, which are definitively fixed and arranged in the Divine mind; and it is in that way that they become the causes of human actions. Our wills have just so much power as God willed and foreknew they should have; and consequently whatever be the precise degree of the power which they possess, that they absolutely must possess, and that they inevitably must exert; for both their powers and their operations were foreknown of God, whose foreknowledge cannot be deceived."*

These examples may be sufficient to convey some idea of the acuteness of the reasoning powers of Bradwardine; and the intelligent reader will be at no loss to understand in what manner the conclusions of this celebrated theologian bear upon certain controverted points in divinity, and particularly upon the Pelagian system! Our author closely fol-

* Lib. I. cap. 28.

lows the advocates of that heresy through all their intricate windings; and exposes their antichristian sophisms and subtrefuges with rare patience and address. Of course his subject leads him to examine and discuss in a very copious manner that most difficult of all inquiries, the nature of the human will, and of liberty and necessity. Large and instructive extracts might easily be produced on these points from his second book; but as they would detain us too long, it will be more expedient to take our leave of the treatise, after having selected a passage or two, which are more of a practical nature, and yet altogether related to the Pelagian dispute.

ON TEMPTATION.

The human will, without a supply of the special assistance of God, cannot conquer so much as a single temptation. And this special assistance Bradwardine expressly says is not free-will, but the UNCONQUERABLE will of God. "Armed with this, his tempted children get the better of every temptation; destitute of this, they are constantly defeated. Besides, if man could overcome temptation by his own power, it would be vain and idle in him to pray to God for victory over it, or to give him thanks for victory obtained." Lib. II. cap. 5.

ON GRACE.

Every creature is indebted to Almighty God for various gifts; and these gifts may with sufficient propriety be called the Grace of God, grace freely given. But, with very great thankfulness, we ought further to observe, that there is such a thing as a peculiar species of this free grace, which makes a man accepted of God, makes him a friend of God, and dear to him; makes him his child for the present, and a partaker of his glory in heaven. Now, continues he, the mischievous Pelagians maintain that this sort of grace is not given freely by God, but is to be obtained by preceding merits. I myself was once so foolish and empty, when I first applied myself to the study of philosophy, as to be seduced by this error. For whenever I attended to the manner in which the divines handled this point, I own the Pelagian hypothesis appeared to me the more likely to be true. In the schools of the philosophers I rarely heard a single word said concerning grace, un-

less indeed sometimes an equivocal expression might drop from the disputants, but nothing further. Whereas my ears were assailed, the day through, with such assertions as, "We are the masters of our own free actions: It is in our own power to do well or ill, and to have virtues or vices." And when I heard those parts of the Scriptures read in the church, which extol the grace of God and lower the free-will of man, for example, "It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy," and many similar passages, this doctrine of grace was very disagreeable to my ungrateful mind. But afterwards, when I reflected on the nature of the Divine character, on the knowledge of God, and his prescience, I began to perceive some few distant rays of light respecting this matter, even before I became a regular attendant of the lectures in divinity. I seemed to see, but by no means clearly, that the grace of God is prior, both in nature and in time, to any good actions that men can possibly perform; and I return thanks to God, from whom proceeds every good thing, for thus freely enlightening my understanding. St. Augustine confesses that he himself had been formerly in a similar mistake. "I was once," says he, "a Pelagian in my principles. I thought that faith towards God was not the gift of God, but that we procured it by our own powers, and that then, through the use of it, we obtained the gifts of God; I never supposed that the preventing grace of God was the proper cause of our faith, till my mind was struck in a particular manner by the Apostle's argument and testimony,—What hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it? My mind had been puffed up with worldly books, worldly wisdom, and worldly knowledge; but after that my heart was visited with the influences of Divine Grace, I grasped with the greatest eagerness the sacred writings which were dictated by the Holy Spirit; and above the rest, those of the apostle Paul. Then fell to the ground all my objections, and all the apparent contradictions in the Scriptures. The Bible spoke to my mind one simple language of pure truth, and with this additional praise of Divine Grace constantly inculcated,—that no man should glory as

though he had not received."—Bradwardine then proceeds to say,

In this whole business I follow the steps of Augustine as closely as I can, for he alone appears to me to be both the true apostolic logician and philosopher; and certainly he is very different from many learned doctors. The great point to be maintained is, that God gives his grace FREELY in the strictest sense of the word, and without merit on the part of man. For if God did not bestow his grace in this perfectly gratuitous manner, but on account of some subordinate contingent uncertain cause, He could not possibly foresee how he should bestow his gifts. The word grace evidently implies that there is no antecedent merit: And in this way the apostle to the Romans appears to argue, when he says, "And if by grace, then it is no more of works. Otherwise grace is no more grace. Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt." All this is perfectly intelligible even in the conduct of liberal and magnificent HUMAN characters. They frequently bestow their gifts from a pure spirit of liberality, without the smallest previous claim on the score of merit. And shall not God, whose perfections are infinite, do more than this? St. Paul says, that God commended his love to us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us: And that when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son. St. Paul was in a peculiar manner a child of grace: with gratitude therefore he honours and extols its efficacy in all his epistles; and particularly in his epistle to the Romans, throughout he defends his doctrines with great precision and copiousness. "Every mouth," says he, "must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. By the deeds of the law no flesh can be justified: Men must be justified freely by his grace. By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." Pelagius objects in the following manner; If grace be perfectly free, and if all men be alike, why is grace given to this man and not to that? Augustine, on a similar occasion, exposes the wildness of such reasoning thus: You might as well say, "I am a man; Christ was a man; why am not I the same as He? We have a common nature; and with God there is

no respect of persons: why then are his gifts so different? Would any Christian, nay, would any madman argue so? and yet the principles of Pelagius would carry us this length." Again, the Pelagians produce such scriptures as these; "The Lord is with you while ye be with him, and if ye seek him he will be found of you."* "Turn ye, and I will turn unto you."† From which they would infer, that the grace of God is proportioned to the merits of men. But all this would be to no purpose, if they would but compare one scripture with another: for example, "Turn us, O God of our salvation;‡ and after that I was turned, I repented:§ And, Turn us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned."|| Undoubtedly such expressions as, Turn yourselves, &c. . . . relate to the free power which every man has to WILL; but if Pelagius had half an eye, he might see, that God, in giving the precept which directs us to turn unto him, influences also the human will, and excites to action, not indeed in opposition to our free choice, but the reverse, as I have all along maintained. Hence it is written, Without me ye can do nothing. And again, I have laboured more abundantly than you all, yet not I but the grace of God within me. And lastly, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; and I will cleanse you from your idols. A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart, and will give you a heart of flesh. Lib. I. cap. 35.

LOVE, PATIENCE, HUMILITY, AND THANKSGIVING,

Are the subjects of the thirty-fourth chapter of the second book. And these are handled with great force and eloquence. A short specimen is given in pp. 120, &c. of this History. It may be worth while to subjoin a few sentences more, for the purpose of showing how steadily the author keeps his eye on the mischiefs of Pelagianism.

I know, says he, O Lord, I know, and with grief I relate, that there are certain proud Pelagians, who choose rather to

* 2 Chron. xv. 2.

† Zech. i. 3.

‡ Psalm lxxxv. 4.

§ Jer. xxxi. 19.

|| Lam. v. 21.

trust in themselves than in God. They think that if they have but free-will, and are the sole masters of their own actions, they are sufficiently safe, and have a good foundation for hope. O ye vain children of men, why will ye use a false balance! why will ye trust in yourselves, who are covered with sins, miseries, and defects, rather than in him, who is infinitely good and compassionate, and pleuteous in his inestimable donations? Why will ye not place your hopes on his happy government, who cannot err; and no longer on yourselves, who continually err and stray like lost sheep? Why rely on your own diminutive, infirm, and fragile powers; and not on his Almighty help, whose strength is boundless and irresistible? Beware of the prophet's curse, Thus saith the Lord. Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. "I am astonished," says St. Augustine, "that, notwithstanding the Apostle declares, It is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure,—men can choose rather to rely on their own debility, than on the strength of the Divine promise." But ye will tell me, that in regard to myself, the Divine promise is altogether uncertain. Be it so: What then? Can ye depend upon your own will so as to be assured of your future salvation? What, have ye no fears on that head? Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Since then there may be uncertainty in either way, why not place your faith, hope, and charity, where there is stability, and good ground for dependence? Strange doctrine of the Pelagians! Tell men, say they, of the greatness of their own natural powers, and such preaching will excite them to virtue; but when ye inform them that nothing is to be done without the compassion, the help, and the grace of God, ye break their spirits, and drive them to despair. Thus have they that confidence in their own insignificant powers, which all holy men have in the boundless mercy of God; and thus do the former declare war against those very free gifts of God, by the assistance of which the latter successfully fight against their innate corruptions. . . . O Pelagians, how is it, that ye, who fancy yourselves so acute, do not see the dilemma into which your opinions necessarily bring you? Either ye

rob the Almighty of his prescience, or if ye admit that attribute, ye must at the same time admit the conclusiveness of this reasoning. Ye desire to have ground for hope; it is my prayer that ye should; but let your hope be in the Lord. For my part, it is good for me to draw near to God, and to put my trust in the Lord God. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, whose hope the Lord is. It is this perfect confidence in God, which fortifies the mind of a good man against every species of adversity. He knows that God is most wise, just and compassionate, and that he never falls into error; and he knows also that all things work together for good to them that love God. He learns therefore, with the Apostles and many other holy men, even to rejoice in sufferings.

A genuine love of God requires us to employ every faculty we possess, mental and corporeal, for the praise, honour, and glory of God; moreover, we ought freely to submit to every inconvenience and disadvantage, even to the irrecoverable loss of ourselves, rather than offend his Divine Majesty in the slightest degree.

Grant, I beseech thee, good Lord, that as I thus pronounce my duty with my lips, I may efficaciously perform the same, and persevere unto the end: and do Thou, I humbly beg, of thy great compassion, deign to accept this bounden service which thou hast prepared me to perform, as being the only recompense I can possibly make. More than this I neither have, nor ever shall have; unless, perhaps, it may be thought more, most earnestly to wish both to know and to do, under all circumstances, what is altogether agreeable to thy will. Grant that this also may be my heart's desire; and I humbly ask these things as a poor, miserable, mendicant sinner. Is there anything farther than this for which I can ask? I do not see that there is, though I turn my thoughts every way: but if there be, I entreat thee, O Lord, with the most devout supplication, to answer my prayer in this respect also; that so, for thy unspeakable benefits bestowed freely upon me, I may make the most grateful return in my power, and manifest the feelings of my heart by incessant thanksgiving.

St. Augustine, one of thy most grateful children, observes, That whether we would use our minds in contemplation, or our mouths in speaking, or our pens

in writing, we cannot be better employed than in giving thanks to God. It is not easy to produce a sentiment more concise in the expression, more pleasant to the ear, more grateful to the understanding, or more useful in practice. The same author was, no doubt, taught by Thee to say, That there is true wisdom in the worship of God, which very materially consists in gratitude. Hence we are particularly admonished in the Communion Service "to give thanks to our Lord God." Let us therefore humbly acknowledge that every good thing we possess is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights; and with our whole heart let us give thanks to our Lord God continually.

He maintains the doctrine of a universal, decisive Providence; and justly exposes the absurdity of the common language of mankind concerning Fortune.* He observes how often it is said in Scripture, that the Lord will put his fear into the hearts of the enemies of his people, will fight for his Church, will go before them, &c. He asserts, that God meant to show by these declarations,† that this is his general plan of government, which is always carried on by his energy, though that energy may be often invisible, or not accompanied with sensible miracles; that the promises of divine support are specially applicable to spiritual conflicts; as, in them more particularly, the Lord means to teach the impotent and the miserable where they should place their hope, and seek for strength, victory, and salvation. "Let him," says he, "who likes not these things, hope in princes, trust in man, make flesh his arm, and in his heart depart from the Lord; let him trust in his bow, let him fancy that his sword will save him; and if he be successful, let him not return thanks, nor bless the Lord in hymns of grateful acknowledgment, because he owes, forsooth, no obligation to him: and I no way doubt, but though he call himself a Christian, he will pay less regard to the true God, than a Pagan does to an idol, to whom he offers sacrifice. But, let others hope as they please, it is good for me, in every conflict, to hold fast by God."

He makes an excellent practical use of his doctrine of Providence.‡ "He, who excludes from his creed the view of

Divine Providence, disposing of all events, not permissively, but actually, removes, so far as in him lies, from every troubled person the greatest encouragements to patience, hope, consolation, and joy. Who will serenely bear adversity, if he believe it to proceed from chance, or ultimately from an enemy; and if he do not know that it really proceeds from, and is guided by, the unerring direction of the all-wise God, who, by means invisible to human sight, purges sins, exercises virtues, and accumulates rewards? He, doubtless, who does thus believe in Divine Providence, has every advantage for patience and composure of mind, because he knows that all things work together for his good. Thus rough places are made smooth to all the saints of God, hard things are softened, the edge of suffering is blunted, and bitter things are tempered sweetly: And thus a singular solace, a principal and a never-failing refreshment, in all adversities, is provided for me, a sinful worm. With what patience may all disagreeable events be endured by the man who fears and loves God; and firmly believes that the great and wise Being, who can require nothing but what is wise and good, actually requires him to bear such things! This, I think, is to make the Lord's yoke easy, and his burden light.

The maxims of Bradwardine induced him to conclude, that whatever things come to pass, are brought about by the Providence of God.* Even a prudent master of a family, says he, takes care of everything that belongs to him, and makes provision beforehand, according to the best of his knowledge and power; and leaves nothing unregulated in his house, but exactly appoints the due time and place for everything.

I find† that he agrees with the account, which has been given, concerning the author of the letter to Demetrius.‡ For he shows, that Augustine, in his first book against Pelagius and Celestius, asserts that letter to be the work of Pelagius, quoting and arguing against a part of it in the plainest terms, and that nothing can be a more groundless surmise than to ascribe the Epistle in question to Jerom. He also goes over the same

* Page 267. † Page 277. ‡ Page 288.

* Lib. I. c. 27. † Page 312.

‡ Vol. II. chap. iv.

ground which Augustine had gone over before him, in confuting Pelagianism.

He largely refutes the error, more famous than any other in his day, namely, that men, by their works, deserve grace of congruity.* "By this it is," says he, "that men rush headlong into Pelagianism. Not content with gratuitous grace, men would have grace to be sold by God, though at a very cheap rate." He proves, that men are naturally destitute of the least spark of genuine love to God, without which it seems impossible that they should have any claim upon him in any sense whatever. He also† disapproves the error of those, who contend, that grace is conferred on account of future merits foreseen.

He observes,‡ that Robert, bishop of Lincoln, in his questions on the will of God, and in his other works, seems to favour Pelagianism, when he teaches, that the Supreme Being does never antecedently determine the free acts of the will, but that the will, in its own nature, possesses a self-determining power; and that the event may always be either compliance or non-compliance with those gracious influences by which God excites the mind to virtue.

The following is an extract of Bradwardine's devout meditations on the subjects discussed in the Treatise:—

"O great and wonderful Lord, our God, thou only Light of the eyes! open, I implore thee, the eyes of my heart, and of others my fellow-creatures, that we may truly understand and contemplate thy wondrous works! And the more thoroughly we comprehend them, the more may our minds be affected, in the contemplation, with pious reverence and profound devotion! Who is not struck with awe in beholding thy all-powerful WILL, completely efficacious throughout every part of the creation? It is by this same sovereign and irresistible WILL, that whom, and when thou pleasest, thou bringest low and liftest up, killest and makest alive. How intense and how unbounded is thy love to me, O Lord! Whereas, my love, how feeble and remiss! My gratitude, how cold and inconstant! Far be it from thee, that thy love should ever resemble mine; for in every kind of excellence thou art consummate. O thou, who fillest heaven

and earth, why fillest thou not this narrow heart? O human soul, low, abject, and miserable, whoever thou art, if thou be not fully replenished with the love of so great a Good, why dost thou not open all thy doors, expand all thy folds, extend all thy capacity, that, by the sweetness of love so great, thou mayest be wholly occupied, satiated, and ravished; especially, since, little as thou art, thou canst not be satisfied with the love of any Good inferior to the ONE SUPREME? Speak the word, that thou mayest become my God and most amiable in mine eyes, and it shall instantly be so, without the possibility of failure. What can be more efficacious to engage the affections, than preventing love? Most gracious Lord, by thy love thou hast prevented me, wretch that I am, who had no love for thee, but was at enmity with my Maker and Redeemer. I see, Lord, that it is easy to say and to write these things, but very difficult to execute them. Do thou, therefore, to whom nothing is difficult, grant, that I may more easily practise these things with my heart, than utter them with my lips: Open thy liberal hand, that nothing may be easier, sweeter, or more delightful to me, than to be employed in these things. Thou, who preventest thy servants with thy gracious love, Whom dost not thou elevate with the hope of finding thee? And, what canst thou deny to him who loves thee, who is in need, and who supplicates thy aid? Permit me, I pray, to reason with thy magnificent goodness, that my hopes may be enlarged. It is not the manner, even of human friendship, to reject a needy friend, especially when the ability to relieve is abundant.

"Why do we fear to preach the doctrine of the predestination of saints, and of the genuine grace of God? Is there any cause to dread, lest man should be induced to despair of his condition, when his hope is demonstrated to be founded on God alone? Is there not much stronger reason for him to despair, if, in pride and unbelief, he founds his hope of salvation on himself?"

Such were the ardent breathings of soul in a studious and thoughtful scholar of the fourteenth century; who, unaided by human connexions, in an age dreary and unpromising throughout Europe, and in our own Island full of darkness, seems to have lived the life of faith on the Son of God. The light of the Waldensian

* Page 325.

† Page 363.

‡ Page 602. lib. ii.

doctrine had been all along confined to the Continent. But HE, who shows mercy, because he will show mercy, and who had, in some measure, paved the way to the more copious exhibition of his grace by the life and writings of Bradwardine, was preparing, not long after his decease, to revive the light of Divine truth in England, and there to form a people for himself, who should set forth his praise.

CHAPTER III.

JOHN WICKLIFF.

- I. HIS LIFE.
 II. HIS RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS.
 III. REFLECTIONS ON HIS CHARACTER.
 IV. FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE PANE-
 GYRIC AND CALUMNY WITH WHICH HE
 HAS BEEN TREATED BY HISTORIANS AND
 BIOGRAPHERS.

I. THE LIFE OF WICKLIFF.

THE papal advocates ascribe the progress of Wickliff's opinions to several circumstances:—1st, The decrepit age of Edward III. and the infancy of his successor Richard; 2d, The charms of novelty; 3d, The enmity of the duke of Lancaster against the clergy; and, lastly, The wicked and intolerable despotism of the Roman See, manifested by its multiplied exactions, and corrupt collations to ecclesiastical benefices.

The more moderate of the Romanists have not been backward in acknowledging, in strong terms, the various abuses and usurpations of the papacy. These, in fact, about the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had arisen to their greatest height; and Wickliff without doubt is one of the first, who dared to call in question the foundation of the tyrannical domination of the clergy.

In regard to the success of this Reformer, be it admitted that a variety of secondary causes contributed to the gradual deliverance of the nation; be it admitted that among these, a principal one was the excessive odium under which the hierarchy laboured at that time; yet the pious student of history will not, on these accounts, be less disposed to see the hand of Providence, in bestowing on

our forefathers the blessings of Christian light and liberty. Strange indeed would it be to reject the idea of a Divine influence, because at the moment when it was most wanted, at the crisis when men's patience was almost exhausted by the cruel and scandalous practices of their spiritual rulers, it pleased God to raise up a man of sincere love for the truth, of a hardy temper, and of a penetrating judgment, who was both capable and willing to fight the good fight, and powerfully withstand the numerous enormities then prevalent in the Church.

WICKLIFF was born about the year 1324, at a village near Richmond in Yorkshire. He was admitted a student at Queen's college, Oxford, but soon removed to Merton ^{Wickliff's birth;} college, which was at that ^{A. D. 1324.} time esteemed one of the most famous seminaries of learning in Europe. In the long list of men of note and eminence belonging to this college, we observe the names of William Occam, called the Venerable Inceptor; and of Thomas Bradwardine, called the Profound Doctor.

Our renowned Reformer soon became master of all the niceties of the school-divinity. He seems to have reigned without a rival in the public disputations, which were then in high repute. The Aristotelian logic was at its height;*

* The Scholastic divinity pretended to discuss and settle all questions in theology in a rational and argumentative manner. Like Plato's school, it has had several ages or periods: the ANCIENT, the MIDDLE, and the NEW.

The Ancient, began under Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, or rather under Abelard, and his disciple, Peter Lombard, called the Master of the Sentences, on account of his work of Sentences, which appeared in 1172: it preserved its credit nearly one hundred years.

The Middle, may be reckoned to commence early in the thirteenth century, under Albertus Magnus, a learned Dominican, who published twenty-one volumes in folio at Lyons. These contain chiefly long commentaries on Aristotle; and though they treat everything in a logical way, are of little real use, but to fill large libraries. The famous Thomas Aquinas was the disciple of Albertus, and read lectures on the book of Sentences. During this period, the Peripatetic philosophy was raised to its utmost reputation. The works of Aquinas have gone

and Wickliff, in opposing error, made use of the same weapons, which his adversaries employed in maintaining it. Such were his labours on the week-days, proving to the learned the doctrine concerning which he intended to preach; and on the Sundays he addressed the common people on the points which he had proved before. He always descended to particulars: He attacked the vices of the friars, and many of the prevailing abuses in religion. On the question of the real presence in the Eucharist, Wickliff has been considered as remarkably clear. In this matter the reader will be better enabled to judge for himself, when certain authentic documents, tending to elucidate this early Reformer's opinion of the nature of the Sacrament, shall have been submitted to his consideration.

Wickliff's defence of the University of Oxford, against the encroachments of the Mendicant friars, seems to have been one of the first things which brought him into public notice.

This religious order not only pretended to a distinct jurisdiction from that of the university, but took every opportunity of enticing the students into their convents, inasmuch that parents feared to send their children to the respective colleges, lest they should be kidnapped by the friars. We are informed that, owing to this cause, the number of students, from having been thirty thousand, was reduced to about six thousand, in the year 1357.

The zeal and ability of Wickliff manifested itself on this occasion. He composed and published several spirited treatises, AGAINST ABLE BEGGARY, AGAINST

through several editions, in seventeen volumes folio. The author died in 1274.

The New, or Third, age of School-divinity, begins with Durandus de St. Pourcain, who wrote commentaries on the four books of Sentences, combated the opinions of Thomas Aquinas, and is said to have displayed great wit and genius. Indeed after the time of Aquinas the scholastic disputes grew more and more subtle, and the whole attention of the disputants was employed on the most frivolous questions. They often contended with great heat about mere formalities, and even raised phantoms in their imaginations for the purpose of continuing disputes, and opposition of sentiment. Durandus died Bishop of Meaux in 1333.—School-divinity is now fallen into the lowest contempt.

IDLE BEGGARY and ON THE POVERTY OF CHRIST. The consequence of these laudable exertions was his advancement to the mastership of Baliol college; and four years after, he was chosen warden of Canterbury hall.

From this office he was ejected, with circumstances of great injustice, by Langham, archbishop of Canterbury. Wickliff appealed to the pope, who for the space of three years artfully suspended his decision.

In the mean time Wickliff, regardless of consequences, continued his attacks on the insatiable ambition, tyranny, and avarice of the ruling ecclesiastics, as also on the illeness, debauchery, and hypocrisy of the friars. Then these things were not done in a corner or by halves; nor did there want informers to carry the news to Rome. Accordingly, nobody was surprised to hear of the confirmation of the ejection of so obnoxious a person as Wickliff. The pope's definitive sentence to that effect arrived

at Oxford in 1370, to the great satisfaction of all the monastic orders, whose dignity and interest were intimately connected with the question of Wickliff's right to hold his office.

A judicious and circumstantial writer, whom I have frequently consulted in these memoirs, apprehends that Wickliff was probably heated against both the pope and the monks* by a resentful sense of the ill-treatment he had met with on this occasion; and there is no denying, that in his expressions there is some appearance of the influence of passion. Moreover, it is, no doubt, true, that where men are wholly devoid of divine grace, personal injuries not only sink deep into the mind, but frequently also are apt to predominate uncontrolled throughout all their conduct. But there want not evidences that in Wickliff a better spirit was the ground of his opposition to the fashionable abuses. Charity teaches us to be very slow in ascribing good practices to bad motives: and in the instance of this Reformer, it should be remembered that he commenced his attack on the papal corruptions and usurpations long before the unjust deci-

W. advanced to the mastership of Baliol Coll. A. D. 1361.

Ejected by Langham from Canterbury Hall, A. D. 1367.

The ejection confirmed by the pope, A. D. 1370.

* Collier, 582.

sion of the Roman See. He is allowed to have been a person of merit, and of a warm temper; and therefore it may not seem improbable, that his being ejected upon an unjust decision, might whet him to an opposition, and induce him to meditate revenge.

However, to speak freely, the removal of Wickliff from his wardenship was attended with so many concomitant circumstances, perfectly agreeable to the feelings of human nature, that I confess I do not perceive much of the Cross in that disappointment. The loss of his dignity and income was abundantly compensated in various ways. The celebrity of his character was increased; and his learning, good sense, and courage, were the more admired, because he had suffered in a righteous cause.

Add to this, the fame of Wickliff became less confined to the university of Oxford. Almost every where he was looked upon as the defender of truth and liberty. The pope and his cardinals feared him, and minutely observed his proceedings; and on the other hand, we find that the first parliament of England held under king Richard II. entertained so high an opinion of his integrity and knowledge, that in a case of the utmost emergency, and on a very nice and delicate question, they applied to him for the sanction of his judgment and authority. The question was, "Whether, for the defence of the kingdom, that treasure which the lord pope demanded on pain of censures, might not be lawfully detained." The affirmative answer of the casuist was undoubtedly foreseen; but still the application of the king and parliament to a man who had been persecuted by the pope and the archbishop of Canterbury, proves beyond contradiction the high estimation in which he was held. It proves also, that though deprived of his wardenship, and surrounded by exasperated friars, and narrowly watched by the rulers of the church, he must have been supported at this time by worldly friends of the greatest weight and consequence. It could not therefore easily happen, that a man in the splendid situation of Wickliff should remain long without an ample maintenance. Accordingly,

Wickliff presented to the rectory of Lutterworth. A. D. 1374.

it appears, that in 1374 he was presented by Edward III. to the rectory of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, and afterwards in 1375, was con-

firmed in the prebend of Auste in the collegiate church of Westbury. The duke of Lancaster is supposed to have been the chief friend of Wickliff, in obtaining for him the royal patronage. Many persons indeed considered the Reformer as in the high road to some dignified preferment; but there is no account of any such offer being made to him; and if there had, I think it probable he would not have refused it.

Wickliff was now become independent. He had a great many admirers, some powerful friends, and a host of bitter enemies. He was profoundly learned; uncommonly eloquent; and, to complete the character, he was inflamed with a zeal for truth, he abhorred hypocrisy, was hostile to every species of vice, and was himself a man of unexceptionable morals. This was precisely the man who, one might predict, would be likely to fall without mercy on proud popes and idle friars.

The following is a short specimen of the manner in which Wickliff sometimes treated the pope. He called him ANTI-CHRIST, the proud worldly priest of Rome, and the most cursed of clippers and purse-kervers. He averred, that the pope and his collectors drew out of the land poor men's livelihood, to the amount of many thousand marks a year: and added, that though the realm had a huge hill of gold in it, and no other man took thereof except this proud worldly priest's collector, yet in process of time this hill would be levelled.

His attacks on the friars are innumerable. They draw, said he, children from Christ's religion by hypocrisy; they tell them that men of their order shall never go to hell. They praise their own rotten habit more than the worshipful body of our Lord Jesus Christ. They teach lords and ladies, that if they die in Francis's habit, the virtue of it will preserve them from hell. St. Paul laboured with his own hands; and it is the commandment of Christ, to give alms to poor, feeble, crooked, blind, and bed-ridden men; but it is leaving this commandment, to give alms to such hypocrites as the begging friars, who feign themselves holy and needy, when in fact they are strong in body, and possess overmuch riches, as well as great houses, precious clothes, jewels and other valuable things.

It was not to be expected that the Romish clergy should tamely submit to

reiterated flagellations of this kind. They forthwith selected, from A. D. 1376. Wickliff's public lectures and sermons, nineteen articles of complaint and accusation, and dispatched them to Rome.

The pope was so completely alive to the business, that he sent no fewer than five bulls to England on this occasion. Three of them were directed to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London. In the first, he orders these prelates to apprehend the rector of Lutterworth, and imprison him, provided they found him guilty of the heresy with which he was charged. In the second, he enjoins them, if they cannot find him, to fix up public citations in Oxford and in other places, for his personal appearance before the pope within the space of three months. In the third, he commands them to acquaint the king and his sons with the heresy of Wickliff, and to require their assistance for its effectual extirpation.

A fourth bull was addressed to the king himself, desiring his royal help and patronage in the prosecution of the heretic. And lastly, a fifth was dispatched to the university of Oxford; in which the pope laments the sloth and laziness of the chancellor and heads of the university, in permitting tares to spring up among the pure wheat. Wickliff's doctrines, he said, would subvert both church and state. They ought to forbid the preaching of such tenets, and assist the bishops in their endeavours to bring the offender to punishment.

It is not too much to say, that, both by the university of Oxford, and by the government of the country, these bulls were treated with the utmost contempt. The university for a long time were disposed wholly to reject with disgrace the pontifical injunctions; and when after much deliberation they had received the bull, they refused to be active in giving it the smallest degree of effect.

The regency and parliament of England manifested their disapprobation of the persecution of Wickliff, in a manner which must have mortified the haughty pontiff exceedingly. For it was at this moment that they chose to honour this celebrated Reformer with their confidence, as aforementioned in page 123.

The archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London, however, did not hesitate to execute the pope's commands.

They cited Wickliff to appear before them at St. Paul's in London, on the thirtieth day after the notice; and this interval of a month was by him wisely employed in taking precautions for his safety. To be brief, he saw no way of evading the present storm of persecution, but by putting himself at once under the protection of the duke of Lancaster, who had long known him, and entertained a high opinion of his learning and integrity, and who was no great admirer either of the monks or of the prelates.

This duke, well known by the name of John of Gaunt, not only advised Wickliff to obey the citation; but also in person, together with Henry Percy, lord marshal of England, accompanied him to St. Paul's. But the conduct of these great personages in the council, I fear, added no real honour to the cause of Wickliff. Sudbury the archbishop was a moderate man, for the times in which he lived; but Courtney, the bishop of London, was an intemperate bigot, no doubt; yet that circumstance will not justify the duke for declaring in court, that "rather than take at his hands what the bishop had said to him, he would drag him by the hair of his head out of the church." The bystanders heard these words, and were so enraged, that they cried aloud "they would rather lose their lives than suffer their bishop to be so contemptuously treated." The court was compelled to break up in tumult and confusion; and it would have given real pleasure to a lover of Christian reformation, if he could have discovered any proof that Wickliff protested against the disorderly and insolent behaviour of his patrons. But this does not appear. Nor is it more than historical justice to say, that the department of the archbishop and bishop seems to have been more unexceptionable than that of Wickliff and his friends in this transaction.

Some of the opinions which brought upon Wickliff the indignation of the hierarchy, are allowed by Walsingham, who always strongly supports the cause of popery, to have been—"that the church of Rome was not the head of other churches,—that St. Peter was not superior to the other Apostles;—and that the pope, in the power of the keys, was only equal to a common priest." These were undoubtedly the sentiments of genuine protestantism. What he fur-

Citation of
Wickliff:
A. D. 1377.

ther asserted, namely, that temporal lords and patrons had a right to disseize the church of her emoluments, in case of misbehaviour, was a sentiment expressed in too indefinite a manner to be made matter of serious acensation; but that John of Gaunt should eagerly support it, is what might be expected from the turbulent and violent character of that nobleman.

Wickliff having escaped in the manner that has been mentioned, those severities which his persecutors, the pope and prelates, had no doubt intended to inflict, paid little regard to the strict charge which they are said to have given him, to be silent in future respecting all the subjects which had given so much offence. He continued in the year 1377, during the minority of Richard the Second, to preach and instruct the people with unabated zeal and courage.*

This perseverance in the good cause induced the English prelates, now encouraged by the decline of the duke of Lancaster's power after the death of king Edward III. to make another attempt at carrying into execution the tyrannical designs of the Roman pontiff.

The heretic was not disobedient to their second citation; for in 1378 we

find him before the same papal delegates, assembled on the present occasion, not in St. Paul's, but in the more

private archiepiscopal chapel at Lambeth. However, many of the citizens of London, who revered Wickliff, forced themselves, together with a multitude of common people, into the chapel, where they spoke in behalf of the prisoner, and exceedingly terrified his judges. Moreover, the Queen dowager, widow of the Black Prince, ordered Sir L. Clifford to go and peremptorily forbid them to proceed to any definitive sentence. Here the papal advocate Walsingham loses all patience. "The bishops," says he, "who had professed themselves determined to do their duty in spite of threats or promises, and even at the hazard of their lives, became so intimidated during the examination of the apostate, that their speeches were as soft as oil, to the public loss of their dignity, and the damage of the whole Church. And when Clifford pompously delivered his message, they were so overcome with fear, that

you would have thought them to be as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. Thus," continues the historian, "this false teacher, this complete hypocrite, evaded the hand of justice; and could no more be called before the same prelates, because their commission expired by the death of the pope Gregory XI."*

But it must not be here dissembled, that our Reformer, though evidently still protected by the GREAT, did not rest his safety entirely on their authority and interference. He delivered in to the court a solemn protest, and an explanatory qualification of several of his positions which had been deemed erroneous or heretical. His very best friends are ashamed to defend this part of his conduct, and have pronounced his defence to be unnatural, forced, artful, and unmanly. From the few instances which follow, the impartial reader may judge for himself, how far Wickliff in this matter acted with the simplicity and integrity of a servant of Christ.

One of his Conclusions, as they were called, exhibited in the convocation of the bishops held at Lambeth, was this: "All the race of mankind here on earth, except Christ, have no power simply to ordain, that St. Peter and his successors should politically rule over the Church for ever." His explanation before the assembly was to this effect: "This Conclusion is self-evident; inasmuch as it is not in man's power to stop the coming of Christ to judge the quick and the dead."—It seems natural to infer from the Conclusion itself, that Wickliff meant to assert the right of mankind to subvert the political authority of the pope. A bold assertion! but, at the same time, an inestimable truth, because the papal power was founded in usurpation. But the explanation of the Conclusion renders it equivocal, if not altogether nugatory.

Again. "There is no example of Christ, which giveth power to his disciples to excommunicate any subject, es-

* Fuller's observation on this event is as follows:—The bishops were struck with a panic fear And the person of this John Wickliff was saved, as was once the doctrine of his GODLY namesake; "THEY FEARED THE PEOPLE, FOR ALL MEN COUNTED JOHN THAT HE WAS A PROPHET INDEED." Mark xi. 32.

* Fox, p. 491.

pecially for denying clerical claims of temporalities; but the contrary." This is a part of Wickliff's doctrine, which undoubtedly was levelled at the right of the clergy to possess any kind of property; and was intended to be applied to the purpose of setting that right aside. He takes care, however, in his explanation, to avoid the direct assertion of his real sentiment, by saying only, "This is declared in that doctrinal principle, taught in Scripture, according to which we believe that God is to be loved above all things; and our neighbour and enemy are to be loved above all temporal goods: for the law of God cannot be contrary to itself."

Further: "When the pope, or temporal lords, or any other persons, shall have endowed the Church with temporalities, it is lawful for them to take away the same temporalities, as it were, by way of medicine to prevent sin, notwithstanding any excommunication, because they are not given but under a condition."

"The truth of this," says he in his explanation, "is evident; because nothing ought to hinder a man from performing the principal works of charity. Yet, God forbid, that by these words occasion should be given to the lords temporal to take away the goods of the Church."

I need make no remark on this Conclusion, and its explanation. The next head I shall mention may be reduced to the same class of sentiments; and seems to show the inconsistency, which I am exposing, in a still more glaring manner.

"If there be a God, the temporal lords may lawfully and meritoriously take away the riches of the Church, when the clergy offend habitually."

Any one, who observes the manner in which Wickliff here speaks of the right of the Church to worldly possessions, and compares it with his other declarations of the same kind, will not easily perceive on what ground he suffered ecclesiastical property to rest. But if he was sincere in the following explanation of this Conclusion, the terms of it must appear perfectly insignificant,* and he may seem to have expressed in very equivocal and dangerous language, a tenet in itself perfectly harmless. "If," says he, "there be a God, he is omnipo-

tent: if so, he can command the lords temporal thus to act; and if he may thus command, they may lawfully take away such goods. But God forbid, that any should believe my intention to have been, that secular lords may lawfully take away whatsoever goods they please by their own naked authority: only by the authority of the Church they may do so, in cases and in form limited by the laws."

Candour and consistency oblige me to observe, that there appear, especially in this last case, such sophistical methods of argument, and such evasive modes of speech, as are very incompatible with the character of a pious Reformer. In some of the English manuscripts of Wickliff, the pope is called the insolent priest of Rome, Antichristian, Robber, &c.; but nothing of this sort of language is found in his Explanations* of his tenets. I am much inclined to believe the account of L'Enfant in these transactions, because he is an author in general extremely accurate and judicious; and also, because nothing is more natural than for a man, who, in the confidence of great political support, had carried his ideas of external reformation to an unwarrantable length, and had exhibited too much of a military spirit, on finding himself deprived of that support, to sink into a timidity, which might be productive of artifice and dissimulation. In Wickliff's work, called "The great Sentence of Excommunication explained," the following passage appears: "When shall we see the proud priest of Rome grant plenary indulgences to engage men to live in peace and charity, as he does to engage Christians to murder each other?" A severe but just reproof! and abundantly verified in this history of the Church of Christ. But such boldness and severity of censure, ought to be accompanied with the spirit of martyrdom. In this, Wickliff was deficient. It will also appear hereafter, both from the history of the council of Constance, and from some extracts of this Reformer's own writings, that though he expressly condemned all ecclesiastical property whatever, yet he himself enjoyed tithes, and possessed the living of Lutterworth in Leicestershire, to his death. †

* L'Enfant's Hist. of Constance.

† It is not to be wondered at, that he, who maintained, "that tithes were mere alms,"

* Fox, p. 494.

From a concise account of the writings and public lectures of Wickliff, with which we purpose to gratify the reader,* it will also distinctly appear in what manner he combatted the doctrine of Transubstantiation. At the end of one of his English Confessions of the Sacrament of the Altar, he declared, that one-third of the Clergy were on his side, and would support him at the hazard of their lives. He was, however, condemned by the University, for holding heretical opinions in this matter; and, from the Vice-chancellor's decree,† Wickliff's Confessions, and other documents, we may form some judgment, though by no means a decisive one, what those opinions really were. Our Reformer has been charged with explaining and qualifying his meaning, in an artful manner, after he had appealed to the secular arm in vain: but here again the reader must determine for himself how far the accusation is well founded. It is certain that his powerful patron, the duke of Lancaster, deserted him on this occasion, and advised him to submit to his natural judges; influenced, it is said, by his dread of the strength of the hierarchy, as well as by scruples of conscience.

In effect, the duke of Lancaster, who had countenanced Wickliff in his opposition to papal usurpation, did not approve his heretical sentiments respecting the received doctrine of the real presence; and he is said to have enjoined silence to this bold innovator on that head. However, soon after this, Wickliff published a long, obscure, and equivocal sort of Confession, which by his enemies has been termed a retraction of his sentiments.‡

Whoever carefully examines the original records, will soon be convinced that the merits of this Reformer have been considerably exaggerated. His inconsistencies may indeed be palliated, and in part excused. I am apt to believe also, that in his latter days he thought more moderately, and altered some of his wild

and irregular notions concerning property: besides, there are such undoubted proofs of his laborious and indefatigable cares in religion, and of his sound comprehension of the essentials of Christianity, and of his general probity, integrity, and innocence of life, that I should be extremely sorry, if, in any one instance, he may reasonably be suspected of deliberate hypocrisy. That he sought Divine truth, and seriously endeavoured both to teach and to practise it, the general tenor of his life evinces; the testimony also of the best and most upright men who lived nearest his times, is unequivocal in his favour. The great benefit likewise resulting from his labours both in England and Bohemia, seems to show that God honoured him with Evangelical fruitfulness, though it must be owned, that many of his disciples appear on the whole to have been better Christians than himself. That he was really pious, can hardly be doubted; and one point of instruction may in some measure compensate the pain which every lover of truth must feel at the discovery of his inconsistencies. It is this: Let serious divines cease to immerse themselves in political concerns: Politics was the rock on which this great and good man split; and in this case it clearly appeared, that the work of God is not to be carried on by "the arm of flesh."

After the last-mentioned conflict with the university of Oxford, Wickliff appears to have been, in the main, delivered from persecution; and to have been still supported, in some degree, by the secular power and by individuals of distinction, though he was induced, I fear, as the price of that protection, to make such sacrifices as are inconsistent with a direct and open sincerity. He had no trouble from his superiors, at least none that deserves any particular detail, though he certainly continued to the end of his days, in the unremitting exercise of zealous pastoral labours in his parish church of Lutterworth; though he persevered in attacking the abuses of popery by his writings against the mendicants, against transubstantiation, and against indulgences; and though he produced a translation of the Bible from the Latin into the English tongue. This work alone sufficed to render his name immortal. The value of it was unspeakable; and his unwearied pains to propagate the genuine doctrines of revelation among man-

should be accused of supporting the seditious practices of Tyler, Straw, and the other incendiaries in the time of Richard II. There is no clear evidence, however, that Wickliff ever patronized these men.

* Page 129, &c. of this Volume.

† Pp. 130, &c. *ibid.*

‡ *Vid.* Wickliff's Confession.

kind, indicated the steady zeal with which he was endowed; while the rage, with which the hierarchy was inflamed against a work so undeniably reasonable, demonstrated, that the ecclesiastical rulers hated the light, and would not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved.*

I know no person of ecclesiastical eminence, whose life and character have cost me more thought and care than Wickliff's. And after all, there is not much to record that deserves the peculiar attention of godly persons. I have consulted the best authorities, and in scrutinizing their contents have been mortified to find, that I could not conscientiously join with the popular cry in ranking this man amongst the highest worthies of the Church. A political spirit, as we have seen, deeply infected his conduct. It nevertheless remains true, that sincere Christians, and more particularly the Protestants of all succeeding ages, are bound thankfully to acknowledge the Divine goodness, for that there actually existed in the personal character of Wickliff "some good thing toward the Lord;"† that such a character was providentially raised up at the very time it was so much wanted; and, that from his labours considerable benefit accrued to the Church of Christ, both in England and upon the Continent.‡

The Editor of the second and subsequent editions of this Work, takes occasion in this place to express his most entire concurrence in opinion with the Author, respecting the difficulties that have occurred in attempting to give such an account of this Reformer as should accord with the plan of this History. No leading character of real godliness has required one-tenth part of the time, which in this case has been found necessary for the separation of truth from error, and the elucidation of facts which appear involved in great obscurity. The mistakes made by authors of integrity, in dates and in representations of circumstances, are numerous; and so are the instances of the prejudice and heat of party-writers. They who are well versed in this abstruse species of biography, know perfectly well why it is almost im-

possible to preserve at all times a complete and orderly connexion between the parts of the materials; and those who are not so well versed, will be candid enough to take for granted, that though certainly a great deal is recorded about Wickliff, yet it is so discordant and contradictory as to be extremely difficult, if not absolutely incapable of an orderly digestion.

The arrangement adopted by the deceased author of the History cannot, it should seem, be much mended; and if the Editor has been enabled to enrich the narrative, or render it more perspicuous, his success is chiefly to be ascribed to the advantages he has possessed over his worthy relative, in having easy access to numerous very scarce books and manuscripts, which, however, he scruples not to say, he has examined with extraordinary patience.

He is not sure, whether, with a view to gratify some persons who expressed a wish to be better acquainted with this early Reformer, he may not have introduced more circumstances of a secular nature, than the author would have judged suitable for the plan of his History of the Church of Christ.

WICKLIFF died in peace at Lutterworth, of the palsy, in the year 1387. In the year 1410, his works were burned at Oxford; and in 1428, his remains were dug out of his grave and burned, and his ashes thrown into the river of Lutterworth. The number of his volumes committed to the flames by order of Subinco,* archbishop of Prague, amounted to about two hundred. His labours indeed appear to have been immense; and beyond all doubt, he was in that dark age a prodigy of knowledge.

After having observed that his works were burned at Oxford, it is proper to add, that previous both to this, and also to the burning of his bones by order of the Council of Constance, a testimonial was publicly given, by the university of Oxford, to his character, dated in the year 1406, which declares,† "That all his conduct through life was sincere and commendable; that his conversation from his youth upward, to the time of his death, was so praiseworthy and honest,

Wickliff died, A. D. 1387.

His bones burnt, A. D. 1428.

Testimonial from Oxford, A. D. 1406.

* John iii. ver. 20. † 1 Kings, xiv. 13.

† A Bohemian gentleman who studied at Oxford, carried Wickliff's books into Bohemia.

* Fox, p. 509.

† Ib. p. 515.

that never at any time was there a particle of suspicion raised against him; and that he vanquished by the force of the Scriptures all such as slandered Christ's religion. God forbid that our prelates should condemn such a man as an heretic, who has written better than any others in the university, on logic, philosophy, divinity, morality, and the speculative arts.* This honourable testimony shows that the speculative errors of Wickliff were not attended with practical consequences; and that sedition in Church and State, was never meant to be encouraged by that Reformer, though the enormities of the age induced him much to exceed the bounds of discretion in his attempts to oppose them.

II.

THE RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS OF WICKLIFF.

THE distinguishing tenet of Wickliff, in religion, was, undoubtedly, the election of grace.† He calls the Church an assembly of predestinated persons. To those who said that God did not everything for them, but that their own merits contributed in part to salvation, he replied with a short prayer, "Heal us gratis, O Lord!" Those, who have diligently studied the sacred volumes, and also the writings of truly pious Christians, will understand how evangelically humble this Reformer might be in the use of such doctrine, and at the same time, how sincerely laborious in inculcating whatever belongs to genuine piety and virtue, in opposition to the Pharisæic superstitions of the times. And if any one be inclined to doubt this, let him consider that the eleventh article of our own Church says, that we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Saviour, by faith, and not for our own works and deservings; and yet no sound divine conceives that, for this rea-

* I find the authenticity of this testimonial has been doubted; and we are told that no trace of it is to be found among the letters and registers of the university of Oxford.—There is, however, very considerable evidence that it is not spurious. Great liberties, in those violent times, were frequently taken with registers and other documents. For example, the institution of Wickliff to the rectory of Lutterworth, is not to be found in the registers of the bishops of the diocese.—Lewis, 191, Antiq. Ox. 203.

† See Appendix, Wickliff.

son, any man is released from the duty of obeying God's commandments, and of abounding in all the fruits of a pure and evangelical faith.* But let us proceed in our endeavours to collect the doctrines of Wickliff from his writings and other authentic documents.

1. In one of his treatises against the mendicant friars, called "The Complaint of John Wickliff to the King and Parliament," he says,† "If ministers, in the execution of their office, do not act, both by word and example, as God commandeth, their people are not bound to pay them tithes and offerings."

"When the principal cause for which tithes and offerings should be paid does not exist, the payment of tithes should cease. Also clergymen are more to be condemned for withdrawing their teaching in word and example, than the parishioners are for withdrawing tithes and offerings, even though they discharge their office as they ought."

This last observation presents us with an absurd comparison between two species of transgression; and we need not wonder if the doctrine of the whole passage should have often influenced the conduct of misers and extortioners.

2. In the sixteenth chapter of another treatise against the orders of friars, he directly charges them with perverting

* Persons of an Arminian way of thinking, are very apt to consider all Calvinistic doctrine as of an Antinomian tendency; and on the contrary, the Calvinist too frequently reproaches the Arminian for being of a legal spirit, and for denying the free and unmerited salvation of men by Jesus Christ. NEITHER PARTY SHOULD BE PRESSED WITH CONSEQUENCES WHICH THEY THEMSELVES DISAVOW. This very important position is clearly stated, and well defended by Burnet. See Preface to Exposition of xxxix Articles, p. 8. The writer of this History is often called upon to form the best estimate he can of religious characters; and for this purpose, the observance of the rule just mentioned, is of the utmost consequence. It is not his province to enter into the discussion of nice theological or metaphysical questions.

† N. B. Though several of the quotations which follow are marked with inverted commas, for the sake of distinction, they are to be understood as only containing the substance of Wickliff's sentiments, and not his words.—The originals are frequently in Latin, and often in such antiquated English as would be unintelligible to ordinary readers.

the right of faith of the sacrament of the altar. "Christ says, that the bread, which he break and blessed, is his body; and the Scripture says openly, that the sacrament is bread that we break and God's body: but they say, 'it is an accident without subject,' and therefore nothing; neither bread, nor God's body. Augustine says, 'what we see, is bread, but to those, who are faithfully taught, the bread is Christ's body.'—Why should our Almighty Saviour conceal this notion of the friars for a thousand years; and never teach the doctrine to his apostles, or to so many saints; but at length communicate it to these hypocrites?"

3. In his public lectures, which he read, as professor of divinity at Oxford, in the summer of 1381,* Wickliff appears to have opposed the papistical doctrine of transubstantiation with all his might; and at the same time to have maintained the true, ancient and scriptural notion of the Lord's Supper. With this view he published sixteen Conclusions, the first of which is expressed in these words: "The consecrated host, which we see upon the altar, is neither Christ nor any part of him, but an effectual sign of him." And he offered to defend this and his other Conclusions in public disputation with any one. But he was prohibited by the rulers of the university and doctors of divinity. Upon which Wickliff published a defence† of his doctrine, which the intelligent reader will think less satisfactory than the above-mentioned Conclusion. "The Eucharist," says he, "is the body of Christ in the form of bread. The right faith of Christian men is this, that this worshipful sacrament is bread and Christ's body, as Jesus Christ is very God and very man."

4. In his Trialog.‡ he tells us, "that though the bread in the Eucharist begins to be the body of Christ, by virtue of the consecration, it must not be believed that it ceases to be bread. It is plain it is SUBSTANTIALLY bread, because it begins to be SACRAMENTALLY the body of Christ. So Christ says, This is my body. The nature of bread is not thenceforth destroyed, but is exalted into a substance of greater dignity. In a similar way the BAPTIST was made Elias, by virtue of

Christ's words in the eleventh of St. Matthew, yet he did not cease to be John. And St. Austin observes, that the Scripture does not say that seven ears of corn and seven fat kine SIGNIFY seven years of plenty, but that they ARE those years. Such expressions denote that the subject is ordained of God to FIGURE the thing predicated according to its fitness. And in the same sense and manner the sacramental bread is specially the body of Christ."—Wickliff very modestly concludes this explanation, with declaring, "that he was ready to believe a more subtle sense, if he could be convinced of the truth of it by Scripture or reason."

We have observed above, that Wickliff, in the matter of transubstantiation, appears both to have opposed the papistical doctrine, and also to have maintained the true. But the discerning reader cannot fail to remark, that authentic documents leave the former proposition in much less doubt than they do the latter. A want of consistency, at least on this head, is but too evident in the conduct of our Reformer.

The circumstances, which attended his condemnation by the university of Oxford, mentioned in page 255, were these: The vice-chancellor, after reciting, before several doctors in divinity, the Reformer's Conclusions, namely, That in the sacrament the substance of the material bread and wine remain the same after the consecration; and, secondly, That in the venerable sacrament the body and blood of Christ are not present essentially, but only figuratively; with their consent decreed, that "These are execrable errors, and repugnant to the determinations of the Church."*

From this decree Wickliff appealed to the king.† But as his great friend and powerful supporter, the duke of Lancaster, failed him at this crisis, the attentive reader will be disposed to watch the proceedings of the Reformer at so trying a moment. In particular, he will carefully weigh the terms used in that confession or retraction, which has been noticed in page 255. There Wickliff declares his belief, as follows: "The same body of Christ which was incarnate of the Virgin, which suffered on the cross, which lay three days in the grave, and rose again on the third day, this same

* Hist. and Antiq. Oxon. A. D. 1381.

† MS. on a feigned contemplative life.

‡ Lib. IV. Cap. 4.

* Spelman, Vol. II.

† Walsingh. Hist. Angliæ. and Antiq. Oxon.

body and same substance is verily and really the sacramental bread or consecrated host, which we see in the hands of the priest." But he presently adds,* "That he dare not say that the body of Christ, considered as an EXTENDED BODY, is essentially and substantially the bread: There is a threefold manner of the body of Christ being in the consecrated host, viz. a virtual, spiritual, and sacramental." And so in his *Triologus* he says, "This sacrament is the body of Christ; and not only that which shall be, or which figures sacramentally the body of Christ." And again, "That the host is to be adored principally for this reason, not because it is in some respect the body of Christ, but because it contains in a secret manner the body of Christ within itself." He is very constant in asserting,† "That the bread, by the words of consecration, is not made the Lord's glorified body, or his spiritual body, which is risen from the dead, nor his fleshly body as it was before he suffered death; but that the bread still continues bread; and so there is bread and the body of Christ together."

Some of Wickliff's admirers, who can see no defects in their favourite, would explain the contradictions and obscurities, which are to be found in his various writings and confessions on the subject of Transubstantiation, by affirming, that he discovered the truth gradually, and that he was late in fixing his opinions on the Lord's Supper. And if this could be made out, it would, doubtless, be a very natural and a very satisfactory defence of the Reformer; but let us attend to the sentiments of a very great man, whose extensive learning and extraordinary candour were never called in question. "I have looked,"‡ says Melancthon, "into Wickliff, who is very confused in this controversy of the Lord's Supper; but I have found in him, also, many other errors, by which a judgment may be made of his spirit. He neither understood nor believed the righteousness of faith. He foolishly confounds the Gospel and politics; and does not see that the Gospel allows us to make use of the lawful forms of government of all nations. He contends, that it is not lawful

for priests to have any property. He wrangles sophistically, and downright seditiously, about civil dominion. In the same manner he cavils sophistically against the received opinion of the Lord's Supper."

The most important Latin performance of Wickliff, seems to be his *Triologus*; from which several passages have already been quoted, for the purpose of elucidating the author's sentiments on the doctrine of Transubstantiation.

This brilliant work was answered by WIDEFORT, a Franciscan, who dedicated his laboured Reply to archbishop Arundel. L'Enfant tells us, in his History of the Council of Constance, that he found a copy of the *Triologus* in the university of Frankfort on the Oder. It contains a dialogue between three speakers, whom the author calls Truth, Falsehood and Wisdom. With that vehemence he opposed the fashionable abuses, may be collected from a single sentence respecting the crime of simony. "Those stupid Simonists imagine that Grace may be bought and sold like an ox or an ass." And speaking of the invocation of saints, he observes, "The festival of the day is to no purpose, if it do not tend to magnify Jesus Christ, and induce men to love HIM. Moreover, our Redeemer Jesus Christ is very God, as well as very man, and therefore, on account of his divinity, he must infinitely exceed any other man. And this consideration induces many to think that it would be expedient to worship no other Being among men, except Jesus Christ; inasmuch as he is the best mediator and best intercessor; and they likewise think, that when this was the practice of the Church, it increased and prospered much better than it does now. What folly then to apply to any other person to be our intercessor! What folly, to choose of two persons proposed, the least eligible of the two, to be our intercessor! Would any one choose the king's buffoon to be an intercessor? The saints in heaven are not indeed buffoons; but in dignity they are less, compared with Jesus Christ, than a buffoon is, when compared with an earthly king."

He is very pointed in asserting the authority of Scripture, which he maintains, infinitely surpasses the authority of any other writings whatsoever; and he declares, that to hold the contrary, is the most damnable of all heresies. He assures us, that he so strenuously com-

* Wickliff's Confession.

† See Wickliff's *Wicket*. and *Triolog Lib.* IV.

‡ *Sententiæ veterum de cæna Domini*.

hated, in the university and before the people, the errors on the sacrament, because none had proved more destructive to mankind. "These errors," says he, "fleece men, and draw them into idolatry: They then deny the faith of the Scriptures; and by their infidelity provoke the God of truth." Such were the principles of Wickliff, and such the testimonies which he has left against the corruptions of the church of Rome.

5. There is preserved in the library of the Cathedral of York, an Apology for Wickliff, written by Dr. Thomas James, keeper of the public library at Oxford, for the purpose of showing this great Reformer's conformity with the present Church of England. The contents of the Apology are collected chiefly from Wickliff's own manuscripts.—I shall present the reader with a few quotations.

Speaking of the Scriptures, Wickliff says, "I think it absurd to be warm in defence of the apocryphal books, when we have so many which are undeniably authentic. In order to distinguish canonical books from such as are apocryphal, use the following rules: 1. Look into the New Testament, and see what books of the Old Testament are therein cited and authenticated by the Holy Ghost. 2. Consider whether the like doctrine be delivered by the Holy Ghost elsewhere in the Scripture." These observations to us, no doubt, appear extremely obvious, and no more than plain, common sense: but those, who are aware of the dominion of prejudice in the age of Wickliff, and of the implicit obedience then shown to ecclesiastical authority, will be best qualified to appreciate that vigour of understanding, and that resolute integrity, which could produce such sentiments, and a correspondent practical conduct.

Dr. James, the compiler, tells us that Wickliff was earnest, every where in his writings, to establish the grand protestant sentiment, of the sufficiency of the Scriptures for saving instruction; and that the reason of his earnestness and pious zeal was, in substance, this: "Few sermons were preached in his time; and those few were on fabulous subjects and traditions, and profaned with much scurrility and emptiness. Friars persecuted the faithful, and said, it had never been well with the Church since lords and ladies regarded the Gospel, and relinquished the manners of their ancestors."

"Some," says he, "are enlightened from above, that they may explain the proper, literal, and historical sense of Scripture, in which sense, all things necessary in Scripture are contained."

This remark was doubtless made to guard his readers against the devious paths of fantastic and endless allegories, in which the sportive genius of Origen had been so conversant; and which, for ages, had thrown so great a cloud over the genuine meaning of the Sacred Writers. It was, at the same time, a strong indication of the native vigour of that good sense, with which the pastor of Lutterworth was eminently endowed; and his idea of Divine assistance, as necessary to qualify a man for the explanation of the revealed Word, indicates his knowledge of our natural blindness and depravity: and further, in making this last observation, he doubtless intimates the very great advantage, which, as a religious instructor, a person, who is practically led by the Spirit of God, has over a mere self-sufficient theorist, depending on the use of his own understanding. We have, indeed, from the extreme disadvantages of obscurity, in which this author's works appear, little opportunity of estimating his merits as a theologian; but it is sufficiently evident, from a few fragments* of his vo-

* Subinco, archbishop of Prague, about the year 1409, endeavoured to collect all the writings of Wickliff, which had been introduced into Bohemia. He is said to have gotten into his possession 200 of them, all of which he burnt by virtue of a royal edict.—Camerarius *Historica Narratio*, p. 32.—The books were very finely written, and adorned with costly coverings and golden bosses, which makes it probable that they belonged to the Bohemian nobility and gentry. The account which *Aeneas Sylvius* gives of this transaction is as follows:

"Subinco, cognomine Lepus, claris parentibus apud Bohemos natus, per idem tempus Pragensem ecclesiam pontificio retinebat consilio et animo illustris. Qui oricnti calamitati obviam ire cupiens, priusquam amplius debaccharctur, libros Johannis Wiclefi ad se ferri, omnesque, doctorum virorum consilio adhibito, publice concremari jussit. Supra ducenta volumina fuisse traduntur, pulcherrime conscripta, bullis aureis, tegumentisque pretiosis ornata. Johannis prædicatio interdicta; et adjectæ morie, si quando priores in populo errores vulgare auderet."—*Fascic. Vol. I. 297.*

luminous writings, that, in light and talents, he was greatly superior to his contemporaries; and if he had escaped the snare of that political speculation, which encourages sedition, and makes Christ's kingdom to be of this world, he might have stood among the foremost of those geniuses, who, since the apostolic age, have been raised up by Providence to instruct and reform the human race.

“Sanctity of life,” he observes, “promotes this ILLUMINATION so necessary for understanding the revealed Word; to continue which in the Church is the duty of theologians, who ought to remain within their proper limits, and not to invent things foreign to the faith of Scripture.”

He lays down some good rules for an expositor, “1. He should be able by collation of manuscripts to settle well the sacred text. 2. He should be conversant in logic. 3. He should be constantly engaged in comparing one part of Scripture with another. 4. The student should be a man of prayer, and his disposition should be upright. 5. He needs the internal instruction of the Primary Teacher.” This last is Augustine's favourite idea; namely, that a genuine relish for Divine aid in rightly interpreting and applying Scripture, is the sure index of an humble spirit; and that the contempt of it no less powerfully indicates the prevalence of profaneness or self-conceit.

The Council of Constance condemned this great man, for denying the pope's supremacy. We shall afterwards see, that that council is entitled to little regard. What colour they might have for their censure, seems to be grounded on his avowed opinion, that all the bishops of Rome before his time, for three hundred years, had been heretics: and yet he advances, that, “whoever disobeys the papal mandates, incurs the charge of Paganism.”* By comparing these two passages together, it seems that he was willing to own the supremacy of that see, provided it was filled by a faithful pastor.

Further, in Dr. James's collection, there are also extracts and observations, in substance as follows:

“The merit of Christ is of itself sufficient to redeem every man from hell.

Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient for salvation; and without faith it is impossible to please God.”

And the writer informs us, that, on the leading controversy respecting Justification, Wickliff accorded fully with the Church of England; and that he persuaded men “to trust wholly to Christ, to rely altogether upon his sufferings, and not to seek to be justified in any other way than by his justice:” that he said, “Unbelievers, though they might perform works apparently good in their matter, still were not to be accounted righteous men; that all who followed Christ, became righteous through the participation of his righteousness, and would be saved.” He adds the following sentences: “Human nature is wholly at enmity with God: All men are originally sinners, not only from their mothers' wombs, but in their mothers' wombs: We cannot think a good thought unless Jesus send it: We cannot perform a good work unless it be properly his good work: His mercy prevents us, so that we receive grace; and it follows us so as to help us and keep us in grace. Heal us, good Lord, we have no merit! Give us grace to know that all thy gifts be of thy goodness only.”*

I recommend these hints to the particular notice of such serious readers as set a high value on the essential truths of the Gospel. They will draw their own conclusions from them. In regard to myself, I have been much mortified to find so little recorded from Wickliff's writings respecting these truths, even by his most diligent biographers. Two of these, very great admirers of this Reformer, either did not comprehend the great doctrines of Justification by faith, and of the nature of good works, or, they must have thought them of little consequence. On all other points they dwell with sufficient accuracy, and with a minuteness of detail; whereas if they touch on these at all, it is done with the greatest reserve; and the little they say is far from being clear. Yet both of the authors to whom I allude, show that they were well aware of the above-mentioned censure of Wickliff by Melancthon; † for one of them has given a very unsatisfactory answer to the charge; and the other

* De Veritate Script. in Expos. Decal. Comment. in Psalm.

† Page 131 of this Vol.

* Apology, Chap. on the Pope, Sect. 1.

appears to me to have evaded the question, and to have presented his reader with a very imperfect view of Wickliff's sentiments on a most important point. He barely says, "Wickliff asserted the necessity of Divine grace. Without this, he saw not how a human being could make himself acceptable to God." Every admirer of Wickliff, if he also be a sincere approver of the inestimable protestant doctrines concerning the grace of God and of the justification of man, will be gratified in reading the sentiments I have produced from Dr. James's collection. If such sentiments abound not in Wickliff's writings, so much as sound and enlightened Christians might wish, it becomes the more necessary to take notice of those which we do find there. At least the plan of this History, which professes to search every where for the real Church of Christ, rendered these remarks indispensably necessary.

The Apology by Dr. James contains many other memorable sentiments of this Reformer: Among which is this,—

"We worship not the image, but the Being represented by the image, say the patrons of idolatry in our times. Suffice it to say, idolatrous heathens said the same."

He also vehemently opposed the whole doctrine of Indulgences; and expressed in the most decisive manner, his disapprobation of forced vows of celibacy, either in the case of monks or of the secular clergy. He is accused of having been an enemy to all oaths, but the Apology proves directly the contrary: also a passage in his book against the mendicant friars, seems to invalidate the charge; "God," says he, "teaches us to swear by himself, when necessity calls for it, and not by his creatures."

In his treatise on the truth of the Scriptures, Wickliff protests, that in his love and veneration for the Church of Rome, (which he calls his mother) it was his study and endeavour to defend all her privileges. He adds, however, that her privileges came from God, and would be the more ample, in proportion as she conformed herself closer to Christ and his laws. No man ought to think that the faith of the Church, or of any individual member of the Church, depended upon this Peter, that John, or that Gregory. It might happen that our lord pope may be ignorant of the laws of the Scripture; and that the Church of Eng-

land may understand the Catholic truth far better than the whole aggregate of the Roman Church with the pope and cardinals altogether.*

Dr. James endeavours to reconcile the former part of this paragraph with the latter. But I think it as well to leave this matter to the reader's judgment.

It has been said that Wickliff preached against purgatory;† but I can find no clear proof that his judgment was ever decided against that abomination of popery. Dr. James allows that he speaks of the dreadful pains of purgatory, and also of praying for the dead. It appears also that he himself prayed to the Virgin Mary. In one place, however, he certainly uses language which may be thought extraordinary in the writings of a man, who seriously believed the popish doctrine of a middle state of temporary punishment. His words are, "Omnia dicta de purgatorio dicuntur solummodo comminatorie tanquam pia mendacia."‡ That is, All things that are said concerning purgatory, are said only in the way of threatening; and are to be considered as pious falsehood.

He maintained, that the papistical practice of extreme unction was no sacrament, and that if it had been so, Christ and his Apostles would not have been silent on such a matter. He blames covetous and greedy priests for making this a source of profit.

Holy orders, however, he considered as one of the SEVEN sacraments of the Church. There were but, he said, *two* species of orders, namely, that of deacons, and of priests. The Church militant ought not to be burdened with *three*; nor was there any ground for it.§ He inveighs severely against the "foul extortion" of fees which took place upon the admission into holy orders; he declares, that a man might have a common barber to attend him a whole year for what he paid to have his crown once shaven. It may deserve notice, that the two last positions, concerning extreme unction, and holy orders, are among the 287 Articles which were selected from Wickliff's writings, and condemned at Oxford in the year

Selection of
Wickliff's
Articles,
viz. 287.

* Dr. James's Apol. C. IV. 1.

† Fuller, p. 130.

‡ De Verit. Script.

§ Dr. James's Apol. C. VIII. 2 & 4.

1411.* I find also the same two Articles among the 301 Conclusions, condemned at the Council of Constance.†

It has been thought, I am well aware, that the Reformers of the sixteenth century built on the foundation which Wickliff had laid. But his knowledge of Christian doctrine, though fundamentally sound, was yet so defective, so obscure, and so scholastical, while that of those admirable Reformers carries such internal marks of originality, of accurate method, and of solid scriptural investigation, that they do not appear to have followed him at all as a guide in theology. We have seen that Melancthon, one of the most judicious and candid of them, thought that Wickliff understood not the doctrine of the righteousness of Faith. It might, perhaps, be nearer the truth to say, that in an accurate knowledge of that important article he seems to have been defective. At the same time, however, that his light respecting pure Evangelical doctrine was scanty, his views of external reformation erred in the extreme of excess. He disliked ALL church endowments, and wished to have the clergy reduced to a state of poverty. He insists that parishioners had a right to withhold tithes from pastors who were guilty of fornication. Now if, in such cases, he would have allowed every individual to judge for himself, who does not see what a door might be opened to confusion, fraud, and the encouragement of avarice?

In vitium ducit culpæ fuga, si caret arte.

HOR.

Never was this remark of the poet more completely exemplified than in the conduct of Wickliff. An honest indignation on account of the enormities and immense revenues of the clergy in his day, led this extraordinary genius to use rash and indefensible expressions, which his own practice, in regard to his beneficence at Lutterworth, seemed to contradict: Hence I am led to conclude, that this good man intended not absolutely, on this subject, the whole of what he uttered in his warmth. Hath the Lord ordained, that they who "preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel?"‡ And have pastors, after all, no right to be maintained by the people? Doubtless,

they have not, if it be true, that all which they receive, is properly to be called alms. Or, ought they, whose business it is to instruct their flocks in their most important and eternal concerns, to be placed in situations not really differing from those of beggars? In such a view, the whole body of the clergy might justly be denominated MENDICANTS, the very orders of men, against which Wickliff so copiously inveighed. This whole sentiment, of reducing the tithes and offerings conferred on the clergy to alms, however it may flatter the pride and avarice, and profaneness of many of the laity in our days, appears on every account perfectly indefensible. The very nature of alms supposes, that the objects of them are recommended to our regard, not by the services which they perform, but by the distresses which they endure. Is this the proper light in which we should view the character of a Christian pastor? or, can this be called, in any degree, a just representation of the functions of a teacher of the Gospel? And, lastly, are spiritual services of so little estimation, as to claim no reward from those on whom they are conferred?

This great defect in Wickliff's ideas of church reformation, very much lessened his reputation in the eyes of those reformers who followed him. Melancthon, in particular, a zealous friend of order and decorum, represents him, as we have already seen, to have been, in this respect, destitute of all sobriety of judgment. It is not to be denied, however, that he was a light in his day. There is reason to believe, that many, who were by no means disposed to defend his errors, admired his virtues; and even those who would describe his lantern as dimly scattering only a few obscure rays of Evangelical truth, must still confess that it sufficed to discover to mankind the turpitude of the works of darkness, which predominated in England. The inestimable present of the Word of God in their own language, with which he was enabled to favour his countrymen, conveyed instruction to great numbers: there was an effusion of the Divine Spirit: and in the next chapter we must attend to its effects.

III.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CHARACTER OF WICKLIFF.

THE reader is now to judge, whether from the historical facts which have

* Antiq. Oxon. 205.

† Fascic. rer. l. 269.

‡ 1 Cor. ix. 14.

been laid before him, together with the extracts from the writings of Wickliff, the writer of this ecclesiastical history be well founded in the observations which he has made on the character and opinions of this celebrated Reformer. And, though it is much to be regretted, that, in regard to certain parts of his conduct, neither the purity of his motives, nor the clearness of his knowledge, can be so ascertained as entirely to stifle suspicion, or silence objection, yet is our information sufficient to explain several things which appear inconsistent or contradictory, as recorded by memorialists and biographers.

For example: I. We may allow and lament, that in certain difficult and dangerous moments of his life, there existed in the defences and explanations of Wickliff, more equivocation and artifice than are consistent with the simplicity of character which should mark a true disciple and follower of Jesus Christ: but when this defect is admitted, who can deny, that, on the whole, he was a sincere believer of Christianity, and a zealous advocate for its essential doctrines? Mr. Hume had too much good sense, and was too acute an observer, not to discover in Wickliff this firm belief of the Christian religion, and this fervent love of the great truths which it teaches: but in order to appreciate justly his remarks on any religious character of this kind, we ought to keep in view the well known prejudices of this otherwise incomparable historian. His dislike of the Gospel of Christ is so perfect and complete, that where he finds sincerity in believing, and zeal in supporting and propagating its fundamentals, these dispositions sink all such persons in his esteem; and, in most cases, when the question turns entirely upon religion, we expect in vain from him, not only the candour and moderation of a philosophical critic, but the justice and impartiality of an upright judge. Mr. Hume's account of Wickliff is as follows: * "He denied the doctrine of the real presence, the supremacy of the Church of Rome, the merit of monastic vows. He maintained, that the Scripture was the sole rule of faith; that the Church was dependent on the State, and should be reformed by it; that the clergy ought to possess no estates; that

the begging friars were a general nuisance, and ought not to be supported; that the numerous ceremonies of the Church were hurtful to true piety. He asserted, that oaths were unlawful, that dominion was founded in grace, that everything was subject to fate and destiny, and that all men were pre-ordained either to eternal salvation or reprobation." The same historian also owns, that the doctrines of Wickliff were derived from his search into the Scriptures and into ecclesiastical antiquity; and he tells us that they were nearly the same with those, which were propagated by the Reformers in the sixteenth century. After such a detail, who would expect the author to conclude with this remarkable sentence? "From the whole of his doctrine, Wickliff appears to have been strongly tinged with ENTHUSIASM, and to have been thereby better qualified to oppose a Church, whose chief characteristic is SUPERSTITION." Therefore, according to Mr. Hume's judgment, it was not so much the natural argumentation of Wickliff, or his diligent search into the Scriptures, as his enthusiasm, which qualified him to become a formidable adversary of the papal superstitions and corruptions. If Wickliff had opposed the abominations of the Church of Rome by ridicule and banter, by scorn and contempt, by sceptical objections to revelation in general, and by these methods only, he would probably have escaped this censure.

"He was distinguished," Mr. Hume says, "by a great austerity of life and manners;" and the historian then coolly observes, that this is "a circumstance common to almost all those, who DOGMATIZE IN ANY NEW WAY." Infidel philosophers and infidel historians, never comprehend how the honour of God, and the salvation of men, can be the ruling principles of a rational conduct. The profession of such principles appears to them to be connected with hypocrisy or enthusiasm: And, therefore, in estimating the merits of truly religious characters, they make no candid allowance for the weakness and imperfection of human nature; but are most ingenious and acute in discovering faults and inconsistencies, as well as bitter and sarcastic in exposing them. If, on the one hand, I have been mortified in finding myself constrained to differ from many in their unbounded applause of Dr. Wickliff, I have

* Hume, Rich. II. chap. 17.

felt it a duty, on the other, to correct the uncandid and injurious representations of a profane historian, who would insinuate to the minds of the unwary, that this Reformer, "though a man of parts and learning," was in fact a cautious and cowardly enthusiast. The defects or inconsistencies, with which, in the former part of this account, I acknowledge the memory of this great man to be considerably stained, afford some handle for the suspicion of timidity or cowardice; but, for the charge of enthusiasm, the historian has no warrant whatever. Moreover, supposing it true, that Wickliff's timid disposition, or any other cause, induced him to decline the praise of martyrdom—is it not at least equally true, that he involved himself in much danger and difficulty, by bringing forward his opinions; that he showed much courage and ability in supporting them; and that, rather than retract them, he suffered heavy persecutions with great patience and fortitude? Did the philosophic Mr. Hume infer the nature of a man's disposition from an occasional imbecility manifested in some trying moments, rather than from the uniform tenor of his conduct? Or did he esteem every man a coward or a hypocrite, who, in explaining his religious sentiments, may, in some instances, have softened them, or perhaps, equivocated for the purpose of saving his life?*

I consider this as one very clear and decisive instance of Mr. Hume's prejudice and partiality. There are many others, in his very excellent writings, of a similar kind. He has a very sly and artful way of insinuating his own opinions, and of depreciating truly religious men; and it is not a sufficient guard against this practice, merely to advertise the young student that this is actually the case, and that therefore he must be constantly on the watch. Clear instances, like this respecting Wickliff, should be produced. It would be very easy to collect a number of a similar sort; and such a collection of particular and distinct examples would be infinitely more efficacious in preventing the daily mischief done by this author's rash assertions, and dangerous insinuations, than numerous pages of GENERAL disapprobation or abuse with which many well-intentioned publications continually abound. Such general disapprobation or

abuse of an author, whose excellencies the student is in the habit of seeing and admiring, is apt to disgust by frequent repetition, rather than to be productive of caution. Show the student that his favourite historian or philosopher is under the dominion of the most violent prejudices, and that he is incapable of misrepresenting notorious facts; do this, even in one instance only, and the memory of it will sink deep into his mind, and prove salutary in its consequences.

2. But other causes, besides a spirit of opposition to revealed religion, have contributed not a little to render some circumstances in our histories of Wickliff contradictory and inconsistent. Let a few hints suffice.

This nation has so long groaned under the evils of popery, that for many years after the Reformation, it was the custom with ecclesiastical writers of the protestant class, to be continually venting their indignation against papal tyranny and superstition. And though it is very true, that the abominations of the Roman Church form so shocking a narrative, that our aversion to that antichristian hierarchy can hardly be raised to too high a pitch; nevertheless, the integrity of history may easily have suffered in particular instances through this aversion, however laudable and well-founded the disposition in itself may have been. Further: an ardent love of freedom, and an unconquerable hatred of slavish doctrines, both in civil and ecclesiastical institutions, are well known to constitute in general, a striking feature of the British character. Now with these two considerations in view, let it be remembered also, that Wickliff has unquestionably the honour of being the first person in Europe that publicly called in question, by his discourses, sermons, and writings, those principles, which had universally passed for certain and undisputed during many ages, and then, I think, we must cease to wonder, that this Reformer's conduct and opinions should have been often exhibited to us in the most glowing terms of veneration and respect; which terms, however, may be expected to vary materially, according as the sentiments of the historian or biographer have more or less of an aristocratic or a popular tendency; and again, according as the writer's views of ecclesiastical government are confined to merely political considerations, or as they

* Hume, Rich. II. chap. 17.

extend to the eternal interests of mankind. No apology can be necessary for having freely animadverted upon such a writer as Mr. Hume; but it might be invidious to exemplify the distinctions here alluded to by apposite quotations from authors, whose zeal for liberty, or whose predilection for particular sentiments, appear to me to have carried them unwarrantable lengths in the commendation of Wickliff. The student of ecclesiastical history will, however, do well to recollect, that unless he keep these and similar distinctions in his mind, and carefully allow for them, he will be much bewildered in his researches. The bigoted papist usually loses his patience in describing the principles and conduct of Wickliff: the unbeliever, in treating the same subject, sees no difficulties, but what are easily explained on the supposition of enthusiasm, hypocrisy, pride of the human heart, or love of popularity. Moderate divines, even of the Roman-catholic persuasion, support Wickliff to a certain point, particularly in his attack on the abuses which interfered with their own interests and privileges: Protestant divines may be expected to defend the Reformer much further: And, in fact, those Protestants, who are usually denominated low churchmen, have shown themselves disposed to transmit his memory to posterity with the most exalted encomiums. His manly freedom in inquiring after truth, and his great boldness in defending it and in encountering dangers, please them so much, that they become almost blind to the faults, errors, and defects of their favourite ecclesiastic. Lastly, it deserves also to be remembered, that those, who are most godly and practical in their conversation, and whose lives are most devoted to promote the salvation of the souls of men, who are the least worldly minded, and meddle the least with political discussions, and controversies, such persons, with regret, are compelled to withhold an unlimited approbation of Wickliff. They gratefully praise God for having raised up a champion for the faith of the Gospel in the most perilous times, and when very much needed:—they rejoice in finding evidence that this celebrated champion did belong to the true Church of Christ: they charitably hope and believe that he said and did many things, which, had they been recorded, might perhaps have made it still clearer that he belonged to

the most distinguished part of Christ's little flock; and lastly, they sincerely lament, that so honoured a servant of God should seem, on any occasion in supporting the righteous cause of religion, to have relied on political dexterity, or on the favour of a court, or to have afforded a handle for the suspicion of artifice and duplicity.

IV.

FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE PANEGYRIC AND CALUMNY WITH WHICH WICKLIFF HAS BEEN TREATED BY HISTORIANS AND BIOGRAPHERS.

1. THE mendicant friars, who settled in Oxford about the year 1230, proved very troublesome and offensive to the university. Their insolent behaviour produced endless quarrels, and their conduct in general was so exceptionable, that, so far from being objects of charity, they became a reproach to all religion. Wickliff lashed this set of men with great acrimony and acuteness; and, by exposing their shameful corruptions and hypocritical pretences, made known his learning and talents; and established his own reputation and consequence. He became at once the beloved and the admired champion of the university. On the contrary, the mendicants "were set on a rage and madness; and even as hornets with their sharp stings they assailed this good man on every side, fighting for their altars, paunches and bellies."* But the daring, active spirit of Wickliff was not to be overcome by the opposition of such men. Fortunately for him, they were in the highest discredit at Oxford; whereas our Reformer was looked up to almost as an oracle; for he had not, as yet, proceeded to those lengths of innovation, which afterwards called forth the vengeance of the hierarchy, and involved him in various difficulties and persecutions. His friends procured him a benefice; he took his degree of doctor of divinity; he was elected into the professor's chair; and he read lectures publicly with the greatest applause.†

2. The credit and interest of Wickliff were much strengthened by the active part which he took in supporting the independence of the crown, against the

* Fox's Acts and Monuments.

† Leland de Script. Brit.

pope's pretensions and menaces. Pope Urban claimed a tribute from King Edward III. The clergy in general espoused the cause of his holiness; but Wickliff distinguished himself, by publishing a masterly answer to the most plausible arguments, which could be produced in support of so unjust a demand. This step irritated his brethren, the clergy, with the pope at their head; the professor of divinity, however, had the Parliament, as well as every disinterested subject of the realm on his side in this question. From the same cause he seems to have been first made known at court, and particularly to the duke of Lancaster. His great learning, increasing celebrity, and powerful connexions, all contributed to support his courage, and to give vigour to the resolutions which he had secretly made for reforming the prevailing corruptions. Accordingly, he proceeded to open the eyes of the people with still greater boldness and plainness of speech. He demonstrated the Romish religion to be a system of errors: he attacked the scandalous lives of the monastic clergy; and showed how they invented and multiplied such superstitious opinions and doctrines, as suited their worldly, sensual, and avaricious views.

3. These extraordinary steps both alarmed the hierarchy and excited its resentment. The clergy raised violent clamours against the heretic: the archbishop of Canterbury took the lead; and the professor was silenced and deprived. In this very moment of his disgrace, we find Dr. Wickliff was brought to court, treated with peculiar kindness, and appointed one of the king's ambassadors,* for the purpose of treating with the pope, concerning a variety of intolerable hardships and usurpations under which the nation had long groaned. On his return, he appears to have recovered his station in Oxford, and to have inveighed against the Church of Rome, in harsher language than he had ever done before, both in his public lectures and in private. His negotiations abroad with the pope's nuncios had, probably, afforded him opportunities of seeing more striking proofs of the ambition, covetousness, tyranny, and insolence of the papal domination. In this part of the history of our Reformer, there is considerable defect and obscurity. We find, however,

that, notwithstanding his employments in the university, he did not neglect to cultivate his great connexions. He was often at court, and continued in high credit with the duke of Lancaster; and though, by many of the clergy, he was esteemed an enemy to the Church and a false brother, he obtained the valuable rectory of Lutterworth, through the Royal favour. These facts deserve particular notice; as they determine several points beyond all controversy: namely, the great weight of Wickliff's character and reputation; his disposition to political concerns and to public business; and, lastly, the sources of that esteem and applause on the one hand, and, on the other, of that hatred and calumny which he met with so plentifully in the former part of his life.

4. While the Reformer confined himself to attacks on the luxury and indolence of the mendicant friars, he was the favourite of the university of Oxford: while he only opposed the exorbitant claims of the papacy upon the king and his subjects, he was admired and applauded by the English court and parliament. His conduct, however, in both these instances, marked him at the court of Rome as an object of detestation and vengeance; and we need not wonder, if the ecclesiastical dignitaries in England, and the regular clergy in general, sympathized with the pope in sentiment and feeling. In effect the dignitaries complained to the pope; and the pope in great wrath sent bull after bull to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London, directing them to take immediate cognizance of Wickliff's heresies, and to imprison him. Hence the citations, of which, and of their consequences, we have already given a concise account.* And it deserves to be remembered how in those affairs the pope and his delegates had the art to select such articles of accusation against the innovator, as might prove a severe trial of his fortitude and sincerity, and also be most likely to involve him in much difficulty and equivocation; and yet at the same time bring the least odium upon themselves as accusers. But as soon as Wickliff began to assail the Roman-catholic religion in a closer manner, and to level his batteries at its very foundations; when he was no longer content with ex-

* Rymer's Fœdera; A. D. 1374.

* Pp. 123—125 of this Vol.

posing the infamous lives and practices of the monastic orders, or with declaiming against the avaricious encroachments and contemptible superstitions of the papal system; when he proceeded to show how the pure doctrines of the Gospel, and the true spirit of Christianity, were almost lost amidst the innumerable abominations of popery; when he descended to particulars, attacked the reigning doctrines of transubstantiation, of worshipping images and deceased saints, and, above all, of merits and satisfactions, and restored in their place the sound Evangelical doctrines of the meritorious sacrifice of our Saviour, and of Justification by faith, we then find not only the whole hierarchy in a flame, but even the vice-chancellor and governing part of the university of Oxford, joining in the general outcry against their professor of divinity. Hence the vice-chancellor's peremptory decree, at Oxford,* against Wickliff's notions of transubstantiation; and we may add, hence also the decline of our theologian's interest with the nobility and worldly persons of all descriptions. To understand this rightly, we should constantly keep in view the distinction that is to be made between the applause which, in general, failed not to accompany Wickliff, as a censurer of gross immoralities and an advocate for religious liberty, and the cold approbation or sceptical reserve with which he was treated, considered as a preacher of the pure Gospel of Christ, and a reviver of the most important practical truths. In the former case he met with few to oppose or envy him, except those who were immediately interested in supporting vice or usurpation; but, in regard to the latter, the greater part of mankind did as they have often done in far more enlightened times; they either suspected that he carried his notions too far; or they kept aloof from him with a profane and indolent negligence; or lastly, they wavered between the religion in which they had been educated, and the Reformer's novelties, and by immersing themselves in business, or in pleasure, both stifled the convictions of conscience, and escaped the dangers of persecution.

5. It will easily be conceived, that to accomplish Wickliff's views, one of the most popular, and at the same time most

useful steps, which he could possibly have taken, was his translation of the Bible into the English language. The clergy indeed clamoured against the measure almost universally; and it may be instructive as well as entertaining to the reader, to see, by a short quotation from a learned canon* of Leicester, and a contemporary of Wickliff, what was thought to be good reasoning by the ecclesiastics of that day. "Christ," says he, "committed the Gospel to the clergy and doctors of the Church, that they might minister it to the laity and weaker persons, according to the exigency of times and persons' wants; but this master John Wickliff, translated it out of Latin into English; and by that means laid it more open to the laity and to women who could read, than it used to be to the most learned of the clergy, and those of them who had the best understanding. And so the Gospel pearl is cast abroad and trodden under swine; and that which used to be precious to both clergy and laity, is made, as it were, the common jest of both; and the jewel of the Church is turned into the sport of the laity."

In our times, one cannot but be astonished, that the bishops, after much consultation, should have brought a bill into parliament to suppress Wickliff's Bible; but it was thrown out by a great majority.

The effect, which, under the direction of the good providence of God, the publication of the Holy Scriptures translated into our own language, produced on the minds of men, must have been very considerable in no great length of time: and it is not easy to conceive how any human means could contribute more to the spreading of the essential doctrines of Christianity. I wish that several diligent and spirited panegyrist of Wickliff had shown an anxiety, in their laudable researches into antiquity, to furnish instances of the conversion of our countrymen, from the ways of the world to the practice of godliness. That many such instances did exist, through the indefatigable labours of Wickliff in public and in private, I doubt not; yet I mean not to insinuate, that if they had been recorded, they would have added much to the fame or celebrity of the Reformer, in the present circumstances of the world.

* Page 131 of this Vol.

* Knyghton, de Event.

There is, indeed, in the Holy Scriptures, a most encouraging promise to those that be wise, and who shall "turn many unto righteousness:" but, it is not in this state of existence; it is when they shall awake from their sleep in the dust of the earth, that they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.*

6. To return: Let the reader remember, that Wickliff not only published an English translation of the Bible; but also pleaded, in a very spirited and sensible manner, the right of the people to read the Scriptures.† All this tended the more to provoke the clergy, and to increase his popularity with the laity. Disinterested persons of every description, if they possessed the least degree of seriousness, and liberality of thinking, must have been gratified to have the Bible rescued from obscurity; though we may allow, without difficulty, that many sincere Roman catholics of the unlearned and weaker sort, may have been greatly puzzled and distressed in their minds, between the discoveries made to them by the Scriptures, and that mass of wretched superstition, which they had been accustomed to receive, all their days, with implicit faith.

If these facts and suggestions prove useful to the curious reader, who wishes to understand and settle the character of this extraordinary Reformer, and to account for the various lights, and, I might add, the various obscurities, in which he has been transmitted to us, I have gained my aim.—I shall conclude this whole narrative with two short quotations.

The first is from a very concise life of Wickliff, written by Dr. Thomas James, author of the Apology already mentioned.

"God gave Dr. Wickliff grace to see the truth of his Gospel, and, by seeing it, to loath all superstition and popery. . . . By Abelard and others, he was grounded in the right faith of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; by Bradwardine in the nature of a true sole-justifying faith against merit-mongers and pardoners, PELAGIANS and PAPISTS. Fi-

nally, by reading Grosseteste's works, in whom he seemed to be most conversant, he descried the popo to be Antichrist."

The second is a very solemn declaration of Wickliff, contained in one of his Latin tracts.*

"Let God be my witness," says he, "that I principally intend the honour of God, and the good of the Church, from a spirit of veneration to the Divine Word, and of obedience to the law of Christ. But if, with that intention, a sinister view of vain-glory, of secular gain, or of vindictive malice, hath crept in unknown to myself, I sincerely grieve on the account, and, by the grace of God, will guard against it."

Dr. James asks, "What could be spoken more ingenuously, soberly, or christianly."†

N. B. The following is a fine specimen of the clear, nervous, and even elegant style of Wickliff (if due allowance be made for the times.) It is almost the whole of one of his tracts; and is now among the MSS. in the library of Benet's College, Cambridge.

WHY MANY PRIESTS HAVE NO BENEFICES.

Some causes why poor Priests receive not Benefices:—the first, for dread of simony; the second, for dread of mispending poor men's goods; the third, for dread of letting of better occupation that is more light or easy, more certain and more profitable.

I. For, first, if men should come to benefices by gift of prelates, there is dread of simony. For commonly they taken the first fruits, or other pensions, or holden curates in office in their courts or chapels, in offices far fro priests life, taught, and ensampled of Christ and his apostles. So that commonly such benefices comen not freely as Christ comandeth, but rather for worldly winning, or flattering of mighty men, and not for kunning of God's law, and true preaching of the Gospel, and ensample of holy life; and therefore commonly these prelates, and receivers ben fouled with simony, that is cursed heresy as God's law and man's law techen. And now whoever can run to Rome, and bear gold out of the lond, and strive and plead,

* Dan. xii. 2, 3.

† Speculum secular: See the Appendix, Wickliff, for an account of this translation, and also for a specimen of it. Several other things worthy of the reader's notice are contained under the same head.

* De Ver. Script.

† Dr. James's Apology.

and curse for tithes, and other temporal profits, that ben cleped with antichrist's clerks rights of holy church, shall have great benefices of cure of many thousand souls, tho he be unable, and of cursed life, and wicked ensample of pride, of covetisse, glotony, leachery, and other great sins. But if there be any simple man, that desireth to live well, and teche truly God's law, he shall ben holden an hypocrite, a new teacher, an heretick, and not suffered to come to any benefice. But if in any little poor place he liven a poor life, he shall be so pursued, and slandered, that he shall be put out by wiles, cantels, frauds, and worldly violence, and imprisoned or brent. And if lords shullen present clerks to benefices, they wolen have commonly gold in great quantity, and holden these curates in some worldly office, and suffren the wolves of hell to stranglen men's souls, so that they have their office done for nought, and their chappels holden up for vain-glory or hypocrisy; and yet they wolen not present a clerk able of God's law, and of good life, and holy ensample to the people; but a kitchen-clerk, or a penny-clerk, or one wise in building castles, or other worldly doing; tho he kun not read his sauter, and knoweth not the commandments of God, ne sacraments of holy church. And yet some lords, to colouren their symony wole not take for themselves, but kerechiefs for the lady, or a palfray, or a tun of wine. And when some lords wolden present a good man, then some ladies ben means to have a dancier presented, or a tripper on tapits, or hunter, or a hawker, or a wild player of summer gambels. And thus it seemeth, that both prelates, and lords commonly maken some cursed antichrist, or a quick fiend to be master of Christ's people, for to leaden them to hell to Sathanas their master; and suffer not Christ's disciples to teche Christ's Gospel to his children for to save their souls.

But in this presenting of evil curates, and holding of curates in worldly office, letting them fro their ghostly cure, ben three degrees of traitery agens God and his people. The first is in prelates and lords, that thus holden curates in their worldly office, for they have their high states in the church, and lordships, for to purvey true curates to the people, and to meyntene them in God's law, and punish them, if they failen in their ghostly

cure, and by this they holden their lordships of God. Then if they maken evil curates, and holden them in their worldly office, and letten them to lead God's people the rightful way to heaven, but helpen them, and constreynd them to lead the people to hell-ward, by withdrawing of God's word, and by evil ensample geving, they ben weiward traytors to God and his people, and vicars of Sathanas.—2. Yet more traitery is in false curates, that geven mede or hire to comen into such worldly offices, and to get lordship and maintenance agenst ordinances, and couchen in lord's courts for to get mo fatte benefices, and purposeu not spedly to do their ghostly office. Woe is to the lords that ben led with such cursed heretics, antichrists, traytors of God and his people; and traytors to lords themselves; who ben so blinded, that they perceiven not that such traytors, that openly ben false to God, wolen much more ben false to them.—3. But the most traitery is in false confessors, that shulden by their office warn prelates, and lords of this great peril, and clerks also that they holden none such curates in their worldly offices. For they don not this, lest they lessen lordship, and friendship, and gifts, and welfare of their stinking belly; and so they sellen christen soul to Sathanas, and maken prelates and lords, and curates to live in sin and traitery agenst God and his people, and deceiven them in their soul's health, and meyntenen them in cursed traitery of God and his people; and thus almost all the world goeth to hell for this cursed symony of false confessors. For commonly prelates, lords, and curates ben envynmed with this heresy of symony, and never done very repentance, and satisfaction therefore. For when they have a fat benefice geten by symony, they forsaken it not as they ben bounden by law, but wittingly usen forth that symony, and liven in riot, covetisse, and pride, and don not their office neither in good ensample, ne in true teching. And thus antichrist's clerks, enemies of Christ, and his people, by money, and flattering, and fleshly love, gedring to them leading of the people, forbare true priests to teche God's law, and therefore the blind leadeth the blind, and both parts ruunen into sin, and full many to hell: and it is huge wonder that God of his righteousness destroyeth not the houses of prelates, and lords, and cu-

rates, as Sodom and Gomor for heresie, extortions, and other cursednesses. And for dread of this sin, and many mo, some poor wretches receive no benefices in this world.

II. Yet the poor priests mighten freely getten presentation of lords to have benefices with cure of souls, they dreaden of mispending poor men's goods. For priests owen to hold themselves paide with food, and cloathing, as St. Paul techeth; and if they have more it is poor men's goods, as their own law, and God's law feyn, and they ben keepers thereof, and procurators of poor men. But for institution and induction he shall give much of this good, that is poor men's, to bishops' officers, archdeacons, and officials, that ben too rich. And when bishops and their officers comen, and feynen to visit, tho they nourishen men in open sin for annual rent, and don not their office, but sellen souls to Sathanas for money, wretched curates ben neded to feasten them richly, and give procuracy and synage, yea against God's law, and man's, and reason, and their own conscience, and yet they shullen not be suffered to teche truly God's law to their own subjects, and warn them of false prophets, who deceiven them both in belief and teaching: for then they musten erie to the people the great sins of prelates; but they demen that such sad reproving of sin is envy, slandering of prelates, and destroying of holy church. Also many times their patrons willen look to be feasted of such curates, else maken them lese that little thing, that they and poor men shullen live by. So that they shullen not spend their tithes and offerings after good conscience, and God's laws, but waste them on rich and idle men. Also eche good day commonly these small curates shullen have letters from their ordinaries to summon, and to curse poor men for nought, but for covetisse of antichrist's clerks; and if they not sumonen and cursen them, tho they know no cause why, they shullen ben hurted, and summoned from day to day, fro far place to farther, or cursed, or lese their benefits or profits. For else, as prelates feinen, they by their rebeldy shulden soon destroy prelates jurisdiction, power, and winning. Also, when poor priests, first holy of life, and devout in their prayers, ben beneficed, if they ben not busy about the world to make great feasts to rich persons and vicars,

and costly and gayly arrayed, by false doom of the world, they shullen be hated and hayned on as hounds, and ech man redy to peire them in name, and worldly goods. So many cursed deceits hath antichrist brought up by his worldly clerks to make curates to mispende poor men's goods, and not truly do their office; or else to forsaken all, and let antichrist's clerks, as lords of this world, rob the poor people by feyned censures, and teche the fend's lore both by open preaching, and ensample of cursed life. Also, if such curates ben stirred to learn God's law, and teche their parishens the Gospel, commonly they shullen get no leave of bishops, but for gold; and when they shullen most profit in their learning, then shullen they be clepid at home at the prelate's will. And if they shullen have any high sacraments, commonly they shulle buy them with poor men's goods; and so there is full great peril of evil spending of these goods, both upon prelates, rich men of the country, patrons, parsons, and their own kyu, for fame of the world, and for shame, and evil deming of men. And certes it is a great wonder that God suffreth so long this sin unpunished, namely of prelates' courts, that ben dens of thieves, and larders of hell; and so of their officers, that ben sotil in malice and covetisse; and of lords, and mighty men, that shulden destroy this wrong and other, and meyntenen truth, and God's servants, and now meyntenen antichrist's falsness and his clerks, for part of the winning. But certes God suffreth such hypocrites and tyrants to have name of prelates for great sins of the people, that eche part lead other to hell by blindness of the fend. And this is a thousand time more vengeance, than if God shud destroy bodily both parts, and all their goods, and earth therewith, as he did by Sodom and Gomor. For the longer that they liven thus in sin, the greater pains shullen they have in hell, unless they amenden them.—And this dread, and many mo, maken some poor priests to receive none benefices.

III. But yet the poor priests mighten have freely presentation of lords, and ben holpen by meyntenen of kings, and help of good commons fro extortions of prelates, and other mispending of these goods, that is full hard in this reigning of antichrist's clerks, yet they dreden sore that by singular cure ordained of sinful men they shulden be letted fro

better occupation, and fro more profit of holy church. And this is the most dread of all; for they have cure and charge at the full of God to help their brethren to heavenward, both by teaching, praying, and example-geving. And it seemeth that they shullen most easily fulfil this by general cure of charity, as did Christ and his Apostles. And by this they most sikerly save themselves, and help their brethren: and they ben free to flee fro one city to another, when they ben pursued of antichrist's clerks, as biddeth Christ in the Gospel. And they may best without challenging of men go and dwell among the people where they shullen most profit, and in covenable time come, and go after stirring of the Holy Ghost, and not be bounden by sinful men's jurisdiction for the better doing. Also they pursuen Christ and his Apostles nearer, in taking alms wilfully of the people that they teachen, than in taking dymes and offerings by customs that sinful men ordeynen, and usen now in the time of grace. Also this is more medeful on both sides as they understonden by Christ's life, and his Apostles: for thus the people geveth them alms more wilfully and devoutly, and they taken it more mekely, and ben more busy to learne, kepe, and teche God's law, and so it is the better for both sides. Also by this manner might and shulde the people geve freely their alms to true priests that truly kepen their order, and taughten the Gospel; and withdrawn fro wicked priests, and not to be constreynd to pay their tithes, and offerings to open cursed men to meyntene them in their open cursedness. And thus shulde symony, covetisse, and idleness of worldly clerks be laid down; and holiness, and true teching, and knowing of God's law be brought in both in clerks and lewid men: also thus shulde striving, pleading, and cursing for dymes and offerings, and hate and discord among priests, and lewid men be ended; and unity, peace, and charity meyntened. Also these benefices, by this course, that men usen now, bring in worldliness, and needless business about worldly offices, that Christ and his Apostles wolden never taken upon them, and yet they weren more mighty, more witty,

and more brenning in charity to God, and to the people, both to live the best manner in themselves, and to teche other men. Also covetisse, and worldliness of the people shulden be done away; and Christ's poverty, and his Apostles, by ensample of poor life of clerks, and trust in God, and desiring of heavenly bliss, shulde regne in christen people. Also then shulde priests study holy writt, and be devout in their prayers, and not be carried away with new offices, and mo sacraments than Christ used, and his Apostles, that taughten us all truth. Also mochil blasphemy of prelates, and other men of feyned obedience, and needless swearings made to worldly prelates shulden then cessen, and sovereyn obedience to God and his law, and eschewing of nedless othes shulde regne among christen men. Also then shulde men eschew commonly all the perils said before in the first chapter, and second, and many thousand mo, and live in clenness, and sikerness of conscience. Also then shulde priests be busy to seke God's worship and saving of men's souls, and not their own wordly glory and winning of worldly dritt. Also then shulden priests live like to angels, as they ben angels of office, whereas they liven now as swine in fleshly lusts, and turnen agen to their former sins for abundance of worldly goods, and idleness in their ghostly office, and overmuch business about this wretched life.

For these dreads and many thousand mo, and for to be more like to Christ's life and his Apostles, and for to profit mo to their own souls and other men's, some poor priests thincken with God to travelle about where they shulden most profiten, by evidence that God geveth them, while they have time, and little bodily strength and youth. Nethless they damnen not curates that don weil their office, and dwellen where they shullen most profit, and techen truly and stably God's law agenst false prophets, and cursed fends deceits.

Christ, for his endless mercy, help his priests and common people to beware of Antichrist's deceits, and go even the right way to heaven! Amen, Jesu, for thy endless charity.

CENTURY XV.

CHAPTER I.

THE LOLLARDS.

TERMS of reproach have, in all ages, been applied to real Christians. Lollard, the name given to the followers of Wickliff, is to be considered as one of them. My chief reason for using it is, that the persons, whose story is the subject of this chapter, may be more distinctly defined.

That same Courtney, bishop of London, whose examination of Wickliff, together with the extraordinary circumstances which attended that examination, has been laid before the reader, afterwards became archbishop of Canterbury; and in that exalted station, employed himself with great vehemence and asperity against the disciples of the man who, by the protection of the duke of Lancaster, had escaped his vengeance. King Richard II. also was induced to patronize this persecution, though it does not appear that during his reign any of the Lollards were actually put to death. That the blind fury of ambitious and unprincipled men was thus, for a time, restrained from committing the last acts of injustice and barbarity, is to be ascribed, partly to the power of the duke of Lancaster, who may be called the political father of the Lollards; and partly to the influence of Anne, the consort of Richard II. and sister of Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia. The accounts of this princess, in regard to religion, are brief; yet they merit our particular attention, because they seem to illustrate the course of Divine Providence, in paving the way for that connexion between England and Bohemia, by which the labours of Wickliff became so serviceable in propagating the Gospel in the latter country. She lived with king Richard about eleven years; and died in the year 1394, in the

seventeenth year of his reign.* It is remarked of her, that she had in her possession the Gospels in the English language, with four learned commentaries upon them. At her funeral, Arundel, archbishop of York, in his sermon adverted to this circumstance, and expressed much surprise at it, as she was born an alien. The prelate added, that she had sent to him, for his inspection and judgment, her four English translations of the Gospel, and that he had found them true and faithful. He confessed that it appeared to him a marvellous instance of godliness, that so great a lady would humbly condescend to study such excellent books: and he completed his encomium by declaring that he never knew a woman of such extraordinary piety. In the same sermon, he sharply rebuked the negligence of bishops and of others.

This relation may probably induce the reader to conjecture, that Arundel himself must have been almost a Lollard. At least he cannot but be both surprised and mortified to find, that shortly after the death of the good queen Anne, his same prelate, to the utmost of his power, stirred up the king to harass, throughout the whole kingdom, the very persons who should dare, in their native language, to read and study the Gospels of Jesus Christ.

Such inconsistencies are not uncommon in the annals of human nature.

About the same time, I find that several persons, who were accused of holding those speculative tenets of Wickliff, which I have allowed to be indefensible, did however, in their examinations, perfectly clear themselves of every reasonable suspicion of factious innovation.† In fact, the whole body of the Lollards

Death of the
Queen in
A. D. 1394.

* Fox, p. 578.

† Ib. p. 499, &c.

in general, were in practice so perfectly void of offence, that speculative errors formed the only charge that could be brought against them; and even in regard to these errors, there seems reason to apprehend that the followers of Wickliff very much meliorated the sentiments of their master and leader. ONLY for the Gospel's sake they suffered; whatever might be the pretences of their enemies.

In the year 1397, died John de Trevisa, a gentleman born at Crocadon, in Cornwall; a secular priest, and vicar of

Death of
John de
Trevisa.
A. D. 1397.

Berkeley; a man who translated many voluminous writings, and particularly the Bible into the English language. Thomas, lord Berkeley, his patron, induced him to undertake the last-mentioned work. This nobleman appears to have had a regard for the written word of God, which was little read or known in that age. He had the Apocalypse, in Latin and French, inscribed on the walls of his chapel at Berkeley. Trevisa was, also, distinguished for his aversion to the monastic system. "Christ," said he, "sent Apostles and presbyters, not monks and mendicant friars." He died in peace, almost ninety years old. Though neither this clergyman nor his patron are usually ranked among Lollards, yet do they seem to be sufficiently distinguished by their piety and veneration for the Scriptures to deserve a place in these memoirs. The period of history we are reviewing, is not so fruitful in Godliness, as to allow us to pass over in silence such examples as these.*

Richard II. being deposed, Henry of Lancaster, the son of that same John of Gaunt who had patronized Wickliff,

Henry IV.
usurps the
throne.
A. D. 1399.

usurped the throne in the year 1399; and shortly after, was crowned by Arundel, then Archbishop of Canterbury. Both the king and the archbishop had demonstrated by their conduct, that they were ready to sacrifice everything to their ambition. It is not therefore, matter of surprise, either that the murderer of King Richard should proceed to persecute, with extreme barbarity, the Lollards, whom his father had so zealously protected; or that the archbishop, who had supported the

usurper in his iniquitous pretensions to the crown, should also concur with him in his plan to crush those reformers. The power of the hierarchy was formidable to all men; and every one, who thirsted after secular greatness, found himself obliged, by political necessity, which is the primary law of unprincipled men, to court that power, and to obey its most unreasonable commands. Thus influenced, Henry IV. and Arundel commenced a persecution more terrible than any which had ever been known under the English kings. William Sawtre was the first man who was burnt in England for opposing the abominations of popery. He was a clergyman in London, who openly taught the doctrines of Wickliff. And though, through the weakness of human nature, he had revoked and abjured those doctrines before the bishop of Norwich, he afterwards recovered so much strength of mind, as to incur a second prosecution for his open confession of Evangelical truth before the archbishop. Among other charges which it would be tedious to recount, this was one; "he had declared, that a priest was more bound to preach the word of God, than to recite particular services at certain canonical hours."* Such was the genius of the reigning superstition! The exposition of the word of God was looked on as a small matter, in comparison of the customary formalities. Sawtre, glorying in the cross of Christ, and strengthened by divine grace, suffered the flames of martyrdom in the year of our Lord fourteen hundred.†

Martyrdom
of Wm.
Sawtre.
A. D. 1400.

The name of John Badby, a low and illiterate workman, well deserves to be recorded for the honour of divine truth. Arundel took serious pains to persuade him, that the consecrated bread was really and properly the body of Christ. "After the consecration, it remaineth,"‡ said Badby, "the same material bread which it was before; nevertheless it is a sign or sacrament of the living God. I believe the Omnipotent God in Trinity to be ONE. But if every consecrated host be the Lord's body, then there are twenty thousand gods in England." After he had been delivered to the secu-

* Fox, p. 587,

† Wilkins, Convoc. p. 254—260.

‡ Fox, p. 594, and Wilkins, p. 326.

* Fuller's Church History, p. 151.

lar power by the bishops, he was, by the king's writ, condemned to be burned. The Prince of Wales, happening to be present, very earnestly exhorted him to recant, adding the most terrible menaces of the vengeance which would overtake him, if he should continue in his obstinacy. Badby, however, was inflexible. As soon as he felt the fire, he cried, Mercy! The prince, supposing that he was entreating the mercy of his judges, ordered the fire to be quenched. "Will you forsake heresy," said young Henry; "and will you conform to the faith of the holy church? If you will, you shall have a yearly stipend out of the king's treasury." The martyr was unmoved; and Henry, in a rage, declared, that he might now look for no favour. Badby gloriously finished his course in the flames.

And of John Badby.

It was a marvellous instance of the strength of Christ made perfect in weakness, and a striking proof that God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, that a simple artificer should sustain the most cruel torments with patience and serenity, not only in defence of divine truth, but also of common sense; while the most dignified characters in the kingdom, and among these, the Prince of Wales, afterwards the renowned Henry V. gloried in defending one of the most egregious absurdities that ever disgraced the human understanding. What are all his victories and triumphs, of which English history is so proud, compared with the good sense and gracious spirit of J. Badby!

The conflict was now grown serious, and it behoved Henry to exercise the most rigorous measures of prevention, if he intended to repress all innovation, and to protect the established ecclesiastical system. Accordingly, he published a severe statute, by which grievous pains and penalties were to be inflicted on all, who should dare to defend or encourage the tenets of Wickliff; and this, in conjunction with a constitution of Arundel, too tedious* to be recited, seemed to threaten the total extinction of the heresy so called. The persecutors were extremely active; and many persons through fear recanted; but worthies were still found, who continued faithful unto death.

* Wilkins, p. 314. Constitut. Arundel ex MS. Lamb.

In the year 1413 died Henry IV.—His successor Henry V. trod in his steps, and countenanced Arundel, in his plans of extirpating the Lollards, and of supporting the existing hierarchy by pen-

Death of Henry IV. A. D. 1413.

al coercions. In the first year of the new king's reign, this archbishop collected in St. Paul's church at London, a universal synod of all the bishops and clergy of England. The principal object of the assembly was to repress the growing sect; and, as Sir John Oldecastle, lord Cobham, had on all occasions discovered a partiality for these reformers, the resentment of the archbishop and of the whole body of the clergy, was particularly levelled at this nobleman. Certainly, at that time, no man in England was more obnoxious to the ecclesiastics. For he made no secret of his opinions. He had very much distinguished himself in opposing the abuses of popery. At a great expense, he had collected, transcribed, and dispersed, the works of Wickliff among the common people without reserve; and it was well known that he maintained a great number of itinerant preachers in many parts of the country, particularly in the dioceses of Canterbury, Rochester, London and Hereford.*

But lord Cobham was a favourite both of the king and of the people; and therefore to effect his destruction was an undertaking that required much caution. The archbishop however was in earnest, and he concerted his measures with prudence.

Persecution of lord Cobham.

His first step was to procure the royal mandate for sending commissioners to Oxford, whose business should be to examine and report the progress of heresy. These commissioners are, by Mr. Fox, not improperly called "the twelve inquisitors of heresies." The issue of their inquiries proved highly ungrateful to the hierarchy. They found Oxford overrun with heretics: they were, indeed, respectfully received by the rulers of the university, but the opinions of Wickliff had made their way among the junior students; and the talents and integrity of their master were held in high esteem and admiration by his disciples. This information, with many other mi-

* Fox, p. 635. Walden cont. Wickley Goodwin's Henry V.

nute particulars, Arundel laid before the grand convocation, who, after long debates, determined, that, without delay, the lord Cobham should be prosecuted as a heretic. Him they considered as the great offender: to his influence they ascribed the growth of heresy: he was not only, they said, an avowed heretic himself; but, by stipends, encouraged scholars from Oxford to propagate his opinions, many of which were in direct opposition to the sentiments of the holy church of Rome; and lastly, he employed the disciples of Wickliff in preaching, though they had not obtained the licenses of their respective bishops for that purpose. With great solemnity a copy of each of Wickliff's works was publicly burnt, by the enraged archbishop, in the presence of the nobility, clergy, and people; and it happened that one of the books burnt on this occasion, had belonged to lord Cobham. This circumstance tended much to confirm the assembly in their belief that that nobleman was a great encourager of the Lollards.*

At the moment when the convocation seemed almost in a flame, and were vowing vengeance against lord Cobham, some of the more cool and discreet members are said to have suggested the propriety of sounding how the young king would relish the measures they had in view, before they should proceed any further. Arundel instantly saw the wisdom of this advice, and he resolved to follow it.

For the purpose of giving weight to the proceedings, this artful primate, at the head of a great number of dignified ecclesiastics, complained most grievously to Henry, of the heretical practices of his favourite servant lord Cobham, and entreated his majesty to consent to the prosecution of so incorrigible an offender.

The affections of the king appear to have been, in some measure, already alienated from this unfortunate nobleman: Mr. Fox observes,† that he gently listened to those "blood-thirsty prelates, and far otherwise than became his princely dignity." But there is a circumstance which seems to have escaped the notice of this diligent searcher into ancient records. Through the management of the archbishop, the king's mind

was previously impressed with strong suspicions of lord Cobham's heresy and enmity to the church. That very book above mentioned, which was said to belong to this excellent man, and which the convocation condemned to the flames, was read aloud before the king, the bishops, and the temporal peers of the realm: And the fragment of the account of these proceedings informs us, that Henry was exceedingly shocked at the recital; and declared that, in his life, he never heard such horrid heresy.* However, in consideration of the high birth, military rank, and good services of Sir John Oidecastle, the king enjoined the convocation to deal favourably with him, and to desist from all further process for some days: He wished to restore him to the unity of the church without rigour or disgrace; and he promised, that he himself, in the mean time, would send privately for the honourable knight, and endeavour to persuade him to renounce his errors.

The king kept his promise, and is said to have used every argument he could think of to convince him of the high offence of separating from the church; and at last, to have pathetically exhorted him to retract and submit, as an obedient child to his holy mother. The answer of the knight is very expressive of the frank and open intrepidity which distinguished his character. "You I am always most ready to obey," said he, "because you are the appointed minister of God, and bear the sword for the punishment of evil-doers. But, as to the pope and his spiritual dominion, I owe them no obedience, nor will I pay them any; for as sure as God's word is true, to me it is fully evident, that the pope of Rome is the great Antichrist foretold in Holy Writ, the son of perdition, the open adversary of God, and the abomination standing in the holy place." The extreme ignorance of Henry in matters of religion, by no means disposed him to relish such an answer as this: he immediately turned away from him in visible displeasure, and gave up the disciple of Wickliff to the malice of his enemies.†

Arundel, supported by the sovereign

* Fox, p. 636. Collier, p. 632. Wilkins Concilia, p. 352.

† Fox, p. 636.

* Fragmentum Convoc. Cantuar. ARUNDEL.

† Fox, p. 636. Goodwin, Henry V.

The king attempts to reclaim the knight.

power, sent a citation to the castle of Cowling, where lord Cobham then resided. But feudal ideas were at that time no less fashionable than those of ecclesiastical domination. The high-spirited nobleman availed himself of his privileges, and refused admission to the messenger. The archbishop then cited him,* by letters affixed to the great gates of the cathedral of Rochester; but lord Cobham still disregarded the mandate. Arundel, in a rage, excommunicated him for contumacy, and demanded the aid of the civil power to apprehend him.

Cobham, alarmed at length at the approaching storm, put in writing a confession of his faith, delivered it to the king, and entreated his majesty to judge for himself, whether he had merited all this rough treatment. The king coldly ordered the written confession to be delivered to the archbishop. Lord Cobham then offered to bring a hundred knights, who would bear testimony to the innocence of his life and opinions. When these expedients had failed, he assumed a higher strain, and begged that he might be permitted, as was usual in less matters, to vindicate his innocence by the law of arms. He said he was ready, "in the quarrel of his faith," to fight for life or death, with any man living, the king and the lords of his council being excepted.

Nothing can be said by way of extenuating so gross an absurdity, except that he had been educated in the military habits of the fourteenth century. And such was the wretched state of society in the reign of Henry V. whose history we are accustomed to read with so much pride and admiration, that no method of defence remained for this Christian hero, but what was as contrary to all ideas of justice and equity, as that by which he was persecuted. In the issue, Cobham was arrested by the king's express order, and lodged in the tower of London. The very zealous and honest Mr. Fox,† gives the following account of his first examination.

On the day appointed, Thomas Arundel, the archbishop, "sitting in Caiaphas' room, in the chapter-house of St. Paul's," with the bishops of London and

Winchester, sir Robert Morley brought personally before him lord Cobham, and left him there for the time. Sir, said the primate, you stand here, both detected of heresies, and also excommunicated for contumacy. Notwithstanding, we have as yet, neither shown ourselves unwilling to give you absolution, nor yet do to this hour, provided you would meekly ask for it.

Lord Cobham took no notice of this offer, but desired permission to read an account of his faith, which had long been settled, and which he intended to stand to. He then took out of his bosom a certain writing, respecting the articles whereof he was accused, and when he had read it, he delivered the same to the archbishop.

The contents of the paper were, in substance, these :

1. That the most worshipful sacrament of the altar is Christ's body in the form of bread.

2. That every man, who would be saved, must forsake sin, and do penance for sins already committed, with true and very sincere contrition.

3. That images might be allowable to represent and give men lively ideas of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the martyrdom and good lives of saints; but, that if any man gave that worship to dead images which was due only to God, or put such hope or trust in the help of them as he should do in God, he became a grievous idolater.

4. That the matter of pilgrimages might be settled in few words. A man may spend all his days in pilgrimages, and lose his soul at last: but he, that knows the holy commandments of God and keepeth them to the end, shall be saved, though he never visited the shrines of saints, as men now do in their pilgrimages to Canterbury, Rome, and other places.

Then the archbishop informed the prisoner, that, though there were many good things contained in his paper, he had not been sufficiently explicit respecting several other articles of belief: and that upon these also his opinion would be expected. As a direction to his faith, he promised to send him, in writing, the clear determinations of the church; and he warned him very particularly, to attend to this point; namely, whether, in the sacrament of the altar,

He reads his confession of faith.

Lord Cobham's challenge.

ready, "in the quarrel of his faith," to fight for life or death, with any man living,

* Citacio Arund. Wilkins, p. 329.

† Pages 638 and 639.

the material bread did, or did not, remain, after the words of consecration.

The gross superstition and unscriptural notions of the church at that time, are strikingly exhibited in this authentic determination of the primate and clergy, which, according to promise, was sent to the lord Cobham in the tower.

1. The faith and determination of the Holy Church, touching the blissful sacrament of the altar, is this, that after the sacramental words be once spoken, by a priest in his Mass, "the material bread, that was before bread, is turned into Christ's very body; and the material wine, that was before wine, is turned into Christ's very blood." And so there remaineth, thenceforth, neither material bread, nor material wine, which were there before the sacramental words were spoken.

2. Every christian man living here bodily on earth, ought to confess to a priest ordained by the church, if he can come to him.

3. Christ ordained St. Peter to be his vicar here on earth, whose see is the holy Church of Rome: And he granted that the same power, which he gave to Peter, should succeed to all Peter's successors; whom we now call popes of Rome; . . . and whom christian men ought to obey, after the laws of the Church of Rome.

4. Lastly, Holy Church hath determined, that it is meritorious to a christian man to go on a pilgrimage to holy places; and there to worship holy reliques, and images of saints, apostles, martyrs, and confessors, approved by the Church of Rome.

On Monday, the day appointed for the next examination, Arundel accosted lord Cobham with an appearance of great mildness, and put him in mind, that, on

the preceding Saturday, he had informed him, he was "accused for contumacy and disobedience to the holy church;" and had expected he would at that time have meekly requested absolution. The archbishop then declared, that even now it was not too late to make the same request, provided it was made in due form, as the church had ordained.*

Amidst this very interesting narrative,

let not my reader for a moment forget, that his historian is always in quest of evidences of the true faith of the Gospel exemplified in practice. The trial of lord Cobham, though in many points of view a gloomy tale, affords a remarkable and a very satisfactory evidence of this sort. This exemplary knight appears to have possessed the humility of a Christian, as well as the spirit of a soldier: for, he not only faithfully protested against the idolatry of the times, the fictitious absolutions, and various corruptions of popery, by which the creatures of the pope extorted the greatest part of the wealth of the kingdom; but he also openly made such penitential declarations, and affecting acknowledgments of having personally broken God's commandments, as imply much salutary self-knowledge and self-abasement, strong convictions of sin, and bitter sorrow for the same, together with a firm reliance on the mercy of God through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

"I never yet trespassed against you," said this intrepid servant of God; "and therefore I do not feel the want of your absolution." He then kneeled down on the pavement; and lifting up his hands to heaven, he said, "I confess myself here unto thee, my eternal living God, that I have been a grievous sinner: How often in my frail youth have I offended thee by ungoverned passions, pride, concupiscence, intemperance! How often have I been drawn into horrible sin by anger, and how many of my fellow-creatures have I injured from this cause! Good Lord, I humbly ask thee mercy: here I need absolution."

With tears in his eyes, he then stood up, and with a loud voice cried out, "Lo! these are your guides, good people. Take notice; for the violation of God's holy law and his great commandments, they never cursed me: but, for their own arbitrary appointments and traditions, they most cruelly treat me and other men. Let them, however, remember, that Christ's denunciations against the Pharisees shall ail be fulfilled."

The dignity of his manner, and the vehemence of his expression, threw the court into some confusion. After the primate had recovered himself, he proceeded to examine the prisoner respecting the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Acute answers of Lord Cobham.

"Do you believe, that after

Lord Cobham's second examination.

* Fox, p. 639. Wilkins, p. 356.

the words of consecration there remains any MATERIAL bread?" "The Scriptures," said Cobham, "make no mention of MATERIAL bread; I believe, that Christ's body remains in the FORM of bread. In the sacrament there is both Christ's body and the bread: the bread is the thing that we see with our eyes; but the body of Christ is hid, and only to be seen by faith."* Upon which, with one voice, they cried, Heresy! heresy! One of the bishops, in particular, said vehemently, "That it was a foul heresy to call it bread!" Cobham answered smartly, "St. Paul, the Apostle, was as wise a man as you, and perhaps as good a Christian; and yet he calls it BREAD. The bread, saith he, that we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? To be short with you; I believe the Scriptures most cordially, but I have no belief in your lordly laws and idle determinations: ye are no part of Christ's holy church, as your deeds do plainly show." Doctor Walden, the prior of the Carmelites, and Wickliff's great enemy, now lost all patience; and exclaimed, "What rash and desperate people are these followers of Wickliff!"

"Before God and man," replied Cobham, "I solemnly here profess, that till I knew Wickliff, whose judgment ye so highly disdain, I never abstained from sin; but after I became acquainted with that virtuous man and his despised doctrines, it hath been otherwise with me; so much grace could I never find in all your pompous instructions."

"It were hard," said Walden, "that in an age of so many learned instructors, you should have had no grace to amend your life, till you heard the devil preach."

"Your fathers," said Cobham, "the old Pharisees, ascribed Christ's miracles to Beelzebub, and his doctrines to the devil. Go on; and, like them, ascribe every good thing to the devil. Go on, and pronounce every man a heretic, who rebukes your vicious lives. Pray, what warrant have you from Scripture, for this very act you are now about? Where is it written in all God's law, that you may thus sit in judgment upon the life of man? Hold—perhaps you will quote Annas

and Caiaphas, who sat upon Christ and his Apostles!"

"Yes, sir," said one of the doctors of law, "and Christ too, for he judged JUDAS."

"I never heard that he did," said lord Cobham. "Judas judged himself, and thereupon went out and hanged himself. Indeed Christ pronounced a wo against him, for his covetousness, as he does still against you, who follow Judas' steps."

The examinations of lord Cobham are unmeasurably prolix. I have, therefore, chosen to select such passages from the tedious accounts,* as might best indicate the real dispositions of this DEFENDER OF THE FAITH. Though intrepid and high spirited to the last, he appears not to have given his enemies any advantage over him, by using rude and coarse language, or by bursts of passion. The proud and ferocious spirit of an ill-educated soldier seems to have been melted down into the meekness and humility of the Christian. His reproof of his judges was severe, but perfectly just: His deep and animated confession of his sins is both affecting and instructive; and his bold testimony, in those trying moments, to the virtues and excellencies of a character so obnoxious to his ecclesiastical judges as that of Wickliff, is exceedingly honourable to the memory both of the master and the scholar. I need not add, the same testimony covers their cruel and relentless adversaries with shame and disgrace.

We have seen, that lord Cobham, in the process of his trial, hinted at the lessons of divine grace, which he had learnt in the school of Wickliff. The intimation is by no means obscure; yet every pious reader, at the same time that he is delighted with finding this evidence of the sound of christianity of Cobham, will lament with me, that there is not, on record, a larger and more distinct account both of his conversion, and of his private life and conversation. Such an account would give us a clearer insight into the religious character of this disciple of Wickliff, and might probably throw more light also on the practical tenets of that early reformer.

* The learned reader cannot fail to observe, that both Wickliff and his followers seem sometimes to lean to the notion of consubstantiation.

* I generally give the very words; though sometimes, for the sake of brevity, only the substance: and sometimes I put a modern phrase in the place of one now antiquated.

But we must be thankful for the documents we have. That distinct and impressive declaration of lord Cobham, concerning the change in his life from sin to the service of the living God, when we reflect on the awful and peculiar circumstances in which it was made, is in itself an inestimable fragment of ecclesiastical biography. This is that testimony of experience, which invincibly confirms every real Christian in the belief of the truth of the doctrine, which he has been taught. He may be baffled in argument by men more acute and sagacious than himself; he may be erroneous in many less matters; he may want both learning and eloquence to defend that which he believes; but the doctrines of grace he knows to be of God, by the change which they have wrought in his soul. In this proof he knows all other views of religion, whether nominally christian or not, do totally fail.

At the conclusion of this long and iniquitous trial, the behaviour of Lord Cobham was perfectly consistent with the tempers he had exhibited during the course of it. There remained the same undaunted courage and resolution, and the same Christian serenity and resignation. Some of the last questions which were put to him, respected the worship of the cross; and his answers prove that neither the acuteness of his genius was blunted, nor the solidity of his judgment impaired.

One of the friars asked him, whether he was ready to worship the cross upon which Christ died.

Where is it? said lord Cobham.

But suppose it was here at this moment? said the friar.

A wise man indeed, said Cobham, to put me such a question; and yet he himself does not know where the thing is! But, tell me, I pray, what sort of worship do I owe to it?

One of the conclave answered; Such worship as St. Paul speaks of, when he says, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Right, replied Cobham, and stretched out his arms; THAT is the true and the very cross; far better than your cross of wood.

Sir, said the bishop of London, you know very well that Christ died upon a MATERIAL CROSS.

True, said Cobham; and I know also

that our salvation did not come by that material cross, but by him who died thereupon. Further, I know well that St. Paul rejoiced in no other cross, but in Christ's passion and death ONLY, and in his own sufferings and persecutions, for the same truth which Christ had died for before.*

Mr. Fox's account of these transactions, collected from ancient manuscripts, does not, in general, differ materially from the archbishop's own registers of the proceedings of the convocation. But there are some circumstances noted by Mr. Fox, which we may well suppose to have been designedly omitted in the registers last mentioned. For example, Mr. Fox informs us that the court were so amazed at the spirit and resolution of lord Cobham, as well as at the quickness and pertinence of his answers, that they were reduced to a stand, "their wits and sophistry so failed them that day."

From Arundel's own reports it is sufficiently clear, that it was the custom of that artil primate to make, on these occasions, a great external show of lenity and kindness to the prisoners, at the very moment in which he was exercising towards them the most unrelenting barbarity. I observe in the case of William Sawtre, whose martyrdom we have already concisely related,† that when the archbishop degraded that faithful clergyman, pronounced him an incorrigible heretic, and delivered him to the secular power, he then, with the most consummate hypocrisy, requested the mayor and sheriffs of London to treat their prisoner KINDLY,‡ though he well knew they would dare to show him no other kindness, than that of burning him to ashes.

So in the trial of lord Cobham, nothing could exceed the mild and affable deportment of Arundel during the course of the examinations. The registers of Lambeth Palace inform us, that the archbishop repeatedly made use of the most "gentle, modest, and sweet terms" in addressing the prisoner; that with mournful looks he entreated him to return into the bosom of the Church; and that after he had found all his endeavours in vain,

* Fox, p. 442. Convoc. prælat. Wilkins, p. 256.

† Page 146 of this Volume.

‡ Wilkin's Concil. p. 260.—Fox, p. 589.

he was compelled with the bitterest sorrow to proceed to a definitive sentence.

"The day," said Arundel, "passes away fast; we must come to a conclusion." He then, for the last time, desired lord Cobham to weigh well the dilemma in which he stood: "You must either submit," said he, "to the ordinances of the Church, or abide the dangerous consequences."

Lord Cobham then said expressly before the whole court, "My faith is fixed, do with me what you please."

The primate, without further delay, judged, and pronounced, sir John Oldecastle, the lord Cobham, to be an incorrigible, pernicious, and detestable heretic; and having condemned him as such, he delivered him to the secular jurisdiction.*

Lord Cobham, with a most cheerful countenance, said, "Though ye condemn my body, which is but a wretched thing, yet I am well assured ye can do no harm to my soul, any more than could Satan to the soul of Job. He, that created it, will of his infinite mercy save it. Of this I have no manner of doubt. And in regard to the articles of my belief, I will, BY THE GRACE OF THE ETERNAL GOD, stand to them, even to my very death." He then turned to the people, and stretching out his hands, cried with a very loud voice, "Good Christian people! for God's love be well aware of these men; else, they will beguile you, and lead you blindfold into hell with themselves." Having said these words, he fell down upon his knees, and, lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, he prayed for his enemies in the following words: "Lord God Eternal! I beseech thee of thy great mercy to forgive my persecutors if it be thy blessed will!"

He was then sent back to the Tower, under the care of sir Robert Morley.

I was not surprised to find, that in Arundel's own report of this sad transaction, lord Cobham's prayer for his enemies is entirely omitted.† But the preceding address of this nobleman to the people, and his caution to them to beware of their blind guides, is, by the primate, placed immediately BEFORE the

passing of the definitive sentence of condemnation. Mr. Fox, in his account, places that address immediately AFTER the sentence, and seems to have thought Arundel's representation of this circumstance incorrect, for he pointedly tells us, that respecting this very matter, his own two copies of these proceedings agreed with each other.*

Though the ecclesiastical judges of lord Cobham, by condemning him as a heretic, and delivering him to the secular power for the execution of their sentence, appear to have done their utmost to complete the destruction of the man whom they feared and hated, there is yet reason to believe that both the king and the archbishop remained in some perplexity respecting this business. In religious concerns, this able monarch seems to have entirely resigned his understanding to the direction of the clergy; and therefore we need not wonder that he was highly provoked with lord Cobham for his opposition to the Church, and still more for his incurable obstinacy, in adhering to heretical sentiments, after that his sovereign had personally condescended to persuade him to recant. Yet, after all, it is not improbable that such a prince as Henry V. should still retain some esteem for the character of the prisoner in the Tower, who on many occasions had formerly distinguished himself by his valour and military talents. Though the memory of Henry is by no means free from the imputation of cruelty, it must at least be admitted, that the present situation of Cobham was likely to soften animosity, and to revive in the king's mind any latent affection for his favourite. Even Walsingham, a bigoted papist, and bitter enemy of the Lollards, though in many respects a very useful historian, says, that Cobham, "for his integrity, was dearly beloved by the king."‡

This same ancient historian informs us, that the archbishop in person went to the king, and requested his majesty to postpone, for the space of fifty days, the punishment of lord Cobham.‡ If this be true, the motives of Arundel can be no great mystery. The persecution of this virtuous knight was a most un-

* Rymer, Vol. IX. p. 61—66.—Fox, p. 642 & 3.

† Acta Convoc. proc. Cantuar.—Arundel, 18.

* Fox, p. 643.

‡ Regi propter probitatem charus et acceptus.—Walsingham, Henry V.

‡ Page 385.

popular step. His rank and character, and his zeal for the doctrines of Wickliff, had pointed him out to the primate as a proper victim of ecclesiastical severity; but his condemnation involved, in a general odium, the rulers of the Church who had been his judges. It was necessary, therefore, to temporize a little; and before the whole sect of the Lollards were to be terrified by the public execution of a person so highly esteemed as lord Cobham, it was thought necessary to employ a few weeks in lessening his credit among the people by a variety of scandalous aspersions. Mr. Fox assures us, that his adversaries scrupled not to publish a recantation in his name; and that lord Cobham directed a paper to be posted up in his own defence, and in contradiction to the slander.

But, whether the lenity of the king, or the politic caution of the clergy, was the true cause of the delay, it is certain, that lord Cobham was not put to death immediately after being condemned for a heretic. He remained some weeks in

the Tower, and at length by unknown means made his escape: So that it is now impossible to say, whether the clergy would ultimately have pressed the sovereign to proceed to extremities in this instance, or, whether Henry could have been induced to commit to the flames, for heresy, a favourite of such exalted rank and high reputation. For as yet, there had not been any instance of a nobleman suffering in that ignominious manner.

After lord Cobham had escaped out of the Tower, he is said to have taken the advantage of a dark night, evaded pursuit, and arrived safe in Wales, where he concealed himself more than four years.* If he had remained in prison, he would have effectually prevented the calumny with which the papists have endeavoured to load his memory; nevertheless, when we reflect on the intrepid spirit of the man, his unshaken resolution, and the cruel, unjust treatment he met with, we cannot wonder at his eagerness to fly from those flames, which his persecutors ardently longed to kindle. It seems as easy to comprehend lord Cobham's motives for wishing to escape, as it is difficult to censure them.

The clergy were not a little mortified

to find, that this grand heretic and destined victim, had slipped out of their hands; and their uneasiness was increased, by observing that the king discovered no anxiety to have lord Cobham retaken. Soon after this event, however, a very remarkable transaction afforded them every advantage they could wish, to gratify their resentment against the NOBLE CHIEF of the Lollards. These peaceable and truly Christian subjects had been accustomed to assemble in companies for the purposes of devotion; but the bishops represented their meetings as of a seditious tendency, and they found no great difficulty in obtaining a royal proclamation* for suppressing the conventicles of persons who were supposed to be ill inclined to the government. Historians have observed that "jealousy was the ruling foible of the house of Lancaster:" and though Henry V. was naturally of a noble and magnanimous temper, he could never forget that he was an usurper: His suspicions of the evil designs of the Lollards increased to a high degree: He thought it necessary to watch them as his greatest enemies; and he appears to have listened to every calumny, which the zeal and hatred of the hierarchy could invent or propagate against the unfortunate followers of Wickliff.

The royal proclamation, however, did not put an end to the assemblies of the Lollards. Like the primitive Christians, they met in smaller companies, and more privately, and often in the dead of night. St. Giles's Fields, then a thicket, was a place of frequent resort on these occasions. And here a number of them assembled A. D. 1414. in the evening of January the sixth, 1414; with an intention, as was usual, of continuing together till a very late hour.

The king was then at Eltham, a few miles from London. He received intelligence, that lord Cobham, at the head of twenty thousand of his party, was stationed in St. Giles's Fields, for the purpose of seizing the person of the king, putting their persecutors to the sword, and making himself the regent of the realm.

The mind of Henry, we have seen, had been prepared, by the diligent and artful representations of the clergy, to

* Bale.—Gilpin.

* Rymer, Vol. IX.

receive any impressions against the Lollards, which might tend to fix upon that persecuted sect the charges of seditious or treasonable practices. To his previous suspicions, therefore, as well as to the gallantry of his temper, we are to ascribe the extraordinary resolution which the king took on this occasion. He suddenly armed the few soldiers he could muster, put himself at their head, and marched to the place. He attacked the Lollards, and soon put them into confusion. About twenty were killed, and sixty taken.* Among these was one Beverly, their preacher, who with two others, Sir Roger Aeton, and John Brown, was afterwards put to death. The king marched on, but found no more bodies of men. He thought he had surprised only the advanced guard, whereas he had routed the whole army!!

This extraordinary affair is represented by the popish writers as a real conspiracy; and it has given them occasion to talk loudly against the tenets of the reformers, which could encourage such crimes. Mr. Hume, also, has enlisted himself on the same side of the question; and, in the most peremptory and decisive manner, has pronounced lord Cobham guilty of high treason.†

After what has been so lately observed concerning the lamentable prejudices of this most valuable historian, little more can now be necessary, than barely to put the reader in mind, that Cobham and many of the Lollards evidently belonged to the true Church of Christ, and bore with patience the cross of their Master. We may briefly add, that the ingenious, and on many occasions, the sceptical Mr. Hume, instead of affirming that "the treasonable designs of the sect were rendered certain, both from evidence, and from the confession of the criminals themselves," would have done better to have recollected, that the testimony of Walsingham, a violent partizan, merits, in this particular instance, very little attention. When I had reviewed Mr. Fox's able and satisfactory vindication of lord Cobham, I was astonished at the positiveness of our elegant historian, Mr. Hume, in this matter. The martyrologist, with great diligence and judgment, has examined all the authentic documents, and argued most powerfully against the supposition of

any conspiracy. Mr. Hume, on the contrary, gives implicit credit to the most improbable accounts;* and he could not but know that the Lollards had not then a friend on earth.

Though the entire combination of church and state, in the reign of Henry V. against this religious sect, prevents us from being furnished with positive and direct proof of their innocence, the reader, after what has been stated, will be disposed, no doubt, to acquit them of all treasonable views in the affair of St. Giles's Fields. And this persuasion will be strengthened by considering that this is the only instance on record, in which they have been accused of turbulent or seditious behaviour. The Lollards are described, in general, as having been always peaceable and submissive to authority.

Rapin observes,† that the persons assembled on that occasion, "had unhappily brought arms with them for their defence, in case they should be attacked by their persecutors." If we regulate our judgments according to modern notions and habits, this circumstance must appear very suspicious; but not so, if we recollect that the practice of providing arms for the purpose of self-defence, was by no means an unusual precaution in those violent times.

Neither ought much stress to be laid on the confession of several, who were made prisoners by the king. Among those that were taken, says the historian last mentioned, there were some, who, "gained by promises, or awed by threats, confessed whatever their enemies desired." Besides, it is extremely probable, that popish emissaries mixed themselves among the Lollards, for the express purpose of being brought to confession; and it has been well observed, that most likely, the very persons, who pretended to find arms on the field, could have best pointed out the original concealers of them.

Nothing can be more judicious than Rapin's observations on this whole transaction. "It is hardly to be conceived," says this historian, "that a prince so wise as Henry, could suffer himself to be imposed on by so gross a fiction. Had he found, indeed, as he was made to believe, twenty thousand men in arms

* Rapin, Henry V. † Hume, Henry V.

* Such are the accounts of Hall, &c.

† History of England, Henry V.

in St. Giles's Fields, it would have been very suspicious: but, that fourscore or a hundred men, among whom there was not a single person of rank, should have formed such a project, as that of seizing the king's person, is extremely improbable. Besides he himself knew sir John Oldeastle to be a man of sense; and yet nothing could be more wild than the project fathered upon him; a project, which it was supposed he was to execute with a handful of men, without being present himself, and without its being known where he was, or that there was any other leader in his room. Notwithstanding the strictest search made through the kingdom to discover the accomplices of this pretended conspiracy, not a SINGLE person could be found besides those taken at St. Giles's. Lastly, the principles of the Lollards were very far from allowing such barbarities. It is therefore more than probable, that the accusation was forged, to render the Lollards odious to the king, with a view to gain his license for their persecution."

The conduct of those in power in the Church at that time was so completely flagitious and unprincipled, that it is impossible to review their usual mode of proceeding against those, whom they termed heretics, without entertaining suspicions similar to those which have occurred to Rapin; suspicions of forged accusations and of pretended or extorted confessions. This consideration adds much weight to the solid reasonings of this very candid and upright historian.

It has been supposed that, in process of time, the king disbelieved the report of any actual conspiracy in this transaction; and it must be confessed, that when we reflect on the great understanding and military skill of this prince, it seems extraordinary, that he should not at the first have reflected, that the very marshalling of such a number of soldiers, and the furnishing of them with necessaries, could never have been managed with secrecy. He appears, however, to have given sufficient credit to the calumny to answer all the designs of the ecclesiastical rulers. He became thoroughly incensed against the Lollards, and particularly against the lord Cobham. A bill of attainder against that unfortunate nobleman passed the commons, through the royal influence:*

* Gilpin.

The king set a price of a thousand marks upon his head, and promised a perpetual exemption from taxes to any town, that should secure him.*

It was to be expected that these strong measures, aided by the active zeal and unrelenting hatred of his enemies, should be effective to the discovery of lord Cobham: and, it is matter of some surprise, how he was able, for several years, to elude the vigilance of the many, who narrowly watched him. Wales was his asylum; and he is supposed to have frequently changed the scene of his retreat. Through the diligence of lord Powis, and his dependents, he was at length discovered and taken. It was on the tenth of October, 1413, that Lord Cobham was, by Arundel, condemned as a heretic and sent to the Tower. The affair of St. Giles's happened on the evening of the sixth of January, 1414; and it was not till nearly the end of the year 1417, that this persecuted Christian was apprehended and brought to London.

His fate was soon determined. He was dragged into St. Giles's Fields with all the insult and barbarity of enraged superstition; and there, both as a traitor and a heretic, he was suspended alive in chains, upon a gallows, and burned to death.

Execution of
lord Cob-
ham;
A. D. 1417.

This excellent man, by a slight degree of dissimulation, might have softened his adversaries, and have escaped a troublesome persecution and a cruel death. But, sincerity is essential to a true servant of Jesus Christ; and lord Cobham died, as he had lived, in the faith and hope of the Gospel; and, bearing, to the end, a noble testimony to its genuine doctrines; and "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."†

One of lord Cobham's very great admirers has said, that the novelty of Wickliff's opinions first engaged his curiosity; that he examined them as a philosopher, and in the course of his examination became a Christian.

I know not upon what ground this is affirmed; but it might be so; nevertheless I feel assured that if we had lord Cobham's own account of the conversion, this representation of his matter

* Rapin—Rymer

† Heb. xiv. 25.

would appear, at least, very defective; moreover, from the little which he did say, on his trial, respecting Wickliff's doctrines, and from the very feeling manner in which he appears to have delivered that little,* I think it extremely probable, that the preaching and expounding of the true Gospel of Christ, by Wickliff, and his disciples, had been the means of affecting the conscience of this worthy personage, and of convincing him of sin. This has been found the usual way in which the Spirit of God operates salutary changes on the minds of fallen creatures. The philosophical method has a plausible appearance, but fails in practice.

Lord Cobham is allowed to have been a man of learning; and his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is incontestable. The aptness of his quotations, and his promptitude in producing scriptural arguments, were displayed in a very striking manner, through the whole course of his examination before the bishops. At the time when he was seized and made prisoner in Wales, Henry V. was making conquests in Normandy; and a parliament was then sitting in London, for the purpose of supplying the sovereign with money to carry on his wars. The records of that parliament inform us, that on the eighteenth of December, 1417, Sir John Oldecastle

Examination of Sir John Oldecastle before the Lords, A. D. 1417.

was brought before the lords and that he made no answer to the crimes laid to his charge.† No doubt he was thoroughly convinced that all attempts to exculpate himself would be vain and fruitless. The clergy, during the last three or four years had gained a complete ascendancy both in parliament and in the cabinet; Arundel died in 1414; and was succeeded by Chicheley, who soon showed himself to be a primate, both of more art and ability, and also of more zeal and courage, than his predecessor. Ecclesiastical tyranny and superstition seemed now at their height; and it required much less sagacity than that of lord Cobham, to see that in the present circumstances, any witnesses, which he could produce, would be overawed or disre-

garded amidst the imprecations of the priests and monks; and that a close and cruel confederacy of power, prejudice and resentment, would be impenetrable to argument and eloquence.

It was now, therefore, become the duty of lord Cobham, patiently to resign himself to the will of his Maker, and to seek for comfort by meditations on the sacred Scriptures. That he did so, I collect with no small satisfaction, from a single expression of the ancient memorialist Walsingham, which does not appear to have been taken notice of by succeeding writers. This author informs us, that the prisoner was examined in the presence of the duke of Bedford, then regent of England; and being pressed closely to give answers respecting the insurrection in St. Giles's Fields, and his other treasonable offences, his reply, after a short pause, was, "With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment:"* and then, says the scornful annalist, he again proceeded to PRATE IMPERTINENTLY.†

Yet this, the reader should remember, is the very author, on whose assertions, principally, Mr. Hume grounded his belief, that lord Cobham was guilty of treason. We have before observed‡ that, on that question, our elegant historian appears to have been credulous in the extreme; and, as he had no great taste for scriptural quotations, it is by no means improbable, that he also further agreed with Walsingham in blaming the prisoner for his "impertinent garrulity." Serious persons, however, who listen with reverence to the written word of God, will view the matter in a different light. That such a passage of Scripture should have been actually quoted by lord Cobham, then in the power of enraged and merciless adversaries, seems to be extremely likely; and not the less so, because recorded by Walsingham, a violent and prejudiced enemy of all the Lollards. In regard to the quotation itself, by suggesting the littleness and insignificance of all HUMAN judgments and determinations, in comparison of the DIVINE, it conveyed a wise and salutary admonition to the existing hierarchy, who, at that moment, were uncommonly

* I Cor. iv. 3d verse.

† Et iterum impertinenter garrulare cepit, donec Walsingham, p. 400.

‡ Page 155.

* Page 151 of this Vol.
† Cotton's Abridgment.

inflated with dominion and “drunken with the blood of the saints:”* and at the same time, it must have produced in the minds of all, WHO HAD EARS TO HEAR, a strong conviction of this important truth, that the knight, who was thus persecuted for righteousness’ sake, had made no rash choice in renouncing the love of the world, and thereby demonstrating that the love of the Father was in him.† Every pious Christian will, I doubt not, accord with me in these ideas; and be gratified to find, that “MAN’S JUDGMENT,” however severe and cruel, was “a very small thing,” in lord Cobham’s estimation; and that when all earthly supports must have failed, this martyr for the Gospel of Christ, steadily fixed his eye on GOD’S JUDGMENT, and derived all his hope and comfort from that single source.

At the time of his execution, many persons of rank and distinction were present; and the ecclesiastics are said to have laboured to the utmost to prevent the people from praying for him. Lord Cobham, however, resigned himself to a painful and ignominious death, “with the utmost bravery and most triumphant joy, exhorting the people to follow the instructions which God had given them in the Scriptures; and to disclaim those false teachers, whose lives and conversation were so contrary to Christ and his religion.”‡

Henry Chicheley, now archbishop of Canterbury, continued at the head of that see, from February 1414, to April 1443.§

A. D. 1414. This man deserves to be called the firebrand of the age in which he lived. To subvert the purposes of his own pride and tyranny, he engaged king Henry in his famous contest with France, by which a prodigious carnage was made of the human race, and the most dreadful miseries were brought upon both kingdoms. But Henry was a soldier, and understood the art of war, though perfectly ignorant of religion; and that ardour of spirit, which, in youth, had spent itself in vicious excesses, was now employed, under the management of Chicheley, in desolating France, by one of the most unjust wars ever waged by ambition, and in furnish-

ing for vulgar minds matter of declamation on the valour of the English nation. While this scene was carrying on in France, the archbishop at home, partly by exile, partly by forced abjurations, and partly by the flames, domineered over the Lollards; and almost effaced the vestiges of godliness in the kingdom.

This was one of the most gloomy seasons, which the Church ever experienced. The doctrines of Wickliff, indeed, had travelled into Bohemia; but, as we shall afterwards see, the fires of persecution were also lighted up in that country, at the same time that in England no quarter was given to any professors of the pure religion of Christ. Even the duke of Bedford, the brother of the king,* one of the wisest men of his age, thought it no dishonour to be the minister of Chicheley’s cruelties. A chaplain of lord Cobham, through terror of punishment, was induced to recant his creed: the strictest search was made after Lollards and their books; and while a few souls, dispersed through various parts, sighed in secret, and, detesting the reigning idolatry, worshipped God in spirit and in truth, they yet found no HUMAN consolation or support whatever. The principal use to be made of these scenes, is to excite a spirit of thankfulness for the superior privileges of the times in which we live.

The diocese of Kent was particularly exposed to the bloody activity of Chicheley. Whole families were obliged to relinquish their places of abode, for the sake of the Gospel.

In the midst of these tragedies, and in the year 1422, died Henry V. whose military greatness is known to most readers. His vast capacity and talents for government, have been also justly celebrated. But what is man without the genuine fear of God? This monarch, in the former part of his life, was remarkable for dissipation and extravagance of conduct; in the latter, he became the slave of the popedom; and for that reason, was called the PRINCE OF PRIESTS. Voluptuousness, ambition, superstition, each in their turn, had the ascendant in this extraordinary character. Such, however, is the dazzling nature of personal bravery and of prosperity, that even the ignorance and folly of the bigot,

* Rev. xvii. 6.

† 1 John ii. 15.

‡ Lewis’s account of Wickliff’s followers.

§ Biograph. Britan.—Henry’s Hist. Book V.

* Fox, page 729.

and the barbarities of the persecutor, are lost or forgotten amidst the enterprises of the hero and the successes of the conqueror. Reason and justice lift up their voice in vain. The great and substantial defects of Henry V. must hardly be touched on by Englishmen. The battle of Agincourt throws a delusive splendour around the name of this victorious king.

The persecution of the Lollards continued during the minority of Henry VI. William Taylor, a priest, was burnt, because he had asserted, that every prayer, which is a petition for some supernatural gift, is to be directed only to God.*

The four orders of friars were directed by the archbishop to examine him; and they convicted him of heresy, for asserting a maxim, which peculiarly distinguishes true religion from idolatry.

Not to dwell on the cases of many persons of less note, who suffered much vexation in this calamitous period of the Church, it may be proper to mention William White, who, by reading, writing, and preaching, † exerted himself in Norfolk so vigorously that he was condemned to the stake in 1424. His holy life and blameless manners had rendered him highly venerable in that county. He attempted to speak to the people before his execution, but was prevented. It is remarkable, that his widow, following her husband's footsteps in purity of life and in zeal for the Gospel, confirmed many persons in evangelical truth; on which account she was exposed to much trouble from the bishop of Norwich.

Nor did the civil wars between the houses of York and Lancaster, which filled the whole kingdom with confusion, put an end to the persecution of the Lollards. A person, named John Goose, was burnt at Tower-hill, in the reign of Edward IV. in the year 1473. ‡ This victim was delivered to one of the sheriff's, with an order to have him executed in the afternoon. The officer, compassionating the case of the prisoner, took him to his own house, and endeavoured to prevail on him to retract. But the martyr, after listening to a long exhortation, desired him to forbear: and

then, in strong terms, requested something to eat, declaring he was become very hungry. The sheriff complied with his request. "I eat now a good dinner," said the man very cheerfully, "for I shall have a brisk storm to pass through before supper." After he had dined, he gave thanks to God, and desired to be led to the place, where he should give up his soul to his Creator and Redeemer.

The civil contests with which the kingdom were convulsed, were at length terminated by the union of the two houses of York and Lancaster, at the accession of Henry VII. But the Church of God continued still an unremitted object of persecution. The sufferings of the Lollards were even greater during the established governments of Henry VII. and Henry VIII. than they had been during the civil wars. To give a minute detail of all the horrid cruelties that were inflicted on those who were condemned as heretics for reading the Scriptures, and for denying popish superstitions, is not the object of these memoirs. It may be sufficient to remark, that all, who were convicted of what was then called heresy, and adhered to their opinions, were first condemned as obstinate heretics, afterwards delivered to the secular arm, and lastly burnt to ashes, without mercy, and without exception.*

Neither age nor sex were spared. Mr. Fox has collected, from the registers of the diocese of Lincoln, for the year 1521, a most shocking catalogue, both of the accusers and of the victims, who suffered under the grievous and cruel persecution of bishop Langland, the king's confessor. He has also, with singular industry, recorded the particular names of many, who, through fear of a painful death, renounced their faith during the memorable persecution of that same year. Upon these unfortunate persons, various penances, and many very severe and ignominious punishments, were inflicted. Several, who were found to have abjured before, were condemned for relapse, and committed to the flames. †

A concise account of a person named John Brown, of Ashford, in Kent, shall conclude this distressing detail of the sufferings of the Lollards.

William Taylor, a priest, burnt.

Martyrdom of William White, A. D. 1424.

Of John Goose, A. D. 1473.

Many Martyrs, A. D. 1521.

* Fox, p. 749.
† Ibid. p. 814.

† Ibid. p. 752.

* Henry's Hist of Britain.
† See Appendix, Lollards.

This martyr suffered in the year 1511, under the persecution of William Warham, archbishop of Canterbury. He was discovered to be a heretic, as follows:*

Martyrdom
of John
Brown,
A. D. 1511.

A slight altercation had taken place between him and a priest, as they were both passing down to Gravesend, in the common barge. The priest perceived symptoms of heresy; and immediately upon landing, lodged, with the archbishop, an information against Brown. The man was suddenly apprehended by two of the archbishop's servants, who, by means of assistants, placed him on his own horse, bound his feet under the horse's belly, and carried him to Canterbury, where he remained in confinement forty days; during which time neither his wife, nor any of his friends, could receive the smallest intimation concerning him.

At length he was brought to Ashford, the town where he lived, and placed in the stocks. It was now almost night; but, one of his own female domestics, in passing by the place, happened to become acquainted with his situation; and she instantly carried home to her mistress the afflicting news. His mournful wife sat near her husband all the night, and heard him relate the melancholy story of everything that had happened to him. The treatment this good man had met with, from Warham, the archbishop of Canterbury, and from Fisher,† bishop of

Rochester, was infamous in the extreme. With unparalleled barbarity, they had directed his bare feet to be placed upon hot burning coals; and to be kept there, till they were burnt to the bones. Notwithstanding all this, Brown would not deny his faith, but patiently endured the pain, and continued immovable, fighting manfully the "good fight." To his wife he then said, "The bishops, good Elizabeth, have burnt my feet, till I cannot set them on the ground: they have done so to make me deny my Lord: but, I thank God, they will never be able to make me do that; for, if I should deny him in this world, he would deny me hereafter. Therefore, I pray thee, continue, as thou hast begun, and bring up thy children in the fear of God. Thy husband is to be consumed at the stake to-morrow.

He was burnt at Whitsun-even, lifting up his hands, and uttering the most fervent prayers, particularly the words of the Psalmist, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit; for thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, thou God of truth."*

Such were the sanguinary methods by which the prelates of England attempted to extirpate Lollardism and heresy. And they so far succeeded, that the few disciples of Wickliff, who still remained alive, seem to have been afterwards confounded with the favourers of the GRAND REFORMATION: but, in their main object of strengthening the Roman Catholic religion, they utterly failed. The burning of heretics was found to be not the way to extinguish heresy. On the contrary, both in England and on the Continent, such detestable cruelty increased the compassion of the people for the sufferers, excited their indignation against the persecutors, and roused a spirit of inquiry and of opposition to the existing hierarchy, which at length under the direction of a kind, overruling Providence, proved fatal both to papal corruptions of sound doctrine, and also to papal usurpation of dominion.

When the human mind has been thus fatigued and disgusted with a review of the cruelties of popish persecutors, it is

* Fox, p. 551.

† Fisher was born at Beverley in Yorkshire, in 1459. He was educated at Cambridge, and became Master or President of Queen's College in that University. He was made bishop of Rochester in 1504. It was during the time of his presidentship that Erasmus came to study at Cambridge, and took up his residence at Queen's College. This prelate was beheaded, by Henry VIII. in 1535, for denying the king's supremacy, and for speaking with freedom in behalf of the queen. The pope was so pleased with his conduct, that, even while Fisher was confined in the Tower and attainted of high treason, he made him a cardinal, and sent him the proper hat belonging to that dignity. Henry was so much provoked, that he would not permit the hat to be brought into the kingdom: he also sent Cromwell to sound bishop Fisher, whether he intended to accept it. "Yes," said Fisher. The king then exclaimed with an oath, "Well; let the pope send him the hat when he pleases, he

shall wear it on his shoulders, for I will leave him never a head to set it on." The tyrant was as good as his word.—Erasmus speaks of Fisher in strong terms of commendation.

* Mr. Fox tells us, he had this account from Brown's own daughter.

disposed to pronounce the Roman religion wholly a pretence, and all the ecclesiastical judges and rulers of those times, barbarous hypocrites and deceivers. "It is impossible," we are apt to say, "but that natural conscience should have informed them they were doing wrong, in committing to the flames, for slight differences of opinion, so many innocent victims; nay, often persons of the most exemplary life and conversation." However, a more cool and sedate reflection may convince us, that though in all ages, there have existed wicked men of great ability, who have shown themselves ever ready to sacrifice principle and conscience to their ambition and avarice, and even to wade through much blood in support of their darling objects, yet ALL tormentors of the human race have not been precisely of this class. These are of the first magnitude, and we suppose them to have had their eyes open. But there are others, who knew not what they did;* and towards such, therefore, though we are never to palliate their faults, much less to defend their enormities, yet are we bound to exercise an equitable discrimination. The reader will understand me to have in view those deluded votaries, who have had the misfortune to be taught, and the weakness to believe, that the favour of God is to be obtained, chiefly by paying a scrupulous regard to external forms and observances.—The following remarkable paragraph is extracted from a popish writer,† and will serve to explain my meaning still further.

"The disciples of Wickliff are men of a serious, modest deportment; avoiding

* Luke xxiii. 34.

† Sancho Reinher.—This Sancho Reinher was an apostate, and a persecutor of the Waldensers, in the thirteenth century. Mark well his account of these good men. "Among all sects, none is more pernicious than that of the room of LYONS, for three reasons: 1. It is the most ancient. Some aver their existence from the days of Sylvester; others from the very time of the Apostles. 2. Because it is so universal; for there is hardly a country into which the sect has not crept. 3. Because all others render themselves detestable by their blasphemies; but this has a great appearance of godliness, they living a righteous life before men, believing right concerning God, confessing all the articles of the creed, only hating the pope of Rome," &c. &c.

all ostentation in dress, mixing little with the busy world, and complaining of the debauchery of mankind. They maintain themselves wholly by their own labour, and utterly despise wealth; being fully content with bare necessaries. They follow no traffic, because it is attended with so much lying, swearing, and cheating. They are chaste and temperate; are never seen in taverns, or amused by the trifling gayeties of life. You find them always employed; either learning or teaching. They are concise and devout in their prayers; blaming an unanimated prolixity. They never swear; speak little; and in their public preaching they lay the chief stress on charity. They never mind canonical hours, because, they say, that a Paternoster or two, repeated with devotion, is better than tedious hours spent without devotion. They explain the Scriptures in a different way from the holy doctors and church of Rome. They speak little, and humbly, and are well behaved in appearance."

This abstract is not produced as a proof of the candour of a Roman Catholic, but of his wretched standard of virtue and holiness. For these excellencies of character in the followers of Wickliff, are not here mentioned by the author in terms of approbation, but, on the contrary, are with great simplicity noted by him, as the distinguishing marks of a heretical people. So little, in the times of Wickliff and his followers, had the prevailing religion to do with morals and with the heart.

Though this and many other similar testimonies, which might be adduced from popish authors, in proof of the innocence and virtues of the heretics, may satisfy us, that by no means all the persecutors of the godly were deceivers and hypocrites, in the gross sense of those terms, yet we must remember, as indeed has already been intimated, that the distinctions we would establish, still only serve to show that the sufferings of the righteous, during the period we are reviewing, are, probably, to be ascribed to very different degrees of guilt and wickedness in the hearts of those who inflicted those sufferings. Far be it from us to pretend to exculpate, in the smallest degree, the perpetrators of any of the various and horrid crimes related in this chapter. Rather let St. Peter's example direct our judgments. That Apostle

thought it right to suggest to the Jews, that their case would have been worse, if what they did, had not been done in ignorance; yet he in nowise excuses them; he tells them plainly, that they had denied the Holy One, and killed the Prince of Life, and had preferred a murderer to him;* and in the preceding chapter, he directly accuses them of having taken Jesus of Nazareth; and, by wicked hands, crucified and slain him.†

It may be worth while to notice some other things affirmed by the aforesaid popish writer, in his account of the heretics. He says, they are great enemies to the clergy: they despise and set the Church of Rome at nought. They confound truth and falsehood, to deceive the people. They exasperate the people against those who are not of their party. That indulgences are of no use but to get money, and that it is no sin to thrash a priest or a clergyman.‡

Our Saviour's remarkable prediction‡ naturally occurs on this occasion. For, even on the supposition that it ought to be taken literally, and not extended to all succeeding ages of the Church, it most decidedly proves, that persons may be persecutors "UNTO BLOOD," without being gross hypocrites. "The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service." And here it deserves to be noted, that, though it is said these murderers would think they were doing God service, in killing his faithful servants, yet not one word is added in extenuation of their crimes. For aught we know, therefore, such men might be in a state of judicial hardness and impenitence of heart, on account of long continued habits of sin, and long opposition to light and truth. After all the candid concessions and reasonable conjectures that can be made, respecting the MEASURE of the wickedness of the various papal persecutions, it must be owned, both that the subject is difficult, and also, that we have not much to do with it. When we are wearied and astonished with the contemplation of the barbarous and bloody scenes of this century, one of the most profitable and most certain conclusions we can arrive at, is, that the human "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

* Acts iii. 14, 15.

† See M. Von der Hardt, vol. iii.

‡ John xvi. 2.

CHAPTER II.

THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE; INCLUDING THE CASES OF JOHN HUSS, AND JEROM OF PRAGUE.

THIS celebrated council did not make any essential reformation in religion: on the contrary, they persecuted men who truly feared God; and they tolerated all the predominant corruptions. Their labours, therefore, do not deserve to be recorded, on account of the piety and virtue of those who composed the council. Yet the transactions at Constance claim considerable attention in these memoirs. They tend to throw light on the state of religion at that time; they also serve to illustrate the character of John Huss and of Jerom; and they afford various instructive reflections to those who love to attend to the dispensations of Divine Providence, and would understand the comparative power of nature and of grace, of mere human resources, and of the operations of the Holy Spirit.

The council met in the year 1414. Its objects were various and of high importance.* The necessity of the times had called aloud for an assembly of this kind. Ecclesiastical corruptions had increased to an intolerable magnitude; and Christendom had been distracted, nearly forty years, by a schism in the popedom. To settle this dispute, and restore peace to the church, was the most urgent concern of the council. Three pretenders to the chair of St. Peter, severally, laid claim to infallibility. The very nature of their struggle was subversive of the authority to which each of them made pretensions; and, "of their vain contest there seemed no end." The princes, statesmen, and rulers of the church, in those times, wanted not discernment to see the danger to which the whole ecclesiastical system was exposed by these contentions; but it seems never to have come into the minds of them, or of any of the members of the council, to examine the foundation on which the popedom itself was erected. THAT, on

Council of
Constance
met,
A. D. 1414.

* L'Enfant's History of the Council of Constance.—It is foreign to my design to follow this author through the details of his very accurate and circumstantial narration. The affairs, however, of John Huss and of Jerom, deserve a minute attention.

all sides, was looked on as sacred and inviolable, though allowed to be burdened and incumbered with innumerable abuses.

However, they deposed the three existing popes, and chose a fresh successor of St. Peter, Martin V.; and we are to remark a providential benefit, which arose from the accomplishment of this first object of the council; namely, that while THEY had their eye only on the restoration of the unity of the Romish see, they were led to decree the superiority of councils over popes. Thus a deep wound was given to the tyrannical hierarchy, which proved of considerable service to those real Reformers, who arose about a hundred years after the council of Constance.

I say real Reformers; for I cannot give this venerable name to the members of that assembly. That there needed a reformation of the Church in all its component parts, and that church-discipline ought to be re-established, these were ideas, indeed, which lay within their competence; and the members of this council universally confessed, that reformation and discipline ought to be prosecuted with vigour. But they brought not to the council the materials, which only could qualify them for such a work. In general, the best individuals among them were merely moralists; had some "zeal for God, but not according to knowledge;" and knew no higher principles than the voice of natural conscience, the dictates of common sense, and some information concerning the preceptive part of Christianity. Their system of religion was letter, not spirit; law, not gospel. They had some degree of insight into the distemper of human nature, little or none into the remedy. To promote the recovery of depraved mankind, they knew no methods but those of moral suasion, upon principles merely natural. The original depravity of man, salvation through the atonement of a Redeemer, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, were doctrines, the use and efficacy of which they did not understand: yet, these are the only effectual instruments for the reformation either of a corrupted church, or of a corrupted individual, though they are, by the world, generally suspected to be productive of enthusiasm, and are also too often professed by men of counterfeit religion.

A hundred years after the council of Constance, a reformation was attempted, and carried on with permanent success, by men furnished with truly evangelical views and materials. But the members of this celebrated council undertook to make "brick without straw;" and their projects of reform served only, in the event, to teach posterity, that the real doctrines of the Gospel ought to be distinctly known, cordially relished, and powerfully experienced, by those who undertake to enlighten mankind; and that without this apparatus, the efforts of the wisest and most dignified personages in Europe, for such were those assembled at Constance, will evaporate in the smoke of fair words and speeches, and of promising, but inefficient and unsubstantial schemes.

A moment's attentive consideration may convince us that this must unavoidably be the case. How could it be expected in the instance before us, that popes and cardinals, bishops and clergy, would enact, and, what is still more, would execute, laws, which bore hard on their own pride, their sloth, and their love of gain? Or, that the laity, noble or vulgar, would submit to strict rules of church-discipline? Nothing but the principle of divine love in the heart could effect these things; and divine love is learnt only in the school of Christ, and under the fostering influence of Scripture doctrine, connected with spiritual discernment.* I need not put the reader in mind, how ignorant in general, in regard to these things, men were in the fifteenth century. And hence we are no more to wonder at the failure of the attempts of the council of Constance, than at the inefficacy of the complaints, made from age to age, of the wickedness of men, both by philosophers of old, and by nominal Christians in our own times, while those, who complain and even endeavour to effect reforms, are destitute of real christian perceptions, and regard no other light than that of mere nature. Thus the institution of mere laws, however good, "can never give life;"† "the motions of sin by the law work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death."‡ If even the best characters, among the prodigious congregation at Constance, thus failed, through ignorance of the true method of relieving human evils,

* 1 Cor. ii. 14. † Gal. iii. ‡ Rom. vii.

we need not be surprised, that those who were actuated by bad motives, should contribute nothing towards a real reformation. The consequence was, that the prevailing abuses remained in the church in full force. The council managed to restore unity to the popedom, which was indeed a very difficult point: but they found it more easy to procure consent to the deposition of wicked popes, than to compel the clergy to divest themselves of that avarice, ambition, and sensuality, which were the grand sources of the existing ecclesiastical disorders.* However, THAT which men attempted in vain by methods merely human, God himself, about a century afterwards, effected, by the foolishness of preaching,† and by his own Spirit of grace.

It was proposed, that the bishops and other pastors should be compelled to reside in their cathedrals and parishes, to visit their flocks, to renounce pluralities, and to preach the word of God themselves, instead of committing that charge to ignorant or profane priests. Amendments truly just and laudable! But those who proposed these excellent things, were themselves in a high degree proper objects of censure. Some of the orators of the council declared, that "they strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel." In fact, several little punctilios were reformed: but, as we have just observed, all the substantial evils remained in the church.

There can be no doubt but they ought to have begun with Christian doctrine itself, and its influence on the heart, if they had expected success.

The knights of the Teutonic order, at this time, ranged through all their own neighbourhood with fire and sword, under the pretence of converting infidels, and had been justly complained of by the king of Poland; yet this council supported them in their enormities; nor would they even condemn a libel written by a monk, who had exhorted all Christians to murder that monarch, and to massacre the Poles. John Petit, a friar, had publicly vindicated the assassination committed by the duke of Burgundy's order on the duke of Orleans, brother to the king of France. It may seem incredible, but it is true, that the king of France, who prosecuted this friar before the council of Constance, could not pro-

ecure his condemnation. All the dignified orders in Europe, there assembled together, had not sufficient spirit and integrity to punish crimes of the most atrocious nature. Yet they could burn without mercy those whom they deemed heretics, though men of real godliness. This part of the conduct of the assembly particularly deserves our attention; and still more so, if we keep constantly in mind who the members were that composed it. Italy, France, Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, England, Denmark, Sweden, were represented by deputies: Four electors were present, namely, those of Mentz and Saxony, the elector Palatine, and the burgrave of Nuremberg, who there received the electoral cap; besides envoys from the other electors: The emperor Sigismund was never absent, unless employed in the express business of the council: Many other German princes were present, besides the clergy, among whom were twenty archbishops, nearly one hundred and fifty bishops, about one hundred and fifty other dignitaries, and more than two hundred doctors.

After this general review, it may now be proper to lay before the reader a connected view of the proceedings of this council, chiefly in regard to those subjects which relate to the concerns of the real Church of Christ.

At the opening of the council of Constance, pope John XXIII. and the emperor Sigismund, were at the head of it; and they continually endeavoured to baffle the views of each other. The former was by far the most powerful of the three popes, who at that time struggled for the chair of St. Peter; but his character was infamous in the extreme: and Sigismund, while he pretended to acknowledge the authority of John, had formed a secret resolution to oblige him to renounce the pontificate. This same Sigismund was remarkable for hypocrisy and dissimulation: political artifices, however, were multiplied by both these potentates, and by many others connected with the council. But what has the Church of Christ to do with the intrigues of politicians? These were the men who undertook to punish heretics and to reform the church.

John XXIII. secretly designed to leave the council as soon as possible; particularly if their pulse did not beat in his favour. His conscience suggested to him,

* L'Enfant.

† 1 Cor. i.

that an inquiry into his own conduct would terminate in his disgrace; and the very situation of Constance, an imperial city, in the circle of Suabia, exposed him too much to the machinations of the emperor. As he had, however, in a council at Rome, already condemned the opinions of John Huss, he was determined to confirm that judgment at Constance, and in that way to signalize his zeal for what was then called the Church.

John Huss had been summoned to the council, to answer for himself, though already excommunicated at Rome. He obtained, however, a safe conduct* from the emperor, who, in conjunction with his brother Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, had committed him to the care of several Bohemian lords, particularly of John de Chlum. These travelled with him to Constance, where they arrived six days after the pope.

John Huss was born in Bohemia in 1373. He was of mean parentage, but was raised to eminence by his superior genius and industry. All the authors of that time acknowledge, that he was a man of capacity and eloquence, and highly esteemed for the probity and decency of his manners. This is the testimony of the famous Æneas Sylvius, afterwards pope of Rome. But the letters of Huss written from Constance, which he specially requested might never be published, afford a still more striking attestation to his character. He was appointed rector of the university of Prague, which was then in a very flourishing state. His character was no less eminent in the church than in the academy. He was nominated preacher of Bethlehem in the year 1400; and was in the same year made confessor to Sophia of Bavaria, the wife of Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, a princess who highly esteemed John Huss, and was a personage of great merit: how far she was affected by the doctrine which he preached, it is not easy to ascertain; but there is no doubt that, after his condemnation, she was

obliged, by the order of the emperor Sigismund, to retire to Presburg.

In 1405 Huss preached in the chapel of Bethlehem with great celebrity. Some of Wickliff's works had been brought into Bohemia by a Bohemian gentleman, named Faulfisch, when he returned from Oxford. Hence, and probably by other modes of conveyance, the evangelical views of the English reformer were introduced into that country. It is not

easy to determine the point of time, when John Huss received a favourable impression of the works of Wickliff. At first he is said to have held them in detestation. The effect of prejudice indeed on a serious mind, against a person who has been condemned for heresy, was not easily to be overcome; and it is not impossible, but that Luther's account of his own first reception of the works of Huss might resemble the celebrated Bohemian's reception of the works of Wickliff. "When I studied at

Erford," says that truly great man, "I found in the library of the convent, a book entitled, 'The Sermons of John Huss.' I was anxious to know the doctrines of that arch-heretic. My astonishment in the reading of them was incredible. What, thought I, could move the council to burn so great a man, so able and judicious an expositor of Scripture! But then the name of Huss was held in abomination: if I mentioned him with honour, I imagined the sky would fall, and the sun be darkened; I therefore shut the book with indignation. But I comforted myself with the thought, that perhaps he had written this before he fell into heresy!" Such were the juvenile reflections of that renowned reformer.

But it is not in the power of prejudice to prevent the progress of the Divine counsels, and the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart. Notwithstanding the opposition of prejudice, habit, and natural corruptions, Huss was gradually convinced of the power and excellency of evangelical doctrine. It was not necessary that he should see all things in the same light as other reformers; but there are certain truths, in which all, who are taught of God, in every age, do and must agree; and certain points of experience also in religion, in which it is even impossible for them to differ. The doctrinal knowledge of the Bohemian re-

* A safe conduct here means an engagement in writing that he should be allowed to pass and repass without molestation. The very words of it were, "omni prorsus impedimento remoto, stare, morari, & REDIRE, liberè permittatis sibi & suis."

Huss preaches at Prague in A. D. 1405.

Luther's account of the Writings of Huss.

former was indeed always very limited and defective; but the little fundamental light which, through grace, he attained, was directed to the best practical purposes. He preached loudly against the abuses of the Romish church; and particularly against the impostures of false miracles, which then abounded. And about the same year, 1405, he also preached in a synod at Prague, in the archbishop's presence, with amazing freedom against the vices of the clergy.

It was impossible, that a man who rendered himself so obnoxious to the hierarchy, should escape the aspersions of calumny: accordingly we find, that in the latter part of the year 1408, and the beginning of 1409, a clamour was raised against him on the following occasion.* Gregory XII. one of the three popes, whose schism gave rise to the council of Constance, was received by Bohemia. But when measures were proposed for calling a general council to compose the schism, Huss engaged the university to support those measures, and exhorted all Bohemia to the same purpose. The archbishop of Prague, who was attached to Gregory, opposed Huss, called him a schismatic, and forbade him to exercise the pastoral functions in his diocese. About the same time, on occasion of a dispute between the natives and the foreigners who belonged to the university, Huss having supported the former, and gained his point, the Germans in disgust retired from Prague. This circumstance enabled the Bohemian teacher to speak more publicly according to the views of Wickliff.

Wickliff's books burnt at Prague, A. D. 1410.

The archbishop of Prague committed the books of the latter to the flames in 1410.

But the progress of his opinions was rather accelerated than retarded by this step.

The troubles of John Huss were now multiplied. He was excommunicated at Rome. He had sent his proctors thither, to answer for him: but they were committed to prison,† after having remained there to no purpose a year and a half. Huss, after his excommunication, had no other remedy, but to appeal to Almighty God in very solemn terms. In his appeal, which was charged on him

as a crime, among other things, he says, "Almighty God, the one only essence in three persons, is the first and last refuge of those who are oppressed. Our Lord Jesus Christ, very God and very man, being desirous to redeem, from eternal damnation, his children, elected before the foundation of the world, has given, by suffering a bloody and ignominious death, this excellent example to his disciples, to commit their cause to the judgment of God." He continued still to preach on subjects which he deemed reasonable and useful. In one sermon he treated of the uses of the commemoration of the saints, among which, he reckons meditation on the misery of man, subject to death for sin; and on the death which Jesus Christ suffered for our sin. In this same sermon, while he zealously opposes the abuses of the times, he discovers that he himself was not yet entirely clear of the popish notion of purgatory. "In praying devoutly for the dead," says he, "we procure relief to the saints in purgatory." It is sufficiently plain, however, that he could not lay much stress on the prayers of the living for the dead; for he also says expressly, "that there is no mention of such a practice in the Holy Scriptures: and, that neither the prophets nor Jesus Christ, nor his apostles, nor the saints that followed close after, taught prayer for the dead." "I verily believe," continues Huss, "this custom was introduced by the avarice of priests, who don't trouble themselves to exhort the people to live well, as did the prophets, Jesus Christ and the apostles; but take great care to exhort them to make rich offerings, in hopes of happiness and a speedy delivery from purgatory."

At length John Huss was forbidden to preach at Prague any more. All that

he could then do was to instruct his countrymen by writings. Being summoned, as we have seen, to Constance, he obeyed; and before his departure, offered to give an account of his faith in the presence of a provincial synod at Prague, but was not able to obtain an audience. In this and some other particulars, he appears to have acted with great frankness and sincerity; and, though his mind strongly foreboded that which happened in the issue, his resolution to appear at the general council was constant and un-

Huss forbidden to preach at Prague.

* Page 29, L'Enfant. † Id. page 33.

moved. By a letter,* which he wrote to a friend, immediately before he left Prague, he entreats him, on the outside of it, not to open the letter, till he should have had certain news of his death. And among other things, he says, "You know, wo is me!—before my priesthood, I freely and frequently played at chess, neglected my time, and often unhappily provoked others and myself into blameable heat of temper by that game." About the same time he wrote a letter to his flock, in terms which showed how much their spiritual advantage lay at his heart. He exhorted them to steadfastness in the doctrine which he had taught them; prayed for grace that he himself might persevere, and not betray the Gospel by cowardice; and he begged them also to pray, that he might either glorify God by martyrdom, or return to Prague with an unblemished conscience, and with more vigour than ever to extirpate the doctrine of Antichrist. He expressed himself to be very uncertain of the event; but spake like one resigned to the Divine will, and joyful to die for the cause of Christ. In the course of his journey to Constance, he acted the same open part, and every where declared his readiness to be heard by all mankind. Such was the character and conduct of Huss, who, as we have seen, arrived at Constance six days after the pontiff John XXIII.

On the succeeding day, he gave notice of his arrival to the pope, through his friend John de Chlum, who at the same time implored for him the protection of his holiness. This pope himself was then in much fear on his own account, and it behoved him not, in his present circumstances, to exercise the fulness of papal domination. He therefore answered courteously; declared that he would use all his power to prevent any injustice† being done to him while at Constance; and he took off his excommunication.

John Huss appears to have expected that he should have been allowed to preach before the council; for he had prepared for that purpose, sermons, which are inserted among his works.

In the first of these he professed his Christian creed. He declares his reliance on the word of God, which, he observes, is the true rule, and sufficient for

salvation. He declares his veneration also for fathers and councils, so far as they are conformable to Scripture. "Faith," he adds, "is the foundation of all virtues. Every man must be a disciple either of God or of Satan. Faith is the rudiment of one of these schools, infidelity of the other. A man must believe in God alone, not in the Virgin, not in the saints, not in the Church, not in the pope: for none of these are God." He distinguished faith into three kinds.

1. To receive a position, but with some doubt, he apprehends to be the faith which we give to mere men, who yet are fallible.
2. To adhere without any doubt to the sentiments of holy doctors: still this is only to treat their sentiments as opinions, not as articles of faith.
3. To believe simply and purely, is the faith due to the Scriptures. This is the faith which, he apprehends, involves in it all acts of obedience and love; the faith which no wicked man possesses; "the wicked man is a Christian," says he, "in NAME only, and cannot rehearse the creed without making himself a liar. The Church," he says, "is an assembly of all the predestinated; and consists," he thinks, "of the triumphant church in heaven, the militant church on earth, and the sleeping church," pitiable blindness! "who are now suffering in purgatory." He allows the intercession of the Virgin Mary and of the other saints; and in favour of this popish tenet, he speaks far more forcibly, than might have been expected from one who had so unlimited a veneration for the Holy Scriptures.

If Huss had been allowed to preach this, and his other sermon which treats of peace and unity, the injustice of his condemnation must have appeared evident to all mankind, and the council would have been covered with disgrace and ignominy. For there was something very peculiar in his case; he may justly be said to have been a martyr for holy practice itself. He does not seem to have held any one doctrine which at that day was called heretical. The superstitious notions of the times were, in general, parts of his creed: and, as far as a judgment can now be formed, he was not possessed of more light than was absolutely necessary to constitute the character of a genuine Christian. On this account, the wickedness of his enemies was more palpably evident. The world hated him, because he was not of the

Sermons of
Huss.

* L'Enfant, p. 40.

† Id. p. 43.

world, and because he testified of it, that its works were evil. In what then did the peculiarities of his doctrine consist?

The little specimen which has been given

Huss's idea of a lively faith.

of his creed, explains this matter. He held the faith of God's elect, a divine faith necessarily productive of love

and obedience, distinct in its whole kind from the mere human faith of wicked men. With them, faith has nothing in its nature that draws a man to God in confidence and affection; with them, the term, "vicious believer," appears not to be a solecism in language; and, indeed, it may generally be observed, that godly men in all ages, even those men whose evangelical knowledge, like that of Huss, is extremely imperfect, always distinguish between a dead and a living faith; and that their views of this distinction are the consequences of the work of the Holy Spirit on their own hearts. They have known, in common with the rest of mankind, what a formal assent to Christianity means; they have known also, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, what a lively faith means: the former is merely human, has a dead uniformity, or an unanimated sameness: the latter has life and power; is productive of spiritual exercises and actions; is capable of great varieties, augmentations, declensions, and intervals; and is felt to be not of man, but of God. It is the distinctive mark of a child of God, THAT HE IS IN POSSESSION OF THIS LIVELY FAITH; and this, no doubt, was the spark of Divine Fire, which inflamed the heart of the Bohemian martyr; and which was there preserved alive amidst the contagion of superstition, the temptations of the world, and the menaces of insolent and tyrannical domination.*

Those who look only at the surface of religion, might be tempted to think, that the council in general was influenced by the Spirit of God. In all their public sessions they sang an anthem, and then they prayed kneeling.† After having

* I have here described what the faith of the Gospel implies and produces, rather than in what it specifically consists. This has been done on former occasions, and may be done again in the course of this History, when we are reviewing characters who understood evangelical truth much better than Huss did.

† L'Enfant, p. 50.

remained some time in this posture, a deacon called out to them to rise; and the president, with a loud voice, addressed himself to the Holy Ghost in a collect, which, in a very solemn and explicit terms, supplicated his effectual influence, that, notwithstanding the enormity of their sins, which filled them with dread, he would deign to descend into their hearts, to direct them, to dictate their decrees, and to execute them himself, and also to preserve their minds from corrupt passions, and not suffer them, through ignorance or selfishness, to swerve from justice and truth. The ideas, and perhaps the very words, of the prayers were taken from better times, when the operations of the Holy Ghost were not only professed, but FELT in Christian assemblies. The formalities of true religion often remain a long time, after the spirit of it has been almost extinguished. It is not easy to say how much wickedness may be united with religious formalities. The rulers and great men of the Jewish nation, in the time of Christ, were remarkable examples of the hypocrisy here alluded to; and those who are acquainted with the history of their flagitious conduct, will not be surprised to hear of similar instances. Both the emperor Sigismund and his consort Barba attended the religious ceremonies of this council, and both were infamous by lewdness.*

Sigismund in a deacon's habit read the Gospel, while the pope celebrated mass!

Huss was soon deprived of his liberty, in the following manner. He was accused by Paletz, professor of divinity at Prague, and by Causis, a pastor of one of the parishes of the same city. These

Huss imprisoned.

men caused bills to be posted up against him in Constance, as an excommunicated heretic. When Huss complained, the pope replied, "What can I do in the case? your own countrymen† have done it." The bishops of Augsburg and of Trent were directed to summon him to appear before John XXIII. "I had expected," said Huss, "to give an account of myself before the general council, and not before the pope and his cardinals;

* JEneas Sylvius, Hist.

† Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? thine own nation, and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. John xviii. 35.

however, I am willing to lay down my life, rather than to betray the truth." He set out therefore without delay, accompanied by his generous friend John de Chlum. On his arrival at the pope's palace, he was committed to prison. Chlum made loud complaints to the pope, but in vain. Eight articles were exhibited against Huss by Causis, and the pope appointed commissioners to try him. The vexations and insults to which he was exposed, were endless: And there was this peculiar injustice practised against him, that he was accused of being more inimical to the doctrines of the Church of Rome, than he really was. Whatever Wickliff maintained, Huss was accused of maintaining: Nor were his own express declarations respected, particularly in regard to transubstantiation, a doctrine, which he certainly believed, and on which he wrote his thoughts while under confinement at Constance. Such however was the strength of mind with which he was endowed, that during the same period, he wrote also several tracts on subjects of practical godliness, which were sent to Prague by friends whom he had at Constance. With great clearness he vindicated himself against the charge of heresy; but, his holy life was unpardonable in the eyes of his enemies: moreover, all those whom the faithfulness of his pastoral services in Bohemia had provoked, now found an opportunity to wreak their vengeance upon him.

The generous count de Chlum, grieved and incensed at the imprisonment of

Huss, wrote to Sigismund on this subject. That prince immediately sent express orders to his ambassadors, to cause him to be set at liberty, and even to break the gates of the prison in case of resistance. We naturally expect to hear, in the next place, of the prisoner's enlargement; for, independently of this application of count de Chlum, the honour of Sigismund himself, who had positively promised a safe conduct to Huss, seemed to require it. But notwithstanding all this, the unfortunate Bohemian teacher was not released! The crooked arts and intrigues both of the pope and of the emperor, were too powerful for the sincerity and open dealings of Huss: and, he soon found, that to commit himself to Him that judgeth righteously, was his only expedient. In

the mean time, the doctors, in their preachings, exclaimed most pathetically against the prevailing evils and abuses, and exhorted the council to reform the Church with vigour. Its growing corruptions and enormities were by them exposed in the strongest colours. Wickliff himself, or Huss, could scarcely have spoken in a more pointed or in a severer manner. But these INNOVATORS, we find, were not permitted to censure, with impunity, even the most shameful practices. The explanation is, THEIR attachment to the See of Rome itself was doubted; whereas the divines just mentioned, preached by order of their superiors, and constantly took particular care, in the midst of their keenest animadversions, to express an unequivocal respect to the popedom in general.

In the beginning of the year 1415, the commissioners for examining Huss, found themselves impeded by the emperor's grant of a safe conduct; and they

The safe conduct violated in A. D. 1415.

scrupled not at once to entreat that prince to violate his most solemn engagement. To be brief; Sigismund was at length persuaded, that his conscience ought not to be burdened in this matter; but that he was excused from keeping faith with a man accused of heresy; and that to acquiesce in the desires of the venerable council, was the proper line of conduct for an obedient and "good son of the Church."* Such was the language of the Romanists. A direct breach of faith is, however, so strong a violation of the law WRITTEN IN THE HEART of man, that it was not easy even for the most able defender of a bad cause, to vindicate actions of this kind. Laboured apologies have been published, to soften the transactions before us.† But to what purpose is it to multiply words, in order to misrepresent a plain fact, which may be told in very few lines? The authority of Sigismund extended over the empire; HE, by virtue of that authority, REQUIRED ALL HIS SUBJECTS TO SUFFER HUSS TO PASS AND RE-PASS SECURE; AND, FOR THE HONOUR OF HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY, IF NEED BE, TO PROVIDE HIM WITH GOOD PASSPORTS.‡

* Nauclerus.

† Maimburg's History of the Western Schism, Part II.—Varilla's Hist. of Wickliff, Part. I.

‡ L'Enfant, p. 61. See the words in Latin, p. 165, the note.

Constance was an imperial city: from this city he was NOT ALLOWED to repass, but was detained in prison, till he was unjustly burnt by the order of the council. Was this for the honour of his imperial majesty?

The perfidious character of Sigismund indeed was well known. It appears from one of the letters of John Huss, that, before his departure, he had been told by some persons, that the emperor would betray him. But this servant of God, in honour of his master, ventured everything for the cause of divine truth.

Before the death of their countryman, the Bohemian nobility, enraged at the perfidy of Sigismund, repeatedly remonstrated, by letters, against his proceedings: but all to no purpose. At the solicitation of Paletz, Huss was confined in the Dominican convent, where he became dangerously sick, through the bad air and other inconveniences of a noisome dungeon.

But suffering is not the PECULIAR lot of godly men: wickedness has, also, its hardships and its inconveniences. That same John XXIII. who had most unrighteously persecuted Huss, gradually found himself in so disagreeable a situation at Constance, partly from the accusations of his enemies, to the justice of which his own conscience could not but assent, and partly from the intrigues and manœuvres of Sigismund and the majority of the council, that he determined to depart, in secret, from the assembly. Four nations were represented at Constance, namely, the Italians, the Germans, the French, and the English. The last of these had proposed even to arrest the pope; and, though this proposal did not take effect, there seemed a general agreement in the four nations to oblige him to resign his authority. The other two antipopes, Benedict XIII. who was chiefly owned in Spain, and Gregory XII. who had some partisans in Italy, were also pressed to resign; but, like John XXIII. they were determined to preserve the shadow of power as long as possible. The three popes seemed to vie with one another in equivocation, artifice and disingenuity. However, Benedict and Gregory were not present at Constance, but sent thither their respective legates, during the sessions. At this moment, when the council seemed not a

little embarrassed what course they should take, William Fillastre, a cardinal and a French divine, composed a memorial, which was highly acceptable both to the emperor and to the nations. He even advanced a sentiment, which, at last, very much prevailed in the assembly, and was actually reduced to practice; namely, that a "general council was authorized to depose even a lawful pope."* This, as we have already observed, was the most beneficial effect of the council of Constance. The wisdom of Divine Providence weakened the strength of Antichrist by the measures of a council, which, in the main, was destitute both of piety and probity!

It is a remarkable instance of the love of power, in men who have been habituated to it, that John XXIII. even in the decline of his authority, was glad to signalize the relics of his pontificate by the canonization of Bridget, a Swedish woman, which took place in this same year 1415.

Canonization of a Swedish woman, in A. D. 1415.

After numberless intrigues, in which the pope and the emperor seemed to strive which should exceed the other in dissimulation, the former fled from the council to Schaffhausen; whence he wrote to the emperor a letter couched in the most respectful terms. Schaffhausen, it should be observed, was a city belonging to Frederic, duke of Austria, who had promised to defend pope John.

By this step, the designs of those who really intended to put an end to the schism, seemed to be quashed entirely. Among these was the emperor himself, in whose conduct, scandalous and hypocritical as it was in the extreme, one object is yet plainly discernible, a sincere desire of restoring the unity of the hierarchy. He assured the council, on the day after the departure of pope John, that he would defend their authority to the last drop of his blood. He observed, that there were many Antichrists in the world, who sought their own interest, not that of Jesus Christ: He inveighed against the conduct of John; he exposed his tyranny, simony, chicanery, and insincerity, and exhorted them to judge him according to his deserts. Thus, while the members of this assembly agreed in persecuting the

Declaration of Sigismund.

Church of God, and still detained in prison the excellent John Huss, they were involved in extreme difficulties, and scarcely knew how to support the system of idolatry, and secular formality of religion, to which they were in general attached. The doctrine of the superiority of a council, started by Fillastre, was, however, maintained and pressed at this time in an elaborate discourse of John Gerson, chancellor of the university of Paris, who was looked upon as the soul of the assembly, and who, in fact, was one of the greatest men in that age, in erudition and knowledge. He admits the pope to be Christ's vicar on earth; but asserts that his power is limited, and ought to be restrained by certain rules and laws for the edification of the Church, to which the authority of the pope, and all other persons ought to be devoted. Gerson seems to have disregarded the authority of Scripture, which knows nothing of such a vicar of Christ: common sense, however, and the experience of the necessity of some restrictions of the papal power, appear to have suggested to this great man several salutary arguments and propositions. Nor is this the only instance in which we may see, that even mere natural principles, without the aid of revelation, can proceed to a CERTAIN LENGTH in correcting the enormous abuses of a corrupt church.

While the imperial and papal parties were thus contending, the commissioners endeavoured to oblige John Huss to retract; but in vain. Though infirm, and harassed, during his confinement in prison, with a variety of vexations, he answered to every particular inquiry and objection; at the same time, always desiring to be heard by the council itself. The pope's officers hitherto guarded him; but these being gone to their master, he was delivered to the bishop of Constance: and was afterwards carried to the fortress of Gottleben. In his letters to his friends, he commends the pope's officers, for their gentle treatment, and expresses his fears of worse usage in his new circumstances.

It was one of those remarkable instances of the conduct of Divine Providence, with which the history of the council of Constance abounds, that John XXIII. himself, the unrighteous persecutor of Huss, was soon after brought as a prisoner to the same castle of Gottleben,

and lodged, in the same place with the victim of his cruelty. For Sigismund, determined to support the authority of the council, took such measures as effectually quashed the power of Frederic, duke of Austria, reduced him to surrender at discretion, and obliged him to abandon the cause of the pope. Whence this pontiff, who at first had presided at the council, after having been driven to the necessity of fleeing from place to place, was at length confined at Gottleben, which was within half a league from Constance. Seldom has there been a case, which more remarkably showed, that, in external things, the same events often attend the righteous and the wicked. The real difference of condition between the pope and the martyr was INTERNAL, and ought to be measured by the different frame of their MINDS. The one was harassed with all the pangs of disappointed ambition, and had neither the knowledge nor the disposition to console himself with the DIVINE PROMISES; the latter "in patience possessed his spirit, and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God."

John XXIII. was, at length, solemnly deposed, and was also rendered incapable of being re-elected. The same sentence was issued against Benedict XIII. and Gregory XII. The conduct of these three men, particularly of the first, had been so infamous, that all the world applauded these determinations of the council. In general, the members of this assembly were influenced by superstitious, selfish, worldly motives; but this decision is among the very few important instances in which they merit commendation.

While, contrary to every principle of justice, honour, and humanity, the Bohemian reformer was still detained in confinement, and still in vain solicited a fair hearing of his cause, there was exhibited at this council another striking example of the same spirit of persecution.

Jerom of Prague arrived at Constance. He was a master of arts; but had neither the clerical nor the monastic character. He is universally allowed to have been a man of very superior talents. He had adhered to John Huss; and very vigorously seconded all his endeavours to promote a reformation in Bohemia. He travelled into England for the sake of his studies; and had thence brought

Deposition
of John
XXIII.

Arrival of
Jerom of
Prague.

Firmness
of Huss.

the books of Wickliff into his own country.* When Huss was setting out from Pragne, Jerom had exhorted him to maintain with steadfastness the doctrines which he had preached; and had promised that he would himself go to Constance to support him, if he should hear that he was oppressed. Huss, in one of his letters, expressly desired a friend to prevent Jerom's performance of this promise, lest he should meet with the same treatment as he himself had experienced. But Jerom had the generosity to disregard the entreaties of Huss, and came directly to Constance. Hearing, however, that Huss was not allowed a fair examination, and that some secret machination was carrying on against himself, he retired to Uberlingen, whence he wrote to the emperor, to request a safe conduct. Sigismund refused to grant his petition. Upon which Jerom published a paper, declaring it to be his desire to answer any charges of heresy that could possibly be brought against him. And for the purpose of executing so laudable an intention, he begged, in the name of God, to have a safe conduct granted to him. "If," says he, "I am put in prison, and violence is used against me before I am convicted, the council will manifest to the whole world their injustice by such a proceeding." The publication of this writing produced no satisfactory answer; and Jerom finding it impossible to be of any service to his friend Huss, resolved to return to his own country. After his departure from Constance, he was summoned to appear before the council; and a SAFE CONDUCT or PASSPORT was despatched to him; which promised him, indeed, all manner of security, but it contained such a SALVO TO JUSTICE and the INTERESTS OF THE FAITH, as rendered it, in effect, a mere nullity; and as to the citation for his appearance, Jerom protested, on his first examination, that it had never reached his hands.

To omit a long detail of uninteresting particulars, this persecuted reformer was arrested at Hirsaw, on his return to Bohemia, and led in chains to Constance.

He was immediately brought before a general congregation, which seems, on this occasion, to have assembled for the express purpose of insulting, ensnaring,

and brow-beating their virtuous prisoner. A bishop questioned him concerning his precipitate flight from Uberlingen, and his non-obedience to the citation. "Because," answered Jerom, "I was not allowed a safe conduct; notwithstanding, however, if I had known of the citation, I would have returned instantly, though I had been actually on the confines of Bohemia." Upon this answer, there arose such a clamour in the assembly, that no one could be heard distinctly: every mouth opened, at once, against Jerom; and the impartial spectator saw rather the representation of the baiting of a wild beast, than of a wise assembly investigating truth, and dispensing justice. When order was restored, Gerson, who had formerly known Jerom in France, and who discovered much acrimony towards BOTH the Bohemian reformers, reproached him for having formerly given much offence to the university of Paris, by introducing several erroneous propositions. With great spirit Jerom answered, that it was hard to have opinions objected to him of so long a date; and that, moreover, the disputations of young students were never to be considered as strict disquisitions of truth. "As I was admitted master of arts," said he, "I used the liberty of discussion, allowed to philosophers; nor was I then charged with any error: I am still ready to maintain what I advanced at that time, if I am allowed; and also to retract if I be convicted of mistake."

This was not the only instance in which Jerom had occasion to show his promptitude in answering calumnies. He was repeatedly Examination of Jerom. attacked in a similar style;

for a persecuted follower of Christ is looked on, by the world, as lawful game. The governors of the universities of Cologne and of Heidelberg made heavy complaints of the heresies which the prisoner had maintained in those places respectively. "You vented several errors in our university," said a doctor from Cologne. "Be pleased to name one," answered Jerom. The accuser was instantly stopped in his career, and pleaded that his memory failed him. "You advanced most impious heresies among us," said a divine from Heidelberg; "I remember one particularly, concerning the Trinity. You declared, that it resembled water, snow, and ice." Jerom avowed, that he still persisted in

Jerom imprisoned in A. D. 1415.

* Cambrar. Histor. Narr.

his opinions, but was ready to retract with humility and with pleasure, when he should be convinced of an error. However, no opportunity was allowed either for explanation or defence: all was confusion and uproar: voices burst out from every quarter, "Away with him, away with him! to the fire, to the fire!"

Jerom stood astonished at the gross indecency of this scene; and as soon as he could, in any degree, be heard, he looked round the assembly with a steady and most significant countenance, and cried aloud, "Since nothing but my blood will satisfy you, I am resigned to the will of God." With sufficient adroitness, if the passage had but been quoted in support of a better cause, the archbishop of Saltzburg replied, "No, Jerom, God hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live."

After this tumultuous examination, Jerom was delivered to the officers of the city, and immediately carried to a dun-

Jerom confined in a dungeon.

geon. Some hours afterward, Wallenrod, archbishop of Riga, caused him to be conveyed privately to St. Paul's church, where he was bound to a post, and his hands were chained to his neck. In this posture he remained ten days, and was fed with bread and water only. His friends, all this time, knew not what was become of him; till at length one of them received notice of his pitiable situation from the keeper of the prison, and procured him better nourishment. But notwithstanding this, the various hardships he had undergone, brought upon him a dangerous illness, in the course of which Jerom pressed the council to allow him a confessor. With difficulty he at length obtained his request; and, through the means of his confessor, the poor heretic procured some small mitigation of his sufferings from bonds and other cruel treatment. But he remained in prison till his execution.

A number of important, coincident circumstances, tending to illustrate the state of religion in those times, have given vast celebrity to the council of Constance; otherwise, the reader must now be convinced, that the members who composed that immense assembly, merit the description which we have already given of their general character. Many of them were learned and able; many of

them superstitious and bigoted; and most of them worldly-minded and unprincipled, and totally ignorant of evangelical truth.

As the works of the famous Wickliff had undoubtedly laid the foundation of the religious innovations in Bohemia, they now proceeded to condemn the doctrines of that obnoxious reformer. In this point they harmonized with John XXIII. whom they had deposed and now held in custody. For this same pontiff, John XXIII. had formally, at the desire of Arundel, archbishop of Canterbury, condemned the doctrines of Wickliff.* These very doctrines, digested into forty-five articles, which had formally been pronounced heretical at Rome, were now read in the council; and as far as appears, they were reprobated without one dissenting voice, and the author of them was pronounced a heretic.

Doctrines of Wickliff condemned in this Council.

The decrees of so violent and so iniquitous a council as that of Constance, concerning articles of faith, are of little moment. The heads of the articles, however, in the main and in substance, express the real sentiments of Wickliff, which have been already considered and reviewed. His opposition to the POPER doctrine of transubstantiation, was positive and unequivocal. In some particular points, his meaning seems to have been distorted, through prejudice or malice. In regard to his opinions concerning tithes and the temporal possessions of the clergy, let the reader, when he has compared the several arguments advanced by the parties, judge for himself, whether Wickliff or the council had the advantage in that controversy. After what has been stated in Chapter III. Cent. XIV. I shall make no further observations on the subject, except that the council, on this head, do not appear to have materially misrepresented Wickliff's notions.

"Tithes," says Wickliff, "are not of divine right, because it cannot be proved from the Gospel, that Jesus Christ either paid or ordered them to be paid." In his complaints to the king and parliament, he desired that tithes and offerings

* Wilkin's Concilia, p. 350.

† It has been before observed, that on this article of faith Wickliff approached nearly to con-substantiation.

might be given, as before, to honest and able persons, not extorted by force. He thinks it wrong, that the laity should be so much oppressed for the purpose of pampering the luxury of a priest, as not to be able to maintain their own families, and to relieve the poor. "As the laity only," says he, "paid tithes to be instructed in the word of God, there are many cases, in which, according to the laws of God and man, the people may refuse to pay them. However, a good priest ought to have a handsome maintenance: and the appropriation of parish churches to rich monasteries is a great evil."

Even the council of Constance will deserve to be heard, when they appeal to Scripture, and give reasons to support their decrees. "The right," say they, "which the clergy have to the possession of temporalities, is established by several arguments drawn from the holy Scriptures. The clergy under the old law possessed forty-eight cities with their suburbs. They had tithes of all the Israelites, and the first-fruits of their corn, wine, oil, &c. as well as of all things consecrated to God. Besides, if, according to St. Paul, a bishop must be given to hospitality, and a deacon must rule his house, they must have houses and substance. It appears by the book of the Acts, that the believers had possessions; and among those believers were the clergy. Jesus Christ himself had money, of which Judas was the treasurer. God orders Jeremiah to buy a field, which belonged to a Levite, who is called in Scripture Hanameel. Augustine, in an epistle to a bishop, named Boniface, observes, that what the clergy possess more than necessary, belongs to the poor."—What other practical tendency can Wickliff's doctrine on this subject have, than to stir up the laity to seize the possessions of the clergy?

Wickliff is accused also of saying, that all things happen from absolute necessity. The council use the common Arminian arguments in opposition to the English reformer, whose sentiments, however, on this subject have never been shown to be materially different from what by far the greater part of good Christians have maintained in all ages.

If the council of Constance had studied to vindicate Wickliff's reasonings respecting the abuses of popery, and to cast an odium upon their own doctrines

and proceedings, they could scarcely, it should seem, have effected their purpose by surer means, than by using certain arguments which they thought proper to bring forward in confutation of the opinions of the man whom they looked on as a most dangerous innovator. Thus; on one occasion, they boldly affirm, "That there is no salvation out of the church of Rome." A proposition of this magnitude, one would have thought, required all the proof and illustration that could be given to it. Whereas the learned council content themselves with gravely appealing to a decree of the Lateran council, and to a decretal of pope Calixtus, which establishes the two following points: 1st, That the church of Rome is the mistress of all churches; and 2dly, That it is not lawful to depart from her decisions. "Hence," say they, "it clearly follows, that the pope is the immediate vicegerent of Jesus Christ, because the church of Rome has so determined. Though this or that particular pope be corrupt, the church of Rome itself can never decay." Thus do these men give the palm of truth to the man whom they condemn as an heretic. For he appealed to the Scriptures; they to the church of Rome; on a subject too, in which that church is more particularly bound to adduce another sort of argument than that of her own authority.

In the same year commissioners were appointed to inquire into the disputes between the Teutonic knights and the Poles. And though nothing was decided at present in that business, it may throw some light on the state of Christendom, to give a general idea of the case. The Prussians, as we have seen, were among the last of the nations of Europe who received the forms of Christianity. Barbarous and untractable in their manners, they invaded and harassed their neighbours the Poles, who called to their assistance the Teutonic knights, the remnants of those warlike crusaders, who so long had desolated the East. The knights, in consideration of the succours afforded to the Poles, received from them the grant of Prussia and of some neighbouring districts; which grant was confirmed by the Roman pontiff. In this manner Prussia at length was obliged to profess itself Christian. Nor do there seem to be in history any instances of national conver-

Disputes between the Teutonic knights and the Poles, in A. D. 1415.

sions, more contrary to the genius of the Gospel, than this of the Prussians. The knights, armed with indulgences for the conversion of infidels, and with bulls for putting themselves in possession of conquered countries, gratified their military passion, while they imagined they were doing God service, and while they wasted all the neighbourhood with fire and sword, and assaulted even the Poles, their benefactors. Several pitched battles were fought between them and the king of Poland, in which they were generally defeated. Their perfidy was equal to their ambition; for though truces were made from time to time, they continually violated them, as if they had been determined with all their might to disgrace the holy religion for which they professed so much zeal. Ladislaus, king of Poland, had views more honourable to the Christian name. In a letter, which he wrote to a friend, he protested, that he could not refrain from tears before a battle, in which he foresaw the defeat of the knights, and that he entered into the engagement with much commiseration of his enemies.

The repeated violences of these fighting professors of Christianity, obliged this prince, though victorious in the field, to send ambassadors to the council of Constance. The question of law for the decision of the assembly was, whether it is right for Christians to convert infidels by force of arms, and to seize their estates: the knights maintained the affirmative, the Polish ambassadors the negative: and such was the state of religion at that time, that the authority of a council was deemed necessary to decide a case, which to us does not appear to involve the smallest difficulty. When men are heated by ambition, or blinded by prejudice and self-interest, they often forget the dictates of common sense, and the first principles of morality.

In the same year, 1115, another object of controversy was started in the council, which was afterwards attended with important consequences, and produced one of the usual subjects of contention between the papists and the protestants; I mean the doctrine of the communion in both kinds.* John of Prague, bishop of Litomissel in Moravia, censured in the assembly

Questions concerning the Communion in both kinds, in A. D. 1115.

the practice of the followers of Huss, who administered the wine to the laity. About twenty-five years before the council of Constance, Matthias, a curate of Prague, had ventured to preach publicly against the general disuse of the cup in the communion, and is said to have actually administered the sacrament to the laity in both kinds. It is not easy to say precisely, at what period the general disuse took place, but we have seen that it was gradually effected in the dark ages, long after the time of Gregory the first of Rome; and that it was, most probably, a concomitant of the doctrine of transubstantiation. Matthias was obliged to retract

Retraction of Matthias, A. D. 1393.

in a synod assembled at Prague in 1389. It is however agreeable to the general views of this history to observe, from a Bohemian writer,* that Matthias was a pastor of great piety and probity, fervently zealous for the truth of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the Gospel, an enemy to the reigning corruptions and abuses, and one who suffered greatly for his assiduity in preaching the word of God. He died in 1391. Some months after the departure of John

Death of Matthias, A. D. 1394.

Huss for Constance, Jacobel, a pastor of Prague, a man renowned for learning and purity of manners, revived the doctrine of Matthias. Peter of Dresden, being expelled from Saxony for maintaining the Waldensian doctrines, retired to Prague, and there instructed youth. From him Jacobel learnt that the withholding of the cup from the laity was an error.† Faithful to his convictions, he preached with perspicuity and with vehemence: he roused men's attention and excited their zeal; and by these means a flame was kindled throughout Bohemia respecting this matter. The clergy of that kingdom complained to the council of Constance; and the bishop of Litomissel, while he impeached Jacobel, represented the circumstance of this new controversy,

* Procopius of Prague.

† It appears from Perrin's History of the Waldenses, p. 156, that this people rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation. According to them, "the eating of the spiritual bread is the eating of Christ's body figuratively. Otherwise, Christ must have been eaten perpetually. For we need to feed on him continually in a spiritual sense. To eat him, is to abide in him."

* L'Enfant, p. 256.

as a consequence of the doctrine of John Huss, in order to hasten his condemnation.

That reformer had probably been inclined to the views of Jacobel before he left Prague; but it was not till after he came to Constance, that he published his approbation of the communion in both kinds. The principal author, or, to speak more properly, the principal reviver of this practical truth in the Church of Christ, was Jacobel, who seems to have been a zealous, active, laborious minister of Christ. Little indeed is known of his pastoral services, because here, as in other cases, we have to lament that the accounts of vital godliness are general and short, while those of the controversies in external affairs are verbose and prolix. Let the Christian reader, however, contemplate with a lively satisfaction the providential effects of Waldensian light and knowledge in spiritual things.

The appearance of the new controversy, added to the question concerning Jerom of Prague, increased the fury of the storm against Huss; and his enemies laboured day and night for his destruction. His health and strength were decayed by the rigour of confinement. The great men of Bohemia, repeatedly insisted on justice being done to their countryman. But justice was a stranger at Constance: the emperor himself had perfidiously given up this faithful servant of God to the malice of his enemies; and the council, as if conscious of the difficulty of condemning him openly, had recourse to the despicable means of attempting, by repeated insults and vexations, to shake his constancy, and render a public trial unnecessary. He was frequently examined in private. An air of violence and of menace was employed on those occasions, of which we may

A letter of Huss.

form some idea from one of the letters of Huss. "Causis," says he; "was there, holding a paper in his hand, and stirring up the bishop of Constantinople to oblige me to answer distinctly to each article it contained. Every day he is brewing some mischief or other. God, for my sins, has permitted HIM AND PALETZ to rise up against me. Causis examines all my letters and words with the air of an inquisitor; and Paletz has written down all the conversation which we have had together for many years. I

have this day suffered great vexation."

The approbation of a good conscience, and the comforting presence of the Spirit of God, appear to have supported this holy man in all his sufferings. He gave his adversaries no advantage over him either through warmth or timidity; he refused to give answers in private; he reserved himself to the public trial which he had always solicited; he retracted nothing of what he had openly preached, and he possessed his soul in patience and resignation.

The unrighteous views of the council being thus far baffled, he was conducted to Constance, lodged in the Franciscan monastery, and loaded with chains; in which condition he remained till the day of his condemnation.

His first hearing before the council was attended with so much confusion, through the intemperate rage of his enemies, that nothing could be concluded. In the second, The first and second hearing of Huss. in which the emperor was present, for the purpose of preserving order, Huss was accused of denying the doctrine of transubstantiation. Some Englishmen, who knew what Wickliff held on that point, and who were ready to take for granted, that Huss dissented in no article from their countryman, pressed him vehemently on the subject. It appeared, however, that the Bohemian teacher followed the church of Rome on this important doctrine; and the sincerity of his creed, though a mistaken one, appears from his treatise on the Body of Christ.

A tedious dispute ensued, concerning the refusal of Huss to join with those, who condemned the errors of Wickliff. He explained himself with sufficient precision on this head: he declared, that he blamed the conduct of the archbishop Subinco at Prague, only because he had condemned Wickliff's books without examination, and without distinction; and he added, that most of the doctors of the university of Prague found fault with that prelate, because he produced no reasons from the Scriptures. Huss further observed to the council, that, not having been able to obtain justice from John XXIII. he had appealed from him to Jesus Christ. His seriousness in mentioning this appeal, exposed him to the derision of the council. It was even doubted whether it was lawful to appeal

to Jesus Christ. Huss, however, with great gravity affirmed, that it was always lawful to appeal from an inferior to a higher court; that in this case the Judge was infallible, full of equity and compassion, and one who would not refuse justice to the miserable. The levity of the assembly, and the seriousness of the prisoner, were remarkably contrasted in these proceedings. The reader will of course understand John Huss in the sense in which, no doubt, he intended to be understood. In appealing to Jesus Christ, the conscientious martyr had his own mind fixed on the last judgment, and he aimed at making an impression on the court by directing their attention to that awful tribunal.

It would be tedious and uninteresting to take notice of the variety of calumnies with which he was aspersed. One instance may deserve to be mentioned.* "You one day," said his accusers, "advised the people to take up arms against those, who opposed your doctrine." "I one day," replied Huss, "while I was preaching on the christian armour, described in the sixth chapter to the Ephesians, exhorted my audience to take the sword of the Spirit, and the helmet of Salvation; but I expressly admonished them, that I meant the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and not a material sword." Sigismund exhorted him to retract his errors, and declared, that, rather than support him in his heresy, he would with his own hands kindle the fire to burn him.

John de Chlum, however, was not to be dismayed by the power and multitude of the adversaries of Huss: he supported the insulted victim of their fury with courage and constancy. In his third hearing, John Huss answered the inquiries made to him concerning articles of supposed heresy, which were extracted from his own works. He answered severally to the questions with much clearness and candour, owning, denying, or explaining, as occasions required. He was vehemently pressed to retract his errors, to own the justice of the accusations, and to submit to the decrees of the council. But neither promises nor menaces moved him. "To abjure," said he, "is to renounce an error that hath been held. But, as in many of those articles, errors

are laid to my charge which I never thought of, how can I renounce them by oath? As to those articles, which I own to be mine, I will renounce them with all my heart, if any man will teach me sounder doctrines than what I have advanced." His conscientious integrity, however, availed him not. The court demanded a universal retraction; and nothing short of that could procure him their favour. The tedious malignity of the third day's examination oppressed at length both the mind and body of Huss; and the more so, because he had passed the preceding night sleepless, through pain of the tooth-ache. For some days before, he had also been afflicted with the gravel, and was, in other respects, in a weak state of health. At the close of the examination he was carried back to prison, whither John de Chlum followed him. "Oh, what a comfort," said he, "was it to me, to see that this nobleman did not disdain to stretch out his arm to a poor heretic in irons, whom all the world, as it were, had forsaken!" In the same letter in which he mentions this, he begs the prayers of his friend, because "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Such is the treatment, which the dearest and most faithful servants of God are frequently called upon to endure from an evil world. After the departure of Huss, Sigismund, with the most unrelenting barbarity, expressed himself against him, as a heretic worthy of the flames. On the next day a form of retraction was sent to this persecuted prisoner, which, though it was penned in equivocal and ambiguous terms, plainly appeared on the whole, to imply a confession of guilt. Huss therefore refused to sign it; and added, that he would rather be cast into the sea with a millstone about his neck, than give offence to his pious neighbours by acknowledging that to be true, which they knew to be false; that he had preached patience and constancy to others, and that he was willing to show an example of these graces, and hoped by divine assistance to be enabled to do so.

We have constantly seen, in the course of this history, that the holiness of heart and life, which real Christians have evidenced from age to age, was always connected with the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Sometimes one of these doctrines, and sometimes another, consti-

* L'Enfant, p. 330. Vol. I.

tuted the prominent feature of their profession; but it is in vain to look for men of real holiness and virtue, who were inimical or even indifferent to the fundamentals of the Gospel. If there were any one doctrine more particularly insisted on than another by sincere Christians, that doctrine was always, in its nature, of considerable importance; and by just connexion it implied and involved the whole of godliness, even though that connexion might not be understood or relished in every part by all persons of true piety. Should we then

Peculiar doctrines of Huss.

be asked, what peculiar doctrine was maintained and espoused by John Huss, whose holiness and integrity were undoubtedly eminent, the answer is, it was the doctrine of the depravity of human nature, and of the necessity of a divine influence. This, I doubt not, will appear sufficiently evident to the evangelical reader, who will take the trouble fully to consider several of the articles which were objected to him, and also some extracts from his letters; for, notwithstanding that the frequent use of the terms PREDESTINATE, CHOSEN, ELECT, &c. in those articles and extracts, might lead an uninformed and superficial reader to conclude that Huss was merely a speculative defender of the doctrine of absolute decrees, without being an advocate for a real change of heart and personal holiness, it deserves to be remarked, first, that this Reformer used the terms in question precisely in the sense in which they are used in Scripture; and secondly, the doctrine of the total inability of man to save himself, both from the punishment and from the dominion of sin, was the great practical point he had in view. Among the expressions which he had used, and which were objected to

him, we may mention the following: "The assembly of the predestinated is the holy Church, which has neither spot nor wrinkle, which Jesus Christ calls his own. A reprobate is never a member of the holy Church." These and similar passages, produced in accusation against him, he partly admitted as his own; and partly qualified by a fair and candid explanation. On the whole, it is very evident that he gave offence by studiously distinguishing those, whom God hath chosen to be his peculiar people in Christ, and are evidently pointed

out by their real practical holiness, as different from the common bulk of nominal Christians. Even the pope and his cardinals, if not predestinated,* to him appeared to be no members of the body of Christ. "The Church of Christ is," says he, from Bernard, "his own body more evidently, than the body which he delivered for us to death. The Church is as it were the 'Barnfloor'† of the Lord, in which are the predestinate and the reprobate, the former being as wheat, and the latter as chaff." In these subjects he followed the ideas of Augustine, with whose writings he appears to have been much acquainted. Divine influence, therefore, implying and involving all the essentials of the Gospel, according to the views of Augustine, and evidencing itself in particular persons by real humility, piety, and integrity, was one of the grand doctrinal points of John Huss; and this holy man, defective as he was in Christian light, and obscured with much superstition, was yet enabled to distinguish his scriptural creed from that of the mere religion of nature, both in theory and in practice; and he accordingly underwent that cross of Christ from the persecutions of the wicked, which must ever be expected by those who will not allow merely nominal Christianity to be the real religion of Jesus. For it is well known that nothing more irritates those, who live "according to the course of this world,"‡ than to be told that God has a holy peculiar people, formed for himself to show forth his praise.

The following passages are extracted from his letters:

"Almighty God will confirm the hearts of his faithful people, whom he hath chosen before the foundation of the world, that they may receive the eternal crown of glory.—I am greatly comforted with those words of our Saviour, 'Happy are ye when men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company,' &c. O precious consolatory lesson, difficult, indeed, not to understand, but to practise in time of tribulation. Let patience have her perfect work. It is a light matter to speak of patience, but a great matter to fulfil it. Our most patient Champion himself, who

Extracts from his letters.

* Rom. viii. 29.

† 2 Kings, vi. 27.

‡ Ephes. ii. 2.

knew that he should rise again the third day, and redeem from damnation all his elect, was troubled in spirit. Yet he, though sorely troubled, said to his disciples, Let not your hearts be troubled, &c. I trust steadfastly, the Lord will make me a partaker of the crown with you, and with all them who love the Lord Jesus Christ. Merciful Christ! draw us, weak creatures, after thee; for except thou draw us, we are not able to follow thee. Give us a courageous spirit, that it may be ready; for without thee we can do nothing. Give us an upright faith, a firm hope, and a perfect charity.”*

The integrity of the Bohemian martyr was severely tried by the solicitations of several persons. But divine

The integrity of Huss.

grace had given him the virtue of sincerity to a very eminent degree, so that the very least equivocation was abominable in his eyes.

Even his enemy, Paletz, inwardly reverencing his virtue, took pains to induce him to retract. “Put yourselves in my place,” said Huss; “what would you do, if you were required to retract certain errors, which you were sure you never held.” “I own, it is a hard case,” answered Paletz, with tears in his eyes. It is not improbable, that this man had never meant actually to expose his countryman to the flames: and it is extremely probable that he had never before considered the dilemma to which the spirit of persecution must reduce a person of real integrity, namely, either to perjure himself, or to be consumed in the flames. One of the doctors, who visited Huss, said to him, “If the council should tell you, that you have but one eye, though you have really two, you would be obliged to agree with the council.” “While God keeps me in my senses,” replied Huss, “I would not say such a thing against my conscience, on the entreaty or command of the whole world.”

This holy personage foreseeing his end to be near, redeemed† the little time that was left to him, by writing letters, which were publicly read at Prague, in his chapel at Bethlehem, the once delightful scene of his ministry. One of these letters may be considered as a farewell sermon addressed to his flock. He en-

He writes to his flock.

treats them to adhere solely to the word of God, and not to follow himself, if they have observed anything in him not agreeable to it; and he particularly begs them to pardon him, where he had been guilty of any levity in discourse or behaviour. He begs them to be grateful to John de Chlum, and another nobleman, who had been faithful to him in his sufferings. He adds, that he hears no news of Jerom, except that he was a prisoner like himself, waiting for the sentence of death; and he concludes with an earnest prayer, that the Gospel of Christ may be always preached to them in his dear chapel of Bethlehem. His firmness was that of a Christian, not of a stoic; founded in humility, not in pride. He experienced some attacks of the fears of death; but soon recovered his courage. “I am far,” said he, “from the strength and zeal of the apostle Peter. Jesus Christ has not given me his talents; besides I have more violent conflicts, and a greater number of shocks to sustain. I say, therefore, that placing all my confidence in Jesus Christ, I am determined, when I hear my sentence, to continue steadfast in the truth, even to the death, as the saints and you shall help me.” Thus modestly does he write to a friend; and it is from his private epistolary correspondence, that the most genuine features of his character may be drawn. John Huss appears indeed to have been one of those of whom “the world was not worthy;”* and of no mere man could it ever be said with more propriety, that the world hated him, because he testified of it, that its works were evil. Undoubtedly, his open rebukes of sin, both by his public preaching and writings, and by the uniform purity and innocence of his manners, had inflamed the tempers of the great men of the age, both in church and state; yet, it was scarcely to be expected, that the council of Constance should, even upon their own principles, proceed, without the least proof of heresy, to condemn to the flames the most upright of men, because he refused to acknowledge that to be true, which he believed to be false; or that this same council should justify the deceit and perfidy of their Imperial President. Their conduct, therefore, is to be considered as a striking proof, not only of the general depravity of human

* Fox, Vol. I. p. 716.

† Ephes. v. 16.

* Heb. xi. 38.

nature, but also of the general wickedness and hypocrisy of the Roman church at that time.

The council settled beforehand after what manner he was to be treated, in case he should retract.* He was to have been degraded from the priesthood, and to be for ever shut up between four walls. This was the only reward which the unfeeling tyrants had intended to bestow on him, in the event of his wounding his conscience to gratify them. To lay the whole weight of blame on the popes, on account of the enormities of the Roman church, is to view that church superficially. It was generally and systematically corrupt: It had recently deposed three popes: it was, at present, without a pope; and yet could be guilty of crimes, not less heinous than some of the worst which the popes ever committed.

The council, so Huss wrote the night before his death, exhorted him to renounce every one of the articles, which had been extracted from his books; but he absolutely refused to accede to so unreasonable a requisition, except they could, from the Scriptures, prove his doctrines to be erroneous, as they asserted them to be. It may be proper to have mentioned this circumstance here by way of anticipation, to obviate a misrepresentation which was studiously made concerning John Huss, as if he had promised to retract. On the contrary, it appears, that he persisted to the last in the defence of his innocence with UNSHAKEN INTEGRITY.

While the council was preparing the formalities of his condemnation, they enacted a decree to forbid the reception of the communion in both kinds; and assigned no other reason for it, except their regard to the doctrine of transubstantiation; at the same time they owned, that IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH, THIS SACRAMENT IN BOTH KINDS WAS RECEIVED BY THE BELIEVERS.† Thus the triumph of the Roman church seemed to be complete. She dared to own, that she contradicted primitive Christianity; and she dared to enact, that those, who refused to obey HER institutions, though confessedly contrary to

those of the primitive Church, ought to be treated as heretics! What is this but open, undisguised, opposition to the commands of Jesus Christ? And what other name but that of Antichrist, can so well express the corrupt and presumptuous domination of the Romish hierarchy?

But there is a voice in natural conscience, which it is not in the power of Satan easily to silence. Sigismund, inwardly ashamed of his baseness and perfidy towards Huss, wished to save the life of that good man, though he saw that, according to the wicked policy of the council, this was not to be done, except the prisoner could be induced to forswear himself. Many persons, to second the views of the emperor, endeavoured to overcome the constancy of Huss; even the council sent several deputations to him for that purpose. One of this martyr's letters throws some light on these transactions.* "Paletz," says he, "attempts to persuade me, that I ought to abjure, because of the great advantage which will accrue to me from it. I told him, that to be condemned and burned was not so scandalous, as to be guilty of falsehood." He speaks thus of his other accuser, Causis: "That poor man has been often with the deputies before the prison. I heard him say to the guards, if it please God, we shall shortly burn this heretic, who has cost me so many florins in prosecuting him."

He wrote about the same time to a preacher of his acquaintance, concerning the decree of the council lately mentioned: "They have condemned the communion of the cup with regard to the laity, as an error, and have condemned of heresy every one who violates their decree, though they have nothing but custom to oppose to an institution of Jesus Christ."

The council now ordered the works of Huss to be burnt; on occasion of which circumstance, he writes to his friends: "That he was not discouraged on this account; that Jeremiah's books met with the same treatment;† nevertheless the Jews suffered the calamities, which that faithful prophet had foretold. Consider, that they have condemned the pope, their God upon earth, for his crimes, particularly for selling in-

The cruel purpose of the council.

Decree against the communion in both kinds.

The works of Huss are burnt.

* L'Enfant, p. 363, Vol. I.

† Ibid, p. 386, Vol. I.

* L'Enfant, p. 397.

† Jerem. xxxvii.

dulgence, bishoprics, and the like. But in this they are his accomplices. The bishop of Litomissel, who is at the council, went twice to buy the archbishopric of Prague, but others outbid him. They follow this traffic even at Constance, where one sells and another buys a benefice."

At length he received another solemn deputation, in which were two cardinals and some prelates, who tried their utmost endeavours to induce him to recant. Huss, however, persisted in his integrity, and announced his resolution in terms of great vehemence and solemnity.

Having withstood one more attempt of the emperor to shake his resolution, he was thus accosted by his friend John de Chlum. "I am a person of no learning, my dear Huss, and unfit to advise so learned a person as you. If you are convinced of any error, I venture, however, to advise you to retract it; if not to endure whatever punishments shall be inflicted on you, rather than to do violence to your conscience!" An instance this of common sense and artless honesty, which deserves to be contrasted with the subtlety and intriguing spirit of the council. Huss answered with tears, that he called God to witness, how ready he was to retract sincerely and upon oath, any error, the moment he should be convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures, that it was an error. One of the prelates observed, "For my part, I am not so presumptuous as to prefer my private opinion to that of the whole council." "Let the meanest member of that council," replied Huss, "convince me of a mistake, and I am perfectly disposed to obey their injunctions." Some of the bishops observed, "See, how obstinate he is in his errors."

He was now presented before the council in the presence of the emperor, the princes of the empire, and of an incredible concourse of people. The bishop of Lodi preached a sermon from those words of St. Paul, "That the body of sin might be destroyed."* With the grossest ignorance, or the most virulent and indecent malice, he perverted the words to the purpose of the council: "Destroy heresies and errors," said he, "but chiefly that obstinate heretic," pointing to the prisoner. While they

were reading the articles extracted or pretended to be extracted from his works, Huss was beginning to answer to each distinctly, but was told that he might answer to them all at the same time, and was ordered at present to be silent. He expostulated against the unreasonableness of this injunction in vain. Lifting up his hands to heaven, he begged the prelates in God's name to indulge him with the freedom of speech, that he might justify himself before the people: "after which," said he, "you may dispose of me, as you shall think fit." But the prelates persisting in their refusal,* he kneeled down; and with uplifted eyes and hands, and with a loud voice, he recommended his cause to the Judge of all the earth. Being accused in the article of the sacrament, of having maintained that the material bread remains after consecration, he loudly declared, that he had never believed or taught so. Nothing could be more iniquitous than this charge, which he had fully refuted on his former examination. But the council was determined to burn him as a heretic, and it behoved them to exhibit, at any rate, some show of proving his heretical opinions. A still more shameless accusation was introduced: it was said, "A certain doctor bears witness, that Huss gave out, that he should become the fourth person in the Trinity." "What is the name of that doctor?" replied the prisoner, protesting against the charge as a flagrant calumny, and making an orthodox confession of his faith on the subject of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the bishop, who had read the accusation, refused to mention the doctor's name. Being again upbraided with his appeal to Jesus Christ, "Behold," said he, with his hands lifted up toward heaven, "most gracious Saviour, how the council condemns as an error what thou hast prescribed and practised, when, overcome by enemies, thou committedst thy cause to God thy Father, leaving us this example, that when we are oppressed, we may have recourse to the judgment of God. Yes," continued he, turning toward the assembly, "I have maintained and do still maintain, that an appeal made to Jesus Christ is most just and right, because He can neither be corrupted by bribes, nor be deceived by false witnesses, nor be overreached by any artifice.

* Rom. vi.

* Page 421, L'Enfant.

—I came voluntarily to this council, under the public faith of the emperor here present." In pronouncing these last words, he looked earnestly at Sigismund, who blushed at the sudden and unexpected rebuke.*

Sentence was now pronounced against both John Huss and his books; and he was ordered to be degraded. The bishops clothed him with the priest's garments, and put a chalice into his hands. While they were thus employed, he said, that "the Jews put a white garment on our Lord Jesus Christ, to mock him, when Herod delivered him to Pilate;" and he made reflections of the same kind on each of the sacerdotal ornaments. When he was fully apparelled, the prelates once more exhorted him to retract; and to this exhortation he replied with his usual firmness. They then caused him to come down from the stool, on which he stood, and pronounced these words, "O cursed Judas, who having forsaken the council of peace, art entered into that of the Jews, we take this chalice from thee, in which is the blood of Jesus Christ." But God was with the martyr, who cried aloud, "I trust, in the mercy of God, I shall drink of it this very day in his kingdom." Then they stripped him of all his vestments, one after another, uttering a curse on stripping him of each. Having completed his degradation by the addition of some other ridiculous insults not worthy of a distinct relation, they put a paper coronet on his head, on which they had painted three devils, with this inscription, ARCH-HERETIC, and said, "We devote thy soul to the infernal devils." "I am glad," said the martyr, "to wear this crown of ignominy for the love of Him, who wore a crown of thorns."

When the painted paper was placed upon his head, one of the bishops said, "Now we commit thy soul to the devil." "But I," said Huss, "commit my spirit into thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ, unto thee I commend my spirit which thou hast redeemed."† The council

* We are told, that when Charles V. was solicited at the Diet of Worms to arrest Luther, notwithstanding the safe conduct which he had granted him, he replied, "I should not choose to blush with my predecessor Sigismund."—Op. Hus. tom. ii.

† Fox, Acts, &c. Vol. I. p. 709.

now ordered this sentence to be pronounced, namely, "The holy Synod of Constance declares, that John Huss ought to be given up to the secular power, and does accordingly so give him up, considering that the church of God has no more to do with him."

Sigismund committed the execution of Huss to the elector Palatine. The martyr, walking amidst his guards, declared his innocence to the people. When he came near the place of execution, he kneeled and prayed with such fervour, that some of the people said aloud, "What this man has done before, we know not; but we hear him now offer up most excellent prayers to God." The elector Palatine prevented him from speaking to the people, and ordered him to be burned. "Lord Jesus," said Huss aloud, "I humbly suffer this cruel death for thy sake, and I pray thee to forgive all my enemies." His paper crown falling off from his head, the soldiers put it* on again, saying, that it must be burnt with the devils, whom he had served. His neck was fastened to the stake, and the wood was piled about him. The elector advanced to exhort him once more on the often repeated subject of retractation. "What I have written and taught,"—these were the words of Huss,—“was in order to rescue souls from the power of the devil, and to deliver them from the tyranny of sin; and I do gladly seal, what I have written and taught, with my blood.” The elector withdrawing, the fire was kindled, and Huss was soon suffocated, having called on God as long as he could speak.

Many other circumstances of the cruel indignity with which he was treated, it is not necessary to relate. It is more to our purpose to observe what Æneas Sylvius, a Roman catholic historian, records of John Huss and of Jerom of Prague. "They went," says he, "to the stake, as to a banquet; not a word fell from them, which discovered the least timidity; they sung hymns in the flames, to the last gasp, without ceasing."

Thus, by a death, which has affixed eternal infamy on the council of Constance, slept in Jesus the celebrated John Huss, one of the most upright and blameless of men. Human depravity has not often produced a scene so com-

* P. 429, L'Enfant.

pletely iniquitous, and so much calculated to bring disgrace on the Roman church. The uncommon pains taken to prevent his death by a retractation, demonstrates the conviction of the council, that they were doing what they could not justify to their own consciences. At the same time the grace of God was marvellously displayed in supporting and strengthening the martyr, who appears indeed to have exhibited all the graces of a true disciple of Christ. It has often been said, that good men would not suffer persecution, if they were not so bigoted in points of sentiment. But what shall we say of the case before us? A man of the most irreproachable character suffers the most cruel death, attended with a severe course of insult and indignity, even though he could not be proved to have held any point of doctrine absolutely distinct from the creed of his adversaries: But he was a holy man; and the whole world lieth in wickedness.*

The parts and acquirements of John Huss seem to have been above mediocrity; and yet neither of them are by any means to be ranked in the highest class. A vein of good sense runs through all his writings; insomuch that Luther calls him the most rational expounder of Scripture he had ever met with. His natural temper was mild and condescending; all the traces of harshness or severity which are to be found in this Reformer, must be looked for in his contests with vice.—The events of his life prove him to have possessed an exquisite tenderness of conscience, together with great piety and almost unexampled fortitude. Moreover, as the piety of this champion of the faith was perfectly free from enthusiasm or mysticism, so was his fortitude unsullied with vanity or ostentation. A mind of equal energy and resolution, at the same time less scrupulous and conscientious than that of Huss, somewhat less attentive to religious practice, and more inquisitive and solicitous concerning matters of opinion, such a mind, it may be supposed, would probably have got sooner rid of the chains of superstition. There is, however, good reason to think that he had gained so considerable an insight into the prevailing ecclesiastical abuses, that it was not possible

for him to have been held much longer in slavery by papal corruptions. But the wicked decree of the council of Constance shortened his life.

The council, with Sigismund at their head, still preserved the most solemn forms of religion, though their conduct continued to be destitute of humility, justice, and humanity. Gerson preached a sermon concerning the reformation of the Church, the object of which seems to have been, to transfer to the general council, that despotic power, which had been supposed, on divine authority, to rest with the pope. In the mean time, Jerom of Prague was repeatedly examined; and he continued to sustain the rigour of his confinement with patience and constancy.

It is remarkable, that a divinity professor, named Bertrand, preached on the necessity of the reformation of the Church; and strenuously exhorted the council to use the most speedy and effectual means to correct abuses; “particularly the insatiable avarice, the excessive ambition, the gross ignorance, the shameful laziness, and the execrable pride of the clergy.” The council itself affected to undertake the work of reformation. They could not but be sensible, that the world had a right to expect it from them: but what hopes could be indulged of success from men, who, at the very same time, gloried in their iniquity; and wrote imperious letters into Bohemia, charging the clergy there to use all possible diligence to extirpate the followers of John Huss; that is, the very persons who had been most sincerely zealous in promoting that same reformation of the clergy, which the council pretended to regard as their capital object.

Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis
Tempus eget.

VIRG.

Something even besides solid learning and good sense was requisite for a work of this nature. Gerson excelled in both these qualities. A treatise, which he composed at this time, on the trial of spirits, abounds with excellent rules for the detection of feigned revelations and visions, and contributed to prevent the canonization of some pretended saints. But there was not in the council the unction from the Holy One,* of which St. John speaks; that is, the true faith

* John, v. 19.

* 1 John ii. 29.

of Christ and real Christian humility were not the ruling principles in the famous assembly at Constance.

Toward the latter end of the same year, 1415, a letter was sent to the council from Bohemia, signed by about sixty

Testimonial
to the character
of Huss.

principal persons, barons, noblemen, and others of Bohemia,* an extract of which is as follows: "We know not

from what motive ye have condemned John Huss, bachelor of divinity, and preacher of the Gospel. Ye have put him to a cruel and ignominious death, though convicted of no heresy. We

wrote in his vindication to Sigismund, king of the Romans. This apology of ours ought to have been communicated to your congregations; but we have been told that ye burnt it in contempt of us. We protest, therefore, with the heart as

well as with the lips, that John Huss was a man very honest, just, and orthodox; that for many years he conversed

among us with godly and blameless manners; that during all those years he explained, to us and to our subjects, the Gospel and the books of the Old and New Testament, according to the exposition of holy doctors approved by the

Church; and that he has left writings behind him in which he constantly abhors all heresy. He taught us also to detest everything heretical. In his discourses he constantly exhorted us to the

practice of peace and charity, and his own life exhibited to us a distinguished example of these virtues. After all the inquiry which we have made, we can find no blame attached to the doctrine or

to the life of the said John Huss; but on the contrary everything pious, laudable, and worthy of a true pastor. Ye have not only disgraced us by his condemnation, but have also unmercifully imprisoned, and perhaps already put to death.

Jerom of Prague, a man of most profound learning and copious eloquence. Him also ye have condemned unconvicted. Notwithstanding all that hath passed, we are resolved to sacrifice our lives

for the defence of the Gospel of Christ, and of his faithful preachers."—This letter was unanimously approved in an assembly of Bohemian lords, held at Prague.

John de Trocznow, chamberlain to Wenceslaus, king of Bohemia, known

by the name of Zisca, or the one-eyed, was one of the Bohemian noblemen who highly resented the base conduct of the council. Wenceslaus asking him one day what he was musing upon, "I was thinking," said he, "on the affront offered to our kingdom by the death of John Huss."

"It is out of your power or mine to revenge it," said the king; "but if you know which way to do it, exert yourself." From that time Zisca meditated those military projects, for which he was afterwards so famous in history.

The council, startled at the expostulations of the Bohemian lords, yet being still determined to maintain their own unjust authority; at length, partly by promises, and partly by threatenings, induced

Jerom of Prague to retract his sentiments. To carry this point, they appear to have used their utmost efforts: and it is not difficult to comprehend their motives. They were anxious to avoid the infamy which would unavoidably be connected with their execution of another great and good man. Jerom's retraction was at first ambiguous and equivocal, afterwards explicit and circumstantial.

He anathematized the articles both of Wickliff and of Huss, and declared that he believed everything which the council believed. He even added, that if in future any doctrine should escape from him contrary to his recantation, he would submit to everlasting punishment! Thus was disgraced before all the world, and humbled in his own eyes, a man of most excellent morals, of superior parts, and of great learning and fortitude. Reader!

this is an event, memorable in the annals of human imbecility. Consider diligently the instruction it affords. The power and the mercy of God, in owning his fallen servant, and in afterwards restoring and supporting him, were magnified, in this instance, in a very striking manner.

Jerom, notwithstanding his retraction, was remanded to prison, where, however, we find he was allowed a little more liberty than before.*

The council, during these transactions, made a constant parade of reforming the Church. On Sundays and holidays, sermons were preached on that subject from time to time. One preacher said, "When

Jerom retracts.

Jerom retracts.

Jerom retracts.

Jerom retracts.

Jerom retracts.

Jerom retracts.

Jerom retracts.

* L'Enfant, p. 506. Vol. I.

* L'Enfant, p. 513. Vol. I.

a prelate is consecrated, they ask him, if he knows the Old and New Testament. Most of them, I will venture to say, cannot affirm this with a safe conscience." This same preacher inveighed, in general, with great vehemence against the vices of the clergy, which he might do with little danger to his own person, and with as little probability of profiting his audience, because he always took care at the same time to assert the unlimited power of the pope. Other sermons, to the same purport, were preached, in which the wickedness of the clergy was so keenly reprov'd, that we cannot but conclude that their manners must have been at that time licentious beyond measure. Dr. Abendon of Oxford, particularly exhorted bishops and other superior clergymen to apply themselves to the study of the Scriptures, rather than to the litigious and lucrative science of the canon law. He inveighed against the non-residence and the simony of the prelates. The council by their silence could bear to give a sanction to these exhortations, though they had just before condemned to the flames a pastor, who had been singularly exempt from all these vices. There were also those, who, not content with the unhappy retraction of Jerom, insisted upon his being tried a second time; and Gerson himself, with his usual zeal against heresy, was not ashamed to use his utmost efforts in promoting this most iniquitous measure.

The council actually proceeded to examine Jerom again upon the articles formerly exhibited against him, and also upon fresh articles, collected in Bohemia by certain Carmelite friars, and now for the first time brought forward. The prisoner refused to be sworn because they denied him the liberty of defence.

Then it was that this great man, whom a long series of affliction and cruel persecution, and above all, the consciousness of his late prevarication, had brought into the lowest distress, began to exhibit that strength of mind, that force of genius and eloquence, and that integrity and fortitude, which will be the admiration of all ages. How bitterly he had repented, and mourned over his fall, and with what exercises of soul he had been disciplined in secret, the intelligent Christian may easily conceive, though we have no particular account on record. We know, indeed, that after he had act-

The admirable spirit of Jerom.

ed against his conscience, he retired from the council with a heavy heart. His chains had been taken from him, but the load was transferred from his body to his mind; and the caresses of those about him served only to mock his sorrow. The anguish of his own reflections rendered his prison a more gloomy solitude than he had ever found it before. Jerom, however, was not an apostate; and the God whom he served, had compassion on the infirmities of his nature, and did not desert him in his humiliation. No: He made his latter end to be blessed, and glorious.

"How unjust is it," exclaimed this Christian hero, "that ye will not hear me! Ye have confined me three hundred and forty days in several prisons, where I have been cramped with irons, almost poisoned with dirt and stench, and pinched with the want of all necessaries. During this time ye always gave to my enemies a hearing, but refused to hear me so much as a single hour. I wonder not, that since ye have indulged them with so long and so favourable an audience, they should have had the address to persuade you that I am a heretic, an enemy to the faith, a persecutor of the clergy, and a villain. Thus prejudiced ye have judged me unheard, and ye still refuse to hear me. Remember, however, that ye are but men; and as such ye are fallible, and may suffer others to impose on you. It is said, that all learning and all wisdom is collected in this council. The more then does it behove you to take heed that ye act not rashly, lest ye should be found to act unjustly. I know that it is the design of this council to inflict sentence of death upon me. But when all is done, I am an object of small importance, who must die sooner or later. Therefore what I say is more for your sakes than my own. It ill becomes the wisdom of so many great men to pass an unjust decree against me, and by this to establish a precedent for consequences much more pernicious than my death can be." The council was so far moved by his reasonings, that they resolved, after he had answered to the articles, to grant him liberty of speech. All the articles were read to him, one after another: and his answers were delivered with an acuteness and dexterity, which astonished the court. When he was upbraided with the grossest calumnies, he stood up, with extend-

ed hands, and in a sorrowful tone cried out, "Which way, Fathers, shall I turn? Whom shall I call upon for help, or to bear witness to my innocence? Shall I make my address to you? But my persecutors have entirely alienated your minds from me, by saying that I am myself a persecutor of my judges. If ye give them credit, I have nothing to hope for." But, it being impossible to bring the affair to an issue at that time, because of the number of the accusations, the court was adjourned to another

The court
adjourned.

day.*

The former examination took place on May 23d, 1416, and he was called again before the council, according to adjournment, on the 26th of the same month. On that day the remaining articles were read to him. After he had answered all the charges,

Further ex-
amination
of Jerom.
A. D. 1416.
May 26.

owning some, denying others, and clearing up the rest, he was told, that though he had been convicted of heresy by proofs and witnesses most unexceptionable, yet they gave him liberty to speak, so that he might defend himself or retract; only, if he persisted in his errors, he must expect judgment without mercy.

Jerom, having gained this liberty of speech, though with much difficulty and opposition, determined to avail himself of the opportunity. He began with invoking the grace of God so to govern his heart and his lips that he might advance nothing but what should conduce to the salvation of his soul. "I am not ignorant," continued he, "that many excellent men have been borne down by false witnesses, and unjustly condemned." He proved this from various instances adduced both from sacred and profane history. "Moses," said he, "was often scandalized by his brethren; Joseph was sold through envy; and afterwards imprisoned upon false reports. Isaiah, Daniel, and almost all the prophets, were unjustly persecuted. And was not John the Baptist, Jesus Christ himself, and most of his Apostles, put to death as ungodly, seditious persons? In other books as well as the Bible we have similar instances. Socrates was most unjustly condemned by his countrymen; he might indeed have saved his life by doing

Eloquence
of Jerom.

violence to his conscience, but he preferred death to a disingenuous recantation. Plato, Anaxagoras, Zeno, and many others, were maltreated in various ways."—"It is a shameful thing," continued Jerom, "for one priest to be condemned unjustly by another; but the height of iniquity is, when this is done by a council, and a college of priests." He gave so probable an account of the reasons of the malice of his adversaries, that for some moments he seemed to have convinced his judges. "I came here of my own accord," said he, "to justify myself, which a man conscious of guilt would scarcely have done. Those who know the course of my life and studies, know that my time has been spent in exercises and works of a very different tendency from anything wicked or heretical. As to my sentiments, the most learned men of all times have had different opinions concerning religion; they disputed about it, not to combat the truth, but to illustrate it. St. Augustine, and his contemporary St. Jerome, were not always of the same opinion, yet were not on that account accused of heresy. I shall make no apology for my sentiments, because I am not conscious of maintaining any error; nor shall I retract, because it becomes not me to retract the false accusations of my enemies." He then extolled John Huss, vindicated the innocence of that holy martyr, and declared that he was ready to suffer after his example. "This pastor," said he, "by finding fault with the abuses of the clergy, and the pride of the prelates, did not act against the church of God." He declared that he hoped one day to see his accusers, and to call them to judgment before the tribunal of the Sovereign Judge of the world. He accused the council of an act of high injustice in trying him a second time on the same indictment, and declared that he should never acknowledge the authority of the new commissioners, but should look on them as judges* sitting in the chair of PESTILENCE. "I came," said he, "to Constance to defend John Huss, because I had advised him to go thither, and had promised to come to his assistance, in case he should be oppressed. Nor am I ashamed here to make public confession of my own cowardice. I confess, and tremble while I think of it,

that through fear of punishment by fire, I basely consented against my conscience to the condemnation of the doctrine of Wickliff and Huss." He then declared that he disowned his recantation, as the greatest crime of which he had ever been guilty; and that he was determined to his last breath to adhere to the principles of those two men, which were as sound and pure as their lives were holy and blameless. He excepted indeed Wickliff's opinion of the sacrament, and declared his agreement with the Roman church in the article of transubstantiation. Having concluded his speech, he was carried back to prison, and was there visited by several persons, who hoped to reclaim him, but in vain.

On May 30th, Jerom being brought again before the council, the bishop of Lodi preached a sermon from these

The bishop of Lodi preaches.

words, "He upbraideth them with their unbelief and hardness of heart."* He exhorted the prisoner not to show himself incorrigible, as he had hitherto done. He paid some tribute of praise to his extraordinary abilities, and at the same time extolled the lenity and generosity with which he had been treated by the council. The reader, now in possession of the facts, might smile at this gross flattery, if the subject were less grave and less affecting. Jerom, raising himself on a bench, undertook to confute the preacher. He declared again, that he had done nothing in his whole life, of which he so bitterly repented, as his recantation; that he revoked it from his very soul, as also the letter which he had been induced to write on that subject to the Bohemians; that he had been guilty of the meanest falsehood by making that recantation; and that he esteemed John Huss a holy man. At the same time he declared, that he knew no heresy to which Huss was attached, unless they should call by that name his open disapprobation of the vices of the clergy; and that if after this declaration credit should still be given to the false witness borne against him, he should consider the fathers of the council themselves as unworthy of all belief. "This pious man," said Jerom, alluding to John Huss, "could not bear to see the revenues of the church, which were principally designed for the maintenance of the poor,

and for works of liberality, spent in debauchery with women, in feasts, honnds, furniture, gaudy apparel, and other expenses, unworthy of Christianity."

The firmness, eloquence, and zeal of Jerom, sensibly affected the council. They proposed to him once more to retract. But he replied, "Ye have determined to condemn me unjustly; but after my death I shall leave a sting in your consciences, and a worm that shall never die. I appeal to the Sovereign Judge of all the earth, in whose presence ye must appear to answer me." After sentence

Jerom condemned;

had been pronounced against him, he was delivered to the secular power. He was treated with scorn and insult, similar to that which his friend Huss had experienced. He put the mitre with his own hands on his head,* saying that he was glad to wear it for the sake of Him, who was crowned with one of thorns. As he went to execution, he sung the Apostles' creed, and the hymns of the church, with a loud voice and a cheerful countenance. He kneeled at the stake, and prayed. Being then bound, he raised his voice, and sung a paschal hymn then much in vogue in the church.†

and executed.

Hail! happy day, and ever be adored,
When hell was conquered by great heaven's Lord.

The executioner approaching to the pile behind his back, lest Jerom should see him, "Come forward," said the martyr to him, "and put fire to it before my face."* He continued alive in the flames a full quarter of an hour. And there is the most unanimous testimony given by all writers, Hussite and Roman catholic, to the heroic courage and fortitude with which he sustained the torment. When he was much scorched with the fury of the fire, and almost smothered in its flame, he was heard to cry out, "O Lord God, have mercy on me! have mercy on me!" And a little afterward, "Thou knowest how I have loved thy truth." By and by, the wind parted the flames, and exhibited his body full of large blisters, a dreadful spectacle to the beholders; yet even then his lips are said to

* L'Enfant, Vol. I. p. 591.

† Salve, festa dies, toto venerabilis ævo,

Qua Deus infernum vicit, et astra tencns.

† L'Enfant, Vol. I. p. 599.

* Mark xvi. 14.

have continued still moving, as if his mind was actuated by intense devotion.

Poggius, a celebrated Florentine, who had been the secretary of John XXIII. and was present at these scenes, has left the most unequivocal testimony to the abilities, fortitude, and eloquence of Jerom. I have already given the most material historical facts which he mentions.

"I confess," says this writer, "I never knew the art of speaking carried so near the model of ancient eloquence. It was amazing to hear with what force of expression, fluency of language, and excellent reasoning, he answered his adversaries; nor was I less struck with the gracefulness of his manner, the dignity of his action, and the firmness and constancy of his whole behaviour. It grieved me to think so great a man was labouring under so atrocious an accusation. Whether this accusation be just or not, God knows: I make no inquiry into the merits of the case; I submit to those who know more of it than I do.

"The assembly," continues Poggius, "was very unruly and indecent; yet it is incredible with what acuteness the prisoner answered, and with what surprising dexterity he warded off every stroke of his adversaries. Nothing escaped him: his whole behaviour was truly great and pious.

"He took great pains to show that very little credit was due to the witnesses produced against him. He laid open the sources of their hatred to him; and in that way made a strong impression on the minds of his hearers. He lamented the cruel and unjust death of that holy man John Huss, and said he was armed with a full resolution to follow the steps of that blessed martyr.

"It was impossible to hear this pathetic orator without emotion. Every ear was captivated, and every heart touched. Throughout his whole oration he showed a most amazing strength of memory. He had been confined almost a year in a dungeon, the severity of which usage he complained of, but in the language of a great and good man. In this horrid place he was deprived of books and paper, yet notwithstanding this, and the constant anxiety of his mind, he was no more at a loss for proper authorities and quotations, than if he

had spent the intermediate time at leisure in his study.

"His voice was sweet and full, and his action every way proper either to express indignation, or to raise pity; but he made no affected application to the passions. Firm and intrepid, he stood before the council, collected in himself, and not only contemning, but seeming desirous of death. The greatest character in ancient story could not possibly have exceeded him. If there be any justice in history, this man will be admired by all posterity. I call him a prodigious man, and the epithet is not extravagant. I was an eye-witness of his whole behaviour, and could easily be more prolix on a subject so copious."*

Such is the testimony of this ingenious papist to an adversary. His friend Arctin, to whom he wrote the letter of which the above is an extract, was much less candid. "You attribute," says he, "to this man more than I could wish. You ought at least to write more cautiously of these things." It has been well observed, that Poggius would probably have written more cautiously, had he written a few days afterward. But his letter is dated on the very day of Jerom's execution. It came warm from the writer's heart, and proves sufficiently what HE thought of the council of Constance and their proceedings.

Notwithstanding this valuable memoir, I could wish to have been enabled to give a more edifying account of the martyrdom of Jerom: but in this point the materials of history are defective. We must ever expect that writers will record what they esteem important, and pass over what they conceive is better buried in oblivion. Unless, therefore, they have some taste for evangelical principles, and evangelical practice, they will take no notice of many things, which to them appear bordering upon fanaticism or enthusiasm. In the instance before us, indeed, it is very probable that Jerom himself had no very accurate or systematical acquaintance with the truth of the Gospel. The knowledge, however, which he had, doubtless respected the essential doctrines of Christianity; and his spirit and constancy in suffering, his dependence on the grace of Christ, his joyful expectation of a blessed resurrection, and his humble confession of sin-

* Letters of Poggius to Arctin.

fulness and unworthiness, sufficiently distinguish him from the stoic philosopher, or the mere moralist, who, whatever portion he may have of the first of these qualities, is totally void of all the rest. It is remarkable, that Poggius observes, in the same letter, that "Jerom met his fate with a cheerful countenance and with MORE THAN STOICAL constancy."

Let the reader now compare the caution and candour of Poggius the Florentine, with the infatuated bigotry of Theodoric Vrie, a monk, who flourished at the same time. His report of Jerom's execution is, "That holding the crown that was given him, a crown of dishonour, abomination, and turpitude, he uttered these words; *The Lord Jesus Christ, my God, was crowned for my sake with a crown of thorns, and I will gladly wear this crown for his glory.* After having said this, he kneeled down for a few minutes, and then rising up, he sung the creed from the beginning to the end. Thus did the wretched man excite the compassion of all that saw him go along in that miserable condition, without taking any compassion of himself. Then being led to the stake, he was stripped of his clothes, and bound to it; and there, being all naked, in the midst of the scorching flames, he sung those words; *O Lord, into thy hands I resign my spirit;* and just as he was saying, *Thou hast redeemed us,* he was suffocated by the flame and the smoke, and gave up his wretched soul. Thus did this heretical miscreant resign his miserable spirit to be burnt everlastingly in the bottomless pit."—Vid. M. Von der Hardt. tom. i.

Among other valuable purposes to which the council of Constance was rendered subservient under Divine Providence, this was not of the least importance, that the wickedness of the ecclesiastical system, then prevalent in Europe, was demonstrated before all the world. All the knowledge and ability which Europe could afford, was collected at Constance; yet the able and learned fathers of this council were so far from reforming the evils of what they called the Church, that they proved it to be Antichrist more certainly than ever. It could no longer be said, that the particular character of such or such popes was the cause of the crimes of the clergy; the whole of the then clerical

establishment concurred in the support of iniquity.

I have already taken notice of the confession, which, in the sermon preached at Constance, they themselves made of the extreme wickedness of the Church. Another remarkable instance of the same kind occurred on Whitsunday, the seventh of June, a very little time after the death of Jerom. A doctor preached a sermon from these words: "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost." "Instead of the seven gifts," says the preacher, "which God granted to the Apostles, I fear that the devil keeps his Pentecost in the hearts of most of the clergy, and that he has inspired them with the seven contrary vices." He then gave a catalogue of those vices.

But let not malicious infidelity exult in these incontrovertible proofs of the corrupt state of the Church. One of the essential doctrines of Christianity, namely, original sin, or the native depravity of man, as an apostate creature, is strongly illustrated by the general wickedness of merely nominal Christians. In the Roman Church the real Gospel itself was then neither understood, nor preached, nor valued. Hence the natural wickedness of mankind met with no resistance: even the papists could see that the whole ecclesiastical system was vicious in its head and members, yet they trifled respecting sins with the most scandalous levity, and persecuted to death those very persons who earnestly opposed the corruption of the times.

All this, however, affords no just ground of triumph to the infidel. The mere nominal Christian is, in a scriptural sense, an unbeliever as well as himself; and while neither of these characters OVERCOMES THE WORLD, because he has not true FAITH,* it is abundantly evident, and I trust it has appeared so from the course of this history, that where real Christianity is understood and received, there sincerity, and all genuine virtues, do actually thrive and adorn the Gospel.

In the year 1417, on the day of Epiphany, a sermon was preached in full council, which described the abuses of the Church in so strong a manner, that if the preacher had intended to justify the reformation attempted by Huss

A sermon preached in the council, on the day of the Epiphany. A. D. 1417.

* 1 John v. 4, 5.

and Jerom, and completed a hundred years after in several parts of Europe by the protestant reformers, he could not have added much to the vehemence of his invectives. The clergy were by him taxed with pride and the love of power, with the bad distribution of benefices, the mal-administration of the sacraments, the neglect of the study of the Scriptures and of the preaching of the Gospel, and the injustice of their ecclesiastical decrees. "Abomination," cried he, "appears even within these walls, nor are we without instances both of the most scandalous passions, and the basest actions." Could a preacher have been permitted with impunity to draw so frightful a picture in the face of the church in full council, if it had not been corrupt in the extreme; and must there not have been a radical apostacy from the real faith of Christ, where such fruits were suffered to abound?

In this year the followers of Huss, under the famous Zisca and Nicholas de Hussinetz, began to exert themselves in opposition to the hierarchy, but certainly in a manner by no means agreeable to the genius of Christianity. They made use of fire and sword; and the latter of these leaders is said* to have collected together in a mountain, which was afterwards called Tabor, † forty thousand Hussites, to have arranged them in companies, and administered to them the communion in both kinds. This last point of ecclesiastical regulation seems to have been the predominant article of the faith of the majority of the party, so little did they understand the nature of the Gospel! It was indeed the great defect of the whole Bohemian reformation, that, zealous as it was against the popish abominations, it entered not with energy and perspicuity into the genuine, essential doctrines of the gospel; and thus, as must ever be the case, while external practice is the principal object, these reformers were not able to improve, in any considerable degree, that very practice to which they directed their chief attention. Instead of laying the axe to the root, instead of expounding the doctrines of

grace, and preaching the real faith of Christ, and patiently suffering persecution, they took the cause into their own hands, and avenged themselves of their enemies by the sword. Their ill success in the issue, compared with the decisive victories gained over popery afterwards at the Reformation, by those who preached the real scripture doctrine of justification before God, and who allowed the use of no other arms against popery than "FAITH WHICH WORKETH BY LOVE," gives us a salutary lesson, how upon all occasions, in this earthly scene of the trial of the patience and resignation of the righteous, divine truth ought to be defended. To be incited by a zeal, however flaming, against the errors and evil of popery, is not sufficient; it behoves the Christian champion to fight with spiritual, not with carnal weapons, to regulate his zeal by Christian knowledge, humility, faith, meekness, and patience, and to aim chiefly at the purification of the heart by the practical use of the doctrine of Christ crucified, under the influence of the Divine Spirit. But in these things the Hussites were poorly furnished; and they miscarried, because they attempted to cleanse the OUTSIDE OF THE CUP AND PLATTER, before they had cleansed that WHICH WAS WITHIN.*

It was a gloomy season of the church when the majority of those, who had the greatest sincerity in religion, made their capital object to be a † sacramental circumstance, though certainly scriptural and perfectly well founded. The fact is, they understood very little of the native depravity of man, on which the use and necessity of the Gospel depend. A gloomy season truly! when two men, of talents and learning, and uncommonly honest and upright, lost their lives for the support of a good conscience; and when even these, who, it is not to be doubted, died in the faith of Jesus, possessed little clearness of understanding in that faith, and were encumbered with so much rubbish of superstition as to be incapable of giving clear and effectual instruction to their followers and admirers. And further, when the general mass of Christians, even all the dignitaries assembled at Constance, could do no more than acknowledge the necessity of

* Dubravius.

† The Hussites erected tents in the mountain. And the word Tabor means TENT in the Bohemian language. The mountain Tabor is only a few miles from Prague.

* Matt. xxvii. 26.

† Communion in both kinds.

reformation, while many of them constantly practised the foulest abominations, and were ready to burn in the flames as heretics any persons, whose knowledge, and zeal, and morals, and conduct conveyed, by a laudable contrast, a censure on their own principles and practice. The preciousness of real gospel-light, and the duty of cherishing and obeying it, when it is once understood, was never more strikingly evinced.

Whether this account may be thought to bear too hard upon the character of the clergy at that time in general, and of the council in particular, let the reader judge when he has attended to a few extracts from a sermon of Bernard, a French abbot. This divine told the council, that, "with very few exceptions, they were an assembly of Pharisees, who, under the mask of processions, and other external acts of devotion, made a farce of religion and the church. I am sorry," proceeds he, "to say it, that in our days the Catholic faith is reduced to nothing; hope is turned into a rash presumption, and the love of God and our neighbour is quite extinct. Among the laity, falsehood bears the chief sway; and avarice predominates among the clergy. Among the prelates there is nothing but malice, iniquity, &c. At the pope's court there is no sanctity; law-suits and quarrels being the felicity of that court, and imposture its delight." He then exhorted them to make a real reformation, to punish the guilty, and to choose a good pope. This zealous preacher saw not the root of all these evils, namely, the lamentable departure from Christian principles; and like many other declaimers against vice, he knew no remedy but the arguments of mere moral suasion and external discipline. The power of the blood of Christ, in purging the conscience* from dead works to serve the living God, seems to have been generally unknown at that time; and till men are brought to know something of their own native depravity, they are always too proud to submit to the righteousness of God.†

We have already mentioned the beginning of the intestine distractions in Bohemia. These proceeded to such a length as to produce scenes perfectly tragical. The university of Prague declared in favour of the communion in

Distractions
in Bohemia.

both kinds, and the greatest part of both the clergy and laity followed their decision. Wenceslaus, the king, more out of fear than good will to the Hussites, granted them a great many churches, in which they administered the Eucharist according to the scriptural institution, and also entered every day into new engagements not to obey the council. By these means, many of the Bohemian clergy were stript of their revenues, and they stirred up the friends of the church of Rome to oppose the innovations. Vast numbers of highwaymen and banditti took the opportunity of this confusion to exercise all acts of violence and robbery with impunity. Wenceslaus, instead of exerting the requisite authority, abandoned Prague, retired to a castle, and minded nothing but his pleasure, while his whole kingdom was in combustion.*

It was not probable that the council of Constance should be able to restore peace and good order to Bohemia; for they themselves, in a great measure, had been the cause of the existing troubles. It is however true, that they left no stone unturned in their endeavours to re-establish the corrupt custom of administering the sacrament in one kind only. By their order, Gerson composed a treatise against the communion in both kinds, which was publicly read in the assembly; but which, in fact, was little calculated to compose the differences. Conscious of the difficulty of supporting his main point by the authority of Scripture alone, he observes, that in order to understand revelation aright, recourse should be had to human laws, decrees, and the glosses of holy doctors. He maintains, that those who presume to interpret Scripture contrary to what is taught in the Scripture, as DECLARED BY THE CHURCH, and observed by the faithful, ought to be severely punished, rather than dealt with by argument. The whole treatise was unworthy of the learning and sagacity of Gerson, and deserved no notice here, except for the purpose of showing under what strong delusions those are permitted to lie, who love not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The judicious L'Enfant, who is rarely liberal in his censures, breaks out on occasion of the last-mentioned sentiment of Gerson, in the following terms: "I own, I don't

* Heb. ix.

† Rom. x.

* Theobald's War of the Hussites.

understand Gerson's logic on this occasion. He draws a very blunt and rash inference; especially as it was the most improper thing in the world he could say to induce the Hussites of Bohemia to come to Constance, whither they were summoned."

The five nations, for the Spaniards were now added to the French, the Germans, the English, and the Italians, proceeded to elect a pope; and the choice fell upon Otho de Colonna, who took the name of Martin V. This happened in the latter end of the year 1417. All these nations, on

the day after the pope's coronation, concurred in a resolution to demand of the new pope the reformation of the church which he had promised to make after he should be elected. He gave them good words, but did nothing effectual. The Germans were uneasy at his delays, and so were the French; though these, by joining with the Italians and the Spaniards, had caused the deferring of the reformation till after the election of a pope. The answer, which Sigismund gave to the French, was severe, but just: "When I urged you that the church might be reformed before the pope was elected, you would not consent: you would have a pope before the reformation. Go to him yourselves. I have not the same power which I had while the See was vacant."* It is the office of history to do justice to all characters; on which account it behoves us to declare, that Sigismund, grossly perfidious as he had shown himself in regard to Huss, appears to have been sincerely desirous of a partial reformation in the church. He had neither the knowledge nor the zeal sufficient to lead him to anything like an evangelical reformation; but, with many other popish princes, he wished to set bounds to the tyranny of the pope, to reduce him from the state of a despot to that of a limited monarch, to check his encroachments on the rights and property both of sovereigns and of subjects, and to bring the church into a state of decorum and order. Sigismund certainly intended all this; and if he failed of obtaining the blessing of God even on his laudable purposes, the Christian reader will recollect that this man persecuted the church of God, lived

wickedly, and hated the real principles of the Gospel of Christ. Before the election of Martin V. the emperor, with the Germans and the English, was zealous that the reformation of the church should precede the election of a new pontiff; and Robert Halam, bishop of Salisbury, had distinguished himself particularly in this point. He was the favourite of the emperor; but his death at Constance gave a fatal blow to the designs of those who were anxious to oppose the ambition of the Italians. Not only the French, but even the English, strenuous as they had been for the correction of abuses while Halam lived, deserted the emperor; and he was left in a minority with his Germans. The memorial of this last nation deserves to be mentioned. They complained, that "the popes had assumed to themselves the judgment of all causes both ecclesiastical and civil; that by a horrid abuse, even more scandalous than simony, they taxed and rated crimes like merchandize, selling pardons of sins for ready money, and granting indulgences altogether unusual; that they admitted persons of licentious manners into sacred orders, and that since offices were become thus saleable, no one thought knowledge and virtue to be necessary qualifications."

It is extraordinary, that any modern writers should undertake to vindicate the papacy from the charges of protestants, when it appears repeatedly, that nothing could be said worse of it by its enemies, than what was confessed by the very members of the church of Rome. It is very true, that the conduct of these members of the Romish church was in the main inconsistent with their professions and declarations. With what face could these Germans charge Huss with heresy, for saying the very same things which they themselves said? And why should Luther be condemned as too severe against the practice of indulgences, when he only represented that grand corruption in the same light in which it had been openly represented by his ancestors in this council? But so imperious were the Italian cardinals, that they used very threatening language, accusing both the emperor, and those who favoured his views, of heresy. They also added craft to their menaces, and by degrees drew over the German deputies themselves to their party; and at length Sigismund, being left alone, consented that

* L'Enfant, Vol. II. p. 207.

the choice of a pope should be previous to the reformation. This was all that the Italians desired; for Martin and his cardinals contrived to elude the wishes of the nations for reform. And thus, the French, who, with Gerson as their adviser, had condemned the upright servants of God, the Germans, who, with Sigismund at their head, had supported the accusation against them, and the English, who had persecuted the followers of Wickliff, and joined in the cry against Huss and Jerom, all these very deservedly became the dupes of papal artifice; and the nations were destined for another century to groan under one of the most intolerable of all governments. The glory of God, the truths of the Gospel, and the real kingdom of Jesus Christ, being kept out of sight by all parties, none of them regarding reformation much further than it concerned their own interested views, nothing that deserved the name of reformation ensued. Among the valuable lessons to be learnt from the history of the council of Constance, this is one; namely, Those who really mean to serve God and his Christ, and to profit mankind in religion, whether they be pastors, or synods, must begin, if the people be in a state of ignorance, with explaining the written word of God; they must plainly set forth the essential doctrines of salvation by Jesus Christ, and then erect the whole structure of the reformation upon those doctrines.

How void the council was of all true knowledge of the scripture doctrines of salvation, will appear from the bull by which the pope dissolved that assembly. An extract of it is as follows: "Martin, bishop, servant of the servants of God, at the request of the sacred council, we dismiss it. Moreover, by the authority of Almighty God, and of the blessed Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and by our own authority, we grant to all the members of the council plenary absolution of all their sins once in their lives, so that every one of them, within two months after the notification of this privilege has come to his knowledge, may enjoy the benefit of the said absolution in form. We also grant them the same privilege in the moment of death; and we extend it to the domestics, as well as to the masters, on condition, that from the day of the notification, both the one and the other fast every Friday, during a whole

year, for the absolution granted to them while alive; and another year for their absolution in the moment of death, unless there be some lawful impediment, in which case they shall do other works of piety. And after the second year they shall be obliged to fast on Fridays during life, or to do some other acts of piety, on pain of incurring the displeasure of Almighty God and of the blessed Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul."

I hasten to close the history of this council, because in the latter part of their proceedings there is little that falls within my plan. Martin V. by making agreements with the nations separately, found means to defeat all attempts after anything that might deserve the name of a general and effectual reformation. But though this new pontiff seemed reluctant and dilatory in correcting abuses, he soon discovered a disposition sufficiently active in supporting his own authority.

He persecuted the Hussites most vigorously. These were divided into two bodies, the Calixtines,* who differed from the church of Rome only in the affair of the new communion in both kinds; and the Taborites, mentioned above, who are thought to have much resembled the Waldenses. A greater encomium, the circumstances of those times being fully considered, could scarcely be passed upon them. But it is difficult to reconcile this encomium with the accounts of their military ferocity. Most probably, wheat was mixed with the tares; and whilst one part of the people lived the life of "the faith of the Son of God,"† the other could produce few marks of zeal in the cause of religion, except those which were of a bloody and violent kind.

Under the auspices of the council of Constance, paganism was extirpated in Samogitia by the king of Poland. Historical justice required that this fact should be mentioned:—yet I know no evidences of real conversion among the Samogitians; but the very introduction of Christian formalities among idolaters, ought to be esteemed, on the whole, a considerable advantage to a nation.

This celebrated council, Dissolution of the council of Constance, A. D. 1418. which began to sit in 1414, was dissolved in 1418.

If the materials of evangelical history

* From calix, the cup.

† Gal. xi. 20.

appear by no means in quantity proportioned to the length of this Chapter, the importance of the salutary lessons connected with the information it contains, may be thought a sufficient apology for the defect. A great effort was made by the united wisdom of Europe, but in vain, to effect that reformation, which God alone in his own time produced in such a manner, as to illustrate the divine declaration, Salvation is "not by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."*

CHAPTER III.

THE HUSSITES, TILL THE BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION.

WE have seen with what indignation the Bohemians heard of the murder of John Huss and Jerom of Prague. To this cause historians ascribe the commencement of the Hussite war, which was carried on by the enraged Bohemians for three years under the famous Zisea, and for ten years after his death.

The historian of the church of Christ withdraws from a scene crowded with almost incredible victories over the emperor, and with inhuman cruelties on both sides. The main body of the discontented Bohemians were at length satisfied with the liberty of the cup in the sacrament, and with the administration of the ordinance in their own language. These points, after the effusion of a deluge of blood, were given up by the papal party in the year 1433, and a treaty of peace was made, of which these formed the basis. In other respects, the Calixtines resembled the papists, by whose artifices they were induced even to persecute the genuine followers of Huss. These last mentioned, the true Hussites, besides the scriptural celebration of the sacrament, desired to see a real reformation of the church, and the establishment of purity of doctrine and discipline. But, after a long series of military confusion, they found themselves still a persecuted

body of men; and those of them who had been inclined to have recourse to the sword, were gradually convinced, that patient faith and perseverance in prayer are the proper arms of a Christian soldier. Never indeed was there a more striking instance of the inefficacy of carnal weapons in defending the church of Christ. The Bohemians had carried on war for thirteen years, often with great success, and always with undaunted courage and fortitude; and in the end, they gained only two privileges, merely of an external nature, in the administration of the Lord's Supper. With these the majority of the people remained content, and still adhered to the papal abominations; while the real Christians were exposed as much as ever to the persecutions of the church of Rome, and were not only abandoned, but also cruelly treated by their brethren.

In the mean time the council of Basil succeeded that of Constance. But the reader, who has with me examined the motives which appear to have influenced the last-mentioned council, will not perhaps be disposed to take the same pains with that of Basil, which was conducted on a similar plan of secular intrigue and ambition. Among its other objects, the reduction of Bohemia to the papal system was not forgotten; and Rokyzan, a Calixtine, was al-
lured, by the hopes of the archbishopric of Prague, to second the views of the papal party. He was elected archbishop in 1436, and laboured to induce the Bohemians to be content without the cup, and in all other things to conform to the Romish doctrine and worship.

Rokyzan
chosen arch-
bishop of
Prague,
A. D. 1436.

The genuine followers of Huss were, however, not without hopes of engaging him to promote a more complete reformation. His sister's son, Gregory, who was in a great measure the founder of the unity of the Hussite brethren, solicited him in the most pressing manner to promote vital godliness. But Rokyzan, though he had light enough to approve of the pious intentions of his nephew, could not, through fear of losing his archiepiscopal dignity, be prevailed on to oppose the Romish corruptions; yet he advised the Hussites to edify one another in private, and gave them some good books for that purpose. He also obtained for them permission to withdraw to the lordship of Litzitz, on the

* Zech. iv. 6.—See Appendix, Council of Constance.

confines of Silesia and Moravia, and there to regulate their plan of worship according to their own consciences.

About the year 1153, a number of Hussites repaired to Lititz, and chose Michael Bradazius for their minister.

He, with some assistants, under the direction of Gregory, held a conference in 1457, in which the plan of the Hussite church, or that of the United Brethren, was formed; idolatrous rites were prohibited, and a strictness of

discipline, resembling that of the primitive Christian church, was instituted. Discipline, indeed, was a favourite object of this people; and if their attention to this subordinate circumstance had been connected with what is of much greater moment, an accurate and luminous system of Christian doctrine, far more salutary consequences would have ensued. In this the Hussites were certainly defective, though by no means fundamentally so; and hence, while they were pursuing a matter of inferior importance, they failed to promote the spirit of godliness in so great a degree as they had expected. The inward life and vigour of their church corresponded not with the purity of its external system, nor could distressed consciences find among them that comfort and liberty which are so necessary to propagate godliness to any great extent. In one point, however, they proved themselves the genuine followers of Christ; they determined to make use of no carnal weapons for the defence of religion; and no more to suffer the name of Hussites to be disgraced by such unchristian methods, as it formerly had been.

They were soon called to the exercise of that passive courage which they professed. The increase of their congregations in Bohemia and Moravia was beheld with suspicion both by Romish and Calixtine priests, and they were accused of an intention to renew the Taborite tumults, and to seize the government. Those professors of godliness, who have been so far misled by false zeal, or the love of the world, as to take the sword in defence of religion, little know the injury which they do to the cause which they undertake to support. Profane minds are always malicious, and will be ever apt to charge all who profess the same truths, with the same seditious

spirit, of which they have once seen some instances. The Hussites, therefore, loaded with the infamy of their predecessors, had now no remedy. Even George Podiebrad, who was elected king of Bohemia in 1458, and who had hitherto protected them, now consented to persecute the United Brethren.

They had hoped for support in Rokyzan, whose ministry had formerly been useful to their souls. With a degree of evangelical light, this man still followed the world, and lived in miserable grandeur, dearly purchased at the expense of a good conscience. The following is an extract of a letter, which the brethren wrote to him while they laboured under the imputations of promoting needless divisions.

It will give the reader some idea of their principles and spirit.* “Your sermons have been highly grateful and pleasant to us. You earnestly exhorted us to flee from the horrible errors of antichrist, revealed in these last days. You taught us, that the devil introduced the abuses of the sacraments, and that men placed a false hope of salvation in them. You confirmed to us, from the writings of the apostles, and from the examples of the primitive church, the true doctrine of those divine institutions. Being distressed in our consciences, and distracted by the variety of opinions which prevailed in the church, we were induced to follow your advice, which was to attend the ministry of Peter Chelezitius, whose discourses and writings gave us a clearer insight into Christian truths, inasmuch, that when we saw that your life and practice were at variance with your doctrine, we were constrained to entertain doubts concerning your religious character. When we conversed with you on this occasion, your answer was to this effect: ‘I know that your sentiments are true; but if I should patronize your cause, I must incur the same infamy and disgrace which you do.’ Whence we understood, that you would desert us,

The United Brethren are persecuted in A. D. 1453, by Podiebrad, king of Bohemia.

A letter of the United Brethren.

* Joachim Camerarius de Ecclesiis in Bohemia et Moravia, p. 61.—I have consulted this treatise and made use of it as my guide in this chapter, in connexion with Crantz’s History of the Brethren, published by La Trobe.

rather than relinquish the honours of the world. Having now no refuge but in God, we implored him to make known to us the mystery of his will. As a gracious father, he hath looked upon our afflictions, and hath heard our prayers. Trusting in our God, we have assembled ourselves in the unity of the faith by which we have been justified through Jesus Christ, and of which we were made partakers in conformity to the image of his death, that we might be the heirs of eternal life. Do not imagine that we have separated ourselves from you on account of certain rites and ceremonies instituted by men, but on account of evil and corrupt doctrine. For if we could, in connexion with you, have preserved the true faith in Jesus Christ our Lord, we never should have made this separation."

Thus does it appear that the Hussite brethren were not mere schismatics, but properly reformed protestants, who separated from the church of Rome on account of the essentials of godliness, and because, in that church, they could not preserve the genuine faith of the Gospel, and purity of worship. And the constancy with which they endured persecution, showed that they had not received the grace of God in vain. For now they were declared unworthy of the common rights of subjects: and, in the depth of winter, were driven out of the cities and villages, with the forfeiture of all their effects. The sick were thrown into the open fields, where many perished with cold and hunger. Various sorts of torture were inflicted on the brethren: numbers were barbarously murdered, and many died in the prisons.

During these melancholy scenes, Gregory, the nephew of Rokyzan, was distinguished by his zeal, fortitude, and charity. To these virtues he added prudence and discretion, of which he gave a remarkable instance.* The governor of Prague apprehending danger to the brethren to be at hand, had the kindness to warn

Excellent character of Gregory, the nephew of Rokyzan.

Gregory to withdraw from Prague, which he did accordingly.* Some of the brethren were disgusted at this conduct, and boasted that the rack was their breakfast, and the flames their dinner. Part, however, of these men failed on the trial, and recanted, to save their lives; though of the lapsed, some bemoaned their fall, and recovered by repentance. Gregory himself, on another occasion, underwent with patience the tortures of the rack. In the extremity of his suffering he fell into a swoon, and was believed to have expired.† His uncle Rokyzan hastened to the prison at the news, and lamented over him in these words, "My dear Gregory, I would to God I were where thou art." So strong was the power of conscience still in this unhappy archbishop! But Gregory recovered, and was preserved by Providence to be a nursing-father to the church to a very advanced age.

The brethren, hearing of the sensibility discovered by Rokyzan, addressed themselves to him again; but his answers were of the same kind as formerly. He was determined not to suffer persecution; and they, in their farewell letter, said to him, with more zeal than discretion, "Thou art of the world, and wilt perish with the world." The persecution now took a different turn; the Hussites were no longer tortured, but were driven out of the country; whence they were obliged to hide themselves in mountains and woods, and to live in the wilderness. In this situation, in the year 1467 they came to a resolution to form a church among themselves, and to appoint their own ministers. In 1480 they received a great increase of their numbers from the accession of Waldensian refugees, who escaped out of Austria, where Stephen, the last bishop of the Waldenses in that province, was burnt alive, and where the vehemence of persecution no longer allowed this people to live in security. An union was easily formed between the Waldenses and the Hussites, on account of the similarity of their sentiments and manners. The refugees, however, found their situation but little meliorated by a junction with

Expulsion of the Hussite brethren, in A. D. 1467.

Union between the Hussites and the Waldenses, in A. D. 1480.

* It is not easy to give a regular account of these transactions according to the order of time. There is, I find, some diversity in this respect between the two authors whom I follow. But I retain the substance of the narrative, collected from both.

* Joachim Camer. p. 85.
† Id. p. 80.

a people who were obliged to conceal themselves in thickets and in clefts of rocks; and who, to escape detection by the smoke, made no fires, except in the night, when they read the word of God, and prayed. What they must have suffered in these circumstances,

Death of Podiebrad, A. D. 1471.

may be easily conceived. The death of king Podiebrad, in 1471, had afforded them, indeed, some relief; and about the same time had died also the unhappy Rokyzan, who, in his latter days, promoted the persecutions against them, and who expired in despair.

In 1481 the Hussites were banished Moravia, but returned into that country six years afterwards. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, they counted two hundred congregations in Bohemia and Moravia. Their most violent persecutors were the Calixtines, who certainly for the

The Hussites were banished Moravia in A. D. 1481.

most part resembled the papists in all things, except in the particularity from which their names were derived.

And here I close, for the present, the history of the Hussites, who doubtless, as a body of men, feared God and served him in the Gospel of his Son. They also maintained a degree of discipline among themselves, vastly superior to that of any others of the Christian name, unless we except the churches of the Waldenses. Both of these, however, were defective in evangelical LIGHT. There wanted an exhibition of the pure doctrines of Christ, luminous, attractive, and powerful, which should publish peace and salvation to mankind through the cross of Christ, and engage the attention of the serious and thoughtful, who knew not the way of peace. These could find little instruction or consolation in the view of a society of Christians, whose manners indeed were pure and holy, but in the eyes of the ignorant forbidding and austere. God in his mercy was now hastening this exhibition by the light of the Reformation, which, after we have very briefly surveyed the fifteenth century in GENERAL, must engage our attention.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that the plan of this History will require, that the account of the UNITED BRETHREN be hereafter resumed, and their internal principles and regulations, as well as their external connexions and persecu-

tions, examined with care and diligence, and stated with candour and fidelity.

CHAPTER IV.

A BRIEF VIEW OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

THE most remarkable events which distinguish this period in general history, appear to have been directed by Divine Providence with a particular subserenity to the Reformation. Only in this view they will deserve the notice of the historian of the church of Christ. In the year 1453, Constantinople was taken by the Turkish emperor Mahomet II. From the year 1299, when the four angels were loosed, which had been bound in the river Euphrates,* that is to say, when four Turkish sultanies were established in the East, the Turks had gradually increased their power, and filled the world with carnage and confusion.

In the mean time, the princes of Europe, absorbed in the vortex of narrow and contracted politics, indolently beheld these ferocious barbarians advancing further and further to the West, and formed no generous plan of defensive combination. It was in vain that the distressed emperors of the East implored the aid of the Western princes. The common enemy OVERFLOWED AND PASSED OVER,—to use the prophetic language of Daniel,—and having once gained a footing in Europe, he continued to domineer over a large part of Christendom, and to desolate the nations. The same unerring spirit of prophecy which foretold these amazing scenes by St. John, foretold also the continued obduracy and impenitence of the nominal Christians. They repented not of their idolatry and practical wickedness.†

There cannot be a more melancholy contemplation, than to observe the infatuation of nations, who have provoked God to forsake them. Though the voice of Providence is addressed to their senses, they consider not the works of the Lord, and at the same time seem to be as destitute of political sagacity as they are of religious principle. This fifteenth century affords an awful instance of these things. The Turks oppressed

* Rev. ix. 14.

† Rev. ix. 21.

Europe with persevering cruelty; but Europe neither humbled itself before God, nor took any measures to check the ambition of the Mahometans. The Sovereign of the Universe, however, was bringing order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. The learned men, who emigrated from Greece, revived the study of letters in Europe, and paved the way for that light of classical erudition, which was one of the most powerful of all those subordinate means which were employed in the demolition of idolatry and superstition. By a surprising concurrence of circumstances, the noble art of printing was invented about the year 1440.* Learning was cultivated with incredible ardour: the

Invention of Printing, A. D. 1440.

family of the Medici was raised up to patronize science; and toward the end of this same century, Erasmus arose, whose good sense, taste, and industry, were uncommonly serviceable to the Reformation. By his labours, monastic superstition received a wound which has never since been healed; and learned men were furnished with critical skill and ingenuity, of which they failed not to avail themselves in the instruction of mankind to a degree beyond what Erasmus himself had ever conceived.

Thus, under the care of Divine Providence, materials were collected for that beautiful edifice which began to be erected in the next century. In the fifteenth century, the great value and benefit of these materials scarcely appeared; the same corruptions both of faith and of practice, which have so often been described, still prevailed in all their horrors.

In the mean time there were some individuals, who, though not connected with any particular Christian societies, evidenced the power of godliness. Among these, Thomas Rhedon, a Frenchman and a Carmelite friar, was distinguished.† This man came to Rome with the Venetian ambassadors, having undertaken this journey in the hope of improving his understanding in religious concerns. He had hitherto no conception of the enormous corruptions of that venal city, and was therefore astonished to find that even the habitation of St. Peter was become a den of thieves. His

zealous spirit was stirred up in him, to give an open testimony to evangelical truth; and at length by continual preaching he incurred the hatred of the ruling powers. In fine, he was degraded from the priesthood, and was burnt four years after his arrival at Rome, in the year 1436, during the pontificate of Eugenius, the successor of that same Martin who was raised to the papedom by the council of Constance. Several others, who like him were enlightened, and like him were faithful to their God, though unconnected with any particular church, were executed in Germany, not long after the burning of John Huss.

Martyrdom of Thomas Rhedon, A. D. 1436.

Jerom Savanarola, an Italian monk, by his zeal, learning, and piety, incurred in an eminent manner the hatred of the court of Rome. Notwithstanding the repeated menaces of the pope, he continued to preach the word of God with great vehemence, and with a degree of light and knowledge, which seems superior to that of most, if not of all men in that age. In 1496 he upheld the standard of the Gospel at Florence, though many warned him of the danger to which he was exposed by his great boldness. At length, in the year 1498,* he and two other friars, named Dominic and Silvester, were imprisoned. During his confinement, he wrote a spiritual meditation on the thirty-first psalm, in which he described the conflict between the flesh and the spirit, a subject peculiarly evangelical, and which needs some real exercise of practical godliness, in order to be duly understood and relished by mankind. The pope's legates arriving at Florence, Jerom and his two companions were charged with maintaining various heretical opinions, one of which deserves to be distinctly mentioned, as characteristic of the times in which they lived. For example, they were accused, in explicit terms, of having preached the doctrine of free justification through faith in Christ; and after they had persevered in what was called an obstinate heresy, they were degraded, delivered to the secular power at Florence, and burnt to death in the year 1499.

Savanarola, Dominic, & Silvester, preach the Gospel at Florence, in A. D. 1496.

They are burnt, A. D. 1499.

* Mosheim, Vol. I. p. 764.

† Fox, Vol. I. p. 758.

* Fox, p. 830.

There were also some souls who in secret served God in the Gospel of his Son; and who knew what spirituality in religion meant, though from some particular circumstances they never were exposed to suffer in any considerable degree for righteousness' sake. Among these was the famous Thomas à Kempis, who

Death of
Thomas à
Kempis,
A. D. 1471.

died in 1471.* Instead of entering into the tedious dispute concerning the author of the well known book of "The Imitation of Jesus

Christ," let us be content with ascribing it to this monk, its reputed author. It would be impertinent in me to enter into any detail of a performance so familiar to religious readers; and let it suffice to say, that it abounds with the most pious and devotional sentiments, and could not have been written but by one well versed in Christian experience though it partakes of the common defect of monastic writers; that is to say, it does not sufficiently illustrate the doctrine of justification by faith.

Vincent Ferrer, though bred in the midst of darkness, and connected with the worst of ecclesiastical characters, was a shining model of piety.† He was born at Valentia in Spain, became a Dominican friar, and a zealous

Piety of
Vincent
Ferrer.

preacher of the word of God.

A quotation from his book on Spiritual Life will deserve

the attention of students. "Do you desire to study to advantage? Consult God more than books, and ask him humbly to make you understand what you read. Study drains the mind and heart. Go from time to time to be refreshed at the feet of Christ under his cross. Some moments of repose there give fresh vigour and new light: interrupt your study by short, but fervent ejaculations. Science is the gift of the Father of lights. Do not consider it as attainable, merely by the work of your own mind or industry." This holy person was retained in the service of Peter de Luna, who, as pope, took the name of Benedict XIII. and was one of those three popes who were deposed by the council of Constance. Very few men are represented in history to have been of a more proud and deceitful character than Peter de Luna. Vincent entreated his master to resign

his dignity. Benedict rather artfully eluded, than directly refused the request. Bishoprics and a cardinal's hat were then offered to Vincent; but his heart was insensible to the charms of worldly honours and dignities. He very earnestly wished to become an apostolic missionary; and, in this respect, he was at length gratified by Benedict. At the age of forty-two he began to preach with great fervour in every town from Avignon towards Valentia. His word is said to have been powerful among the Jews, the Mahometans, and others. After he had laboured in Spain, France, and Italy, he then, at the desire of Henry IV. king of England, exerted himself in the same manner throughout the chief towns of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Still finding Peter de Luna entirely obstinate in his ambition, he renounced his service, and, by the desire of King Henry V. made Normandy and Brittany the theatre of his labours during the last two years of his life. He died at the age of sixty-two.

How truly humble this man was, appears from the whole of this little account which I can collect concerning him; and particularly, from his own confession: "My whole life is a sink of iniquity; I am all infection; I am corruption throughout. I feel this to be so more and more. Whoever is proud, shall stand without. Christ manifests his truth to the lowly, and hides himself from the proud."

Antoninus, archbishop of Florence, born in the year 1389, seems to have been a similar character.*

Great things are related of his pastoral labours and services. His secretary, observing his indefatigable exertions, once said to him,

Pastoral
labours of
Antoninus,
archbishop
of Florence.

"The life of a bishop is truly pitiable, if he is doomed to live in such a constant hurry as you live." "To enjoy inward peace," replied he, "we must, amidst all our affairs, ever reserve a closet as it were in our hearts, where we are to remain retired within ourselves, and where no worldly business can enter." He died aged seventy; and is said to have frequently repeated, in his last moments, words which he had been accustomed to use in the time of his health; namely, "To serve God is to reign."

Died at 70.

* Du Pin.

† Butler, Vol. IV.

* Butler, Vol. IV.

Bernardin,* of the republic of Sienna, was born in the year 1380, and on account of his uncommon zeal in preaching, was called "The Burning Coal." He gave this advice to clergymen: "Seek first the kingdom of God; and the Holy Ghost will give you a wisdom, which no adversary can withstand." This excellent man expressed an earnest wish to be able to cry out with a trumpet through the world, "How long will ye love simplicity?" He died aged sixty-three years.

John de
Wesalia.

John de Wesalia was a doctor of divinity of the fifteenth century.

1. He taught doctrines which much displeased the Catholics.

2. The archbishop of Mentz prosecuted him: John was imprisoned, and an assembly of popish doctors were convened to sit in judgment upon him in 1479.

3. He made a public recantation of his doctrines; but nevertheless was condemned to a perpetual penance in a monastery of the Augustine friars, where he died soon after.

The Protestants have certainly ranked him in the catalogue of the witnesses to the truth; but there may be a question, whether his principles and his practice, taken together, entitle him to a place in this History? Very little is known concerning him, except from his examination before the German inquisitors, who most undoubtedly treated him with great harshness and severity.

By one author he appears to have been considered as an eminent Christian; but this is the judgment of a person who shows himself on all occasions extremely attached to Calvinistic tenets, and who has no mercy on Arminians. And if, for the sake of brevity, I may be allowed the use of the words Calvinist and Arminian, as being terms well understood at this day, John de Wesalia was certainly a most rigid Calvinist.

A long catalogue of charges were brought against him, from which it may be proper to select a few for the reader's perusal.

1. From everlasting, God hath written a book wherein he hath inscribed all his elect; and whosoever is not already

written there, will never be written there at all. Moreover,

2. He that is written therein will never be blotted out.

3. The elect are saved by the grace of God alone; and what man soever God willeth to save, by enduing him with grace, if all the priests in the world were desirous to damn and excommunicate that man, he would still be saved. Whomsoever likewise God willeth to damn, he would still be damned, though the presbyters, the pope, and others were willing to save him.

4. If there had never been any pope in the world, they who are saved, would have been saved. The pope, and bishops and priests contribute nothing to salvation: concord alone, and peace among men, and a peaceable way of living, are sufficient.

5. Christ never appointed any particular fasts, nor forbid the use of flesh meat on any day.

6. If St. Peter appointed fasts, perhaps he did so for the purpose of having a better sale for his fish.

7. The holy oil is the very same as the oil which you eat at home.

8. The Scriptures do not say that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son.

9. Those who undertake pilgrimages to Rome, are fools.

10. I consider nothing as sinful, which the Scriptures have not declared to be so.

11. I despise the pope and his councils. I love Christ; and may his word dwell in us abundantly!

12. It is a difficult thing to be a Christian.

13. Indulgences are nothing.

It was further objected to him, in the course of his examination, that he had given it as his opinion, that St. Paul contributed nothing towards his conversion by his own free-will.

This account might lead us to suspect, that there was something of a spirit of levity in the disposition of John de Wesalia. He seems to have seen clearly through several of the popish superstitions, and to have exposed them with zeal and freedom. Charity will certainly incline us to hope the best; nevertheless the Christian reader cannot but wish there had been greater marks of personal contrition of soul and of true humility at the cross of Christ. However, it ought not to be omitted, that John was an old

* Butler, Vol. V.

man, and bowed down with infirmities and disorders of long standing; and therefore he was probably not able to recollect what he had formerly advanced, or to express his thoughts distinctly before such a formidable tribunal of Inquisitors. Fear compelled him at last to retract; but in the course of his trial, he had the spirit to say to the court, "If Christ were now present, and ye were to treat him as ye do me, he might be condemned by you as a heretic. However," the old man added with a smile, "he would get the better of you by his acuteness."*

JOHN WESSELUS of Groningen has sometimes been taken for the same person as the preceding John de Wesalia. And no wonder; for besides the similarity of their names, they lived about the same time, and both of them opposed several of the errors and corruptions of popery.

Wesselus, however, is incomparably the superior character in every respect. He was one of the most learned men of the fifteenth century, and was so celebrated for his talents and attainments, as to have been denominated **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.**

Born A. D. 1419; year 1419, not in 1400, as Died some have supposed. He Died A. D. 1480. died in 1489.

Whatever doubts may be entertained respecting the genuine seriousness and solidity of John de Wesalia, the extraordinary religious knowledge of Wesselus, and his truly Christian spirit, are indisputable. He has been justly called the **Forerunner of Luther.**

That great Reformer was so astonished when he first met with some pieces of the composition of Wesselus, that in the Leipsic edition of 1522, he wrote a preface to the work, in which he says,† "By the wonderful providence of God, I have been compelled to become a public man, and to fight battles with those monsters of indulgences and papal decrees. All along I supposed myself to stand alone; yet have I preserved so much animation in the contest, as to be everywhere accused of heat and violence, and of biting too hard. However, the truth is, I have earnestly wished to have

done with these followers of Baal among whom my lot is cast, and to live quietly in some corner; for I have utterly despaired of making any impression on these brazen foreheads, and iron necks of impiety.

"But behold, in this state of mind, I am told that even in these days, there is in secret a remnant of the people of God. Nay, I am not only told so, but I rejoice to see a proof of it. Here is a new publication by Wesselus of Groningen, a man of an admirable genius, and of an uncommonly enlarged mind. It is very plain he was taught of God, as Isaiah prophesied that Christians should be:* And as in my own case, so with him, it cannot be supposed that he received his doctrines from men. If I had read his works before, my enemies might have supposed that I had learnt everything from Wesselus, such a perfect coincidence there is in our opinions. As to myself, I not only derive pleasure, but strength and courage from this publication. It is now impossible for me to doubt whether I am right in the points which I have inculcated, when I see so entire an agreement in sentiment, and almost the same words used by this eminent person, who lived in a different age, in a distant country, and in circumstances very unlike my own. I am surprised that this excellent Christian writer should be so little known. The reason may be, either that he lived without blood and contention (for this is the only thing in which he differs from me;) or perhaps the Jews of our times have suppressed his writings as heretical.

"I recommend it therefore to the pious reader, to peruse this book with care and consideration. The writer peculiarly excels in judgment; and moreover he is admirably calculated to improve the judgment of his reader. Lastly, those who are displeased with my asperity, will meet with nothing of that sort, in Wesselus, to offend them."

A complete edition of the works of Wesselus was published in 1614, with a short account of his life, by Albert Hardenberg. The book is in quarto, and contains about nine hundred pages, and is extremely scarce.

It is only a small part of his writings to which Luther's address to the reader is prefixed; but the subjects are very im-

* Fascic. rer. vol. i. & Bayle, Crit. Dict.

† Ep. II. p. 89.

* Isaiah liv. 13.

portant. For example: 1. On the kind providence of God. 2. On the causes, the mysteries, and the effects of our Lord's incarnation and sufferings. 3. On the nature of ecclesiastical power; and the degree of that obligation which men are under to obey the rulers of the church. 4. On the sacrament of repentance, and the keys of the church. 5. On the true communion of saints. 6. On purgatory, and on indulgences.

If the treatises of Wesselus had fallen in the way of the Author of this History, the Editor is persuaded he would have been both delighted and surprised to find that so much Christian light and wisdom existed in the middle of the fifteenth century; and would probably have given much larger extracts from this eminent divine, than can now be conveniently introduced into the second volume. It is true that his writings are considerably tarnished with popish errors and superstitions; but still the wonder is, that of these blemishes there are not many more and much greater. In general, he appears to have seen quite as far as Luther saw, about the years 1518 and 1519. In regard to purgatory, his notion seems to have been, that it was a place of purification, but not of punishment.

I know not whether Luther ever saw the more elaborate writings of this truly great man. They are extremely practical, and very sound.

1. There are eleven chapters, taking up 184 pages, on the nature and management of prayer. Here the writer follows the order of the clauses in the Lord's prayer; and explains them with a simplicity and copiousness of language, and an originality of thought that has rarely been exceeded in any age.

2. The second treatise, which is somewhat longer, is grave and useful throughout. The author calls it, Rules for Meditation, or Directions for fixing the Mind in its Contemplations, and for restraining irregular Thoughts. From the case of Mary and Martha,* he takes occasion, in the first part, to make a comparison between busy and quiet scenes, between an active and a contemplative life. The rules laid down in the rest of this performance, though they savour a little of the taste of the times, in being formal and artificial, display nevertheless both great powers of intellect and

an extensive erudition. Every line breathes a spirit of piety and devotion. But the depth of the writer's religious thoughts and the warmth of his spiritual affections are most evident in the EXAMPLES which he subjoins, with a view to illustrate his rules for meditation: and these he takes good care to support by appropriate quotations from Scripture.

3. But the work of Wesselus, which is most solid and important, and which seems to have called forth the greatest exercises both of his head and his heart, is, An Inquiry into the reasons of the humiliation of Christ in his incarnation and bitter pains.—This subject is briefly touched upon in the aforementioned small miscellaneous publication of 1522; but in the edition of 1614 it is again handled with uncommon ability, and to the comprehensive extent of twenty chapters on the incarnation, and fourscore chapters on the greatness and the severity of our Lord's sufferings.

It is not possible to communicate a clear idea of the author's manner of treating these mysterious and fundamental points of religion, without transcribing a large part of his compositions. Suffice it to say, that he is in general so perfectly orthodox, and has so clear an insight into the essential doctrines of Christianity, that it would not be easy to point out any material difference between Wesselus and the Church of England in most articles of the greatest consequence. The fall of man, repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, justification by faith only, and sanctification by the Spirit, are the revealed truths which are constantly before his eyes. And it may seem not a little remarkable, that he should have understood perfectly how to reconcile the apparent contradictions between St. Paul and St. James in the matter of justification. "There is not," says he, "the smallest disagreement between these Apostles. They concur in one common sentiment, That the just shall live by a faith which worketh by love. It is not by works that our natural body is proved to be alive! If there be no signs of pulse, no respiration, no warmth about the præcordia, in short, if there be no vital actions whatever, do we not pronounce the body to be dead? These actions are the proper proof that it is alive; yet they are not the CAUSE of its life. The soul, which is the source of these actions, is the cause of life: further,

* Luke x.

the more in number, vigour, and excellence these actions are, the more thoroughly we say that body is alive. So in spiritual things. The LOVE of Christ is the noblest and most excellent of the intellectual affections; and, in this our mortal course, it is the strongest proof of life in the soul of the Christian. Moreover, love may exist even though the person sits still; does nothing; meddles not with external matters, as Martha did; but sees and tastes how sweet the Lord is, as Mary saw and tasted when she obtained the part that was not to be taken from her. But mark, there must be a PRINCIPLE of love, otherwise the actions of the lover will not be accepted. FAITH is that principle; and hence it is that faith is accepted on account of its productive nature. Now, where there is no operation of this sort, St. James pronounces the faith to be dead: And St. Paul in nowise opposes that sentiment, when he says that a man is justified by the faith of Christ without works. However, this is not to be understood as though the faith of a true believer produced the righteousness of an angel; no: the man is justified for this reason, because it has pleased God to bestow on the believer a righteousness superior to that of an angel, namely, the satisfaction of Christ, the great High Priest. Hence also, no religious exercise contributes more to a true justification, than frequent meditation on our Lord's passion, with a commemoration of the same. It is an exercise of faith, in which the believer's object is to become partaker of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice; and in that spirit, he confesses his sins, longs for deliverance, wishes, waits, sits at the feet of Jesus, and, like Mary, chooses the better part: Such a faith, the more vigorous it is in believing, commemorating, tasting, hungering and thirsting; and the more ardent it is in producing spiritual breathings and desires, the more completely will it apply to the conscience the blood of the High Priest, and thereby justify the sinner.—And here, may we not be allowed to ask, whether the man who thus believes, desires, wishes, and prays, can properly be said to produce no works?"

But we must not dissemble that sometimes, among very fine and beautiful sentiments, the exuberant imagination of this venerable divine leads him to advance positions, which, if not absolutely

contrary to Scripture, are neither warranted by it, nor capable of being proved by reason. An instance of this sort may be found, I think, in his seventh chapter, on the reasons of the incarnation of our Lord. He there maintains, that the Word, the second person of the Trinity, would have taken upon him our nature, even though man had not sinned. But it will be unnecessary to take up the reader's time with the subtle, abstruse, inconclusive arguments which he makes use of on this occasion.

I have much less objection to the manner in which he inquires (Chap. 65, on the great sufferings of our Lord), Whether Peter, in denying Christ, so fell as to lose all spiritual life? At the same time, I pretend not to determine how far it may be either safe or laudable to indulge our curiosity in prying into questions of this nature.

It is true, says he, Peter denied him thrice; yet who can doubt but that he nevertheless retained in his heart a sincere love for his master through the whole of that most trying and tempestuous season, and especially after that kind look of Jesus, which I verily believe awakened his gratitude, and produced those undeniable proofs of affection, viz. his bitter, penitential tears? I wish, continues this good man, that I had as much love for the Lord Jesus, even now, in these quiet times, as Peter had, when he cursed and swore and denied his master. I should then certainly conclude myself to be a living member of Christ, and indeed much more alive, than I can now pretend to be. Further, in my opinion, Peter at that time had much more spiritual life than many persons in our days have, who yet are truly religious.

To some persons it may seem extraordinary, that a man, whose life was so uniformly and so eminently Christian, should have been harassed in his last illness with doubts concerning the truth of revealed religion. The friend to whom he owned the uneasiness and perplexity of his mind, was prodigiously surprised, and exhorted Wesselus to direct all his thoughts to Christ, the only Saviour. This admonition did not seem to please him at the moment; and his friend retired, deeply afflicted. A short time after, the same friend returned, and Wesselus, with all the joy and satisfaction that could be expressed by one in his

weak condition, cried out, "God be praised! all those vain doubtings are fled; and now all I know, is Jesus Christ and him crucified."—He then resigned his soul to God.

Two reasons may be given, why Wesselus was not crushed in that storm of persecution which in the year 1479 broke out upon his friend and contemporary, John de Wesalia:

1. David of Burgundy, then bishop of Utrecht, is said to have loved and protected him.

2. His reputation both for learning and piety was at a great height.

Pope Sixtus IV. immediately after his inauguration at Rome, told Wesselus that he would grant him any request that he should make. Wesselus answered thus: Holy Father and kind patron, I shall not press hard upon your holiness. You well know I never aimed at great things. But as you now sustain the character of the supreme pontiff and shepherd on earth, my request is, that you would so discharge the duties of your elevated station, that your praise

may correspond with your dignity, and that when the Great Shepherd shall appear, whose first minister you are, he may say, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord: And moreover, that you may be able to say boldly, Lord, thou gavest me five talents, behold I have gained five other talents.

The pope replied, That must be my care; But do you ask something for yourself. Then, rejoined Wesselus, I beg you to give me out of the Vatican library a Greek and a Hebrew Bible. You shall have them, said Sixtus: But, foolish man, why don't you ask for a bishopric, or something of that sort? For the best of reasons, said Wesselus, because I do not want such things.*

The pious student cannot fail to be interested in this account of a very eminent Christian, so very little known.—And here we shall conclude our review of the Fifteenth Century.

* Vita Wess. ab Hardenb.

CENTURY XVI.

CHAPTER I.

THE REFORMATION UNDER THE CONDUCT OF LUTHER.

PRELIMINARIES.

THE Sixteenth Century, opened with a prospect of all others the most gloomy, in the eyes of every true Christian. Corruption both in doctrine and in practice had exceeded all bounds; and the general face of Europe, though the name of Christ was every where professed, presented nothing that was properly Evangelical. Great efforts indeed had been made to emancipate the Church from the "powers of darkness:" and in consequence many individual souls had been conducted into the path of salvation. Still nothing like a general reformation had taken place in any part of Europe. For it must be confessed, that the labours of Claudius of Turin, of the Waldensian barbs, of Wickliff, and of Huss, had not been sufficiently directed against the predominant corruptions in doctrine, though the practical abuses of the popedom had been opposed with ingenuous freedom and disinterested courage. The external branches only, rather than the bitter root itself, which supported all the evils of false religion, being attacked, no permanent or extensive change had ensued. The Waldenses were too feeble to molest the popedom; and the Hussites, divided among themselves and worn out by a long series of contentions, were reduced to silence. Among both were found persons of undoubted godliness, but they appeared incapable of making effectual impressions on the kingdom of Antichrist. The Roman pontiffs were still the uncontrolled patrons of impiety. Neither the scandalous crimes of Alexander VI. nor the military ferocity of Julius II. (pontiffs whose actions it is im-

pertinent to the plan of this history to detail), seem to have lessened the dominion of the court of Rome, or to have opened the eyes of men so as to induce them to make a sober investigation of the nature of true religion.

But not many years after the commencement of this century, the world beheld an attempt to restore the light of the Gospel, more evangelically judicious, more simply founded on the word of God, and more ably and more successfully conducted, than any which had ever been seen since the days of Augustine. MARTIN LUTHER, whom Divine Providence raised up for this purpose, was evidently the instrument rather than the agent of this reformation. He was led from step to step, by a series of circumstances, far beyond his original intentions; and in a manner which might evince the excellency of the power to be of God and not of man.* Even the reformations which took place in several other parts of Europe, besides Germany, the scene of Luther's transactions, were in a great measure derived from the light which he was enabled to diffuse among mankind. And as the peculiar excellency of the revival of godliness now before us lay in this, that it was conversant in fundamentals of doctrine, rather than in correction of mere abuses of practice, hence the history of Lutheranism recommends itself in an especial manner to the study of every theologian.

That I may be able to furnish the reader with a clear and satisfactory view of this important part of ecclesiastical history, I shall particularly avail myself of the labours of the learned Seckendorf, who published a Latin translation of Maimbourg's† History, and who, in a

* 2 Cor. iv. 7.

† Louis Maimbourg, a learned Jesuit, wrote celebrated histories of Calvinism, Lutheranism, Arianism, &c. &c.

diffusive comment, often corrected and refuted it, and at the same time supplied from the very best materials whatever might be wanted to illustrate the progress of Lutheranism. The authentic documents derived from the archives of the royal house of Saxe Gotha, and the original papers of Luther, Melancthon, and other reformers, are largely quoted by this author. He adverts also continually to the opposite accounts of the Romish writers. In fine, he seems to have examined all the best sources of information on this subject, and to have placed before his readers, whatever might be needful to inform their judgments. I follow Seckendorf therefore as my principal guide, yet not exclusively; I also make use of Father Paul, of Du Pin, of Sleidan, Thuanus, &c. &c. The merely modern writers, who too commonly treat these interesting matters in a superficial manner, content with elegance of style, and an indulgence to the popular taste, afford little service towards the execution of my plan.

In a manuscript history, extending from the year 1524 to 1541, composed by Frederic Myconius, a very able coadjutor of Luther and Melancthon, the author describes the state of religion in the beginning of this century in striking terms. "The passion and satisfaction of Christ, were treated as a bare history, like the Odyssey of Homer: concerning faith, by which the righteousness of the Redeemer and eternal life are apprehended, there was the deepest silence: Christ was described as a severe judge, ready to condemn all who were* destitute of the intercession of saints, and of pontifical interest. In the room of Christ were substituted, as saviours and intercessors, the Virgin Mary, like a Pagan Diana, and other saints, who from time to time had been created by the popes. Nor were men, it seems, entitled to the benefit of their prayers, except they deserved it of them by their works. What sort of works was necessary for this end was distinctly explained; not the works prescribed in the Decalogue, and enjoined on all mankind, but such as enriched the priests and monks. Those who died neglecting these, were consigned to hell, or at least to purgatory, till they were redeemed from it by a satisfaction made either by themselves or by their proxies.

* Seckendorf, Vol. I. p. 4.

The frequent pronunciation of the Lord's prayer and the salutation of the Virgin, and the recitations of the canonical hours, constantly engaged those who undertook to be religious. An incredible mass of ceremonious observances was every where visible; while gross wickedness was practised under the encouragement of indulgences, by which the guilt of the crimes was easily expiated. The preaching of the word was the least part of the episcopal function: rites and processions employed the bishops perpetually, when engaged in religious exercises. The number of clergy was enormous, and their lives were most scandalous. I speak of those whom I have known in the town of Gothen," &c. If we add to this the testimony of Pellicanus, another of Luther's followers, "that a Greek Testament could not be procured at any price in all Germany,"* what can be wanting to complete the picture of that darkness in which men lived, and in what did the Christian nations differ from Pagans, except in the name! It may be proper to mention, that even the university of Paris, the first of all the famous schools of learning, could not furnish a single person capable of supporting a controversy against Luther on the foundation of Scripture. And scarcely any Christian doctor in the beginning of this century had a critical knowledge of the word of God. The reader may find it useful to be detained a little longer in contemplating the situation of the Christian world at the time of Luther's appearance. The observations I have to offer for this purpose shall be arranged under four distinct heads; and they will, I trust, assist us in demonstrating the importance of the Reformation, and fully evince that the difference between popery and protestantism is not merely verbal.

I. The popish doctrine of indulgences was then in the highest reputation. We shall be in no danger of misrepresenting this doctrine, if we state it according to the ideas of one of the ablest champions of popery.† The church, he tells us, imposes painful works or sufferings on offenders; which, being discharged or undergone with humility, are called sa-

* Seckendorf, Vol. I. p. 132.

† Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, in an Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church in matters of Controversy.

tisfactions; and when, regarding the fervour of the penitents, or other good works, she remits some part of the task, this is called "an indulgence." For he pretends that the infinite satisfaction of Christ may be applied in two ways, either by entire remission, without the reservation of any punishment, or by the changing of a greater punishment into a less. "The first," he says, "is done in baptism, the second in the case of sins committed after baptism." And here he gives us the authority of the council of Trent to support his assertion, namely, "The power to grant indulgences has been committed to the Church by Jesus Christ, and the use of them is beneficial to salvation." Those, he observes, who depart this life indebted to divine justice for some of the pains reserved, must suffer them in another life in the state of purgatory.

Reliefs are however provided in this case also; the benefits of indulgences extends, it seems, beyond the grave, and the doctrine of commutation for offences, applied in real practice by the friends of the deceased, was held to be valid in heaven. The foundation of all this system was generally believed to be this: There was supposed to be an infinite treasure of merit in Christ and the saints, which was abundantly more than sufficient for themselves. Thus, what is strictly true of the Divine Saviour, was asserted also of saints, namely, that they had done works of supererogation. This treasure was deposited in the church, under the conduct of the See of Rome, and was sold, literally sold for money, at that see's discretion, to those who were able and willing to pay for it; and few were found willing to undergo the course of a severe penance of unpleasant austerities, when they could afford to commute for it by pecuniary payments. The popes, and under them the bishops and the clergy, particularly the Dominican and Franciscan friars, had the disposition of this treasure; and as the pontiffs had the power of canonizing new saints at their own will, the fund was ever growing; and so long as the system could maintain its credit, the riches of their church, thus secularized under the appearance of religion, became a sea without a shore. No impartial examiner of authentic records will say, that I have overcharged this account of indulgences. In fact, these were the symptoms of the

last stage of papal depravity; and as the moral evils which they encouraged were plain to every one not totally destitute of discernment, they were the first objects assaulted by the Reformers.

2. But the views of those wise and holy personages were far more extensive. They saw, that a practice so scandalously corrupt, was connected with the grossest ignorance of the nature of Gospel grace. The doctrine of justification, in its explicit form, had been lost for many ages to the Christian world. If men had really believed, that by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ salvation was obtained, and that God "justifies the ungodly" through faith alone, how could they have been imposed on by the traffic of indulgences? In whatever manner the papist might subtilize and divide, he was compelled by his system to hold, that by a compliance with the rules of the church, either in the way of indulgences, or by some severer mode, pardon was to be obtained; and that the satisfaction of Christ was not sufficiently meritorious for this end; in other words, that the gift of God is not eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* And in fact, the preachers of indulgences, whether popes themselves or their ministers, held out to the people with sufficient clearness, that the inheritance of eternal life was to be purchased by indulgences. Proofs of this have already appeared in the course of this History, and more will be given hereafter. The testimony of Sleidan, one of the most judicious and dispassionate historians, to the nature of indulgences, well deserves to be transcribed in this place. It is contained in the beginning of his excellent history. "Pope Leo X. making use of that power, which his predecessors had usurped over all Christian churches, sent abroad into all kingdoms his letters and bulls, with ample promises of the full pardon of sins, and of eternal salvation to such as would purchase the same with money!!!" Even when the traffic of indulgences was checked by the pontiffs, as being carried on in too gross a manner, no clear account was given in what the abuse consisted. In fine, it was evident, that no reformation could take place through the medium of qualifying and correcting abuses of this traffic. The system itself was wholly impious, and the right know-

* See Rom. vi. end.

ledge of justification was the only remedy adequate to the evil. This, therefore, the reader is to look for, as the most capital object of the Reformation: and thus, in the demolition of one of the vilest perversions of superstition, there suddenly arose and revived, in all its infant simplicity, that apostolical doctrine, in which is contained the great mystery of the Scriptures.

3. The state of mankind at that time was peculiarly adapted to the reception of so rich a display of Gospel grace. God sent a plentiful rain, whereby he refreshed his inheritance, when it was weary.* Men were then bound fast in fetters of iron: their whole religion was one enormous mass of bondage. Terrors beset them on every side; and the fiction of purgatory was ever teeming with ghosts and apparitions. Persons truly serious, and such there ever were and will be, because there ever was and will be a true church on earth, were so clouded in their understandings by the prevailing corruptions of the hierarchy, that they could find no access to God by Jesus Christ. The road of simple faith, grounded on the divine promises, connected always with real humility, and always productive of hearty and grateful obedience, was stopped up with briars and thorns. No certain rest could be afforded to the weary mind, and a state of doubt, of allowed doubt and anxiety, was recommended by the papal system. What a joyful doctrine then was that of the real Gospel, of remission of sins through Christ alone, received by faith! a doctrine, which is indeed to be found every where in the Scriptures; but the Scriptures were almost unknown among the people at the beginning of the Reformation.

4. Should the philosophical sceptic, or the pharisaical formalist, express his surprise, that I should lay so great a stress on the Christian article of Justification, and wonder that any person should ever be at a loss to discover the way of obtaining true peace of conscience; it may be useful towards satisfying his scruples, to remind such a character of a FOURTH mark of corruption, which much prevailed in the times previous to the Reformation. This is, the predominance of the Aristotelian philosophy in Europe at that period, a philo-

sophy which knew nothing of original sin and native depravity, which allowed nothing to be criminal but certain external flagitious actions, and which was unacquainted with the idea of any righteousness of grace, imputed to a sinner. How many in this age, who neither know nor value Aristotle, do yet altogether follow his self-righteous notions of religion! These are congenial to our fallen nature, and are incapable, while they prevail in the mind, of administering any cure to papal bondage, except that which is worse than the disease itself. They tend to lead men into the depths of Atheistic profaneness. But the person whom God raised up particularly at this time to instruct an ignorant world, was most remarkably eminent for self-knowledge. Only characters of this sort are qualified to inform mankind in subjects of the last importance towards the attainment of their eternal happiness. LUTHER knew himself; and he knew also the scriptural grounds on which he stood in his controversies with the ecclesiastical rulers. His zeal was disinterested, his courage undaunted. Accordingly, when he had once erected the standard of Truth, he continued to uphold it with an unconquerable intrepidity, which merits the gratitude and esteem of all succeeding ages.

CHAPTER II.

THE BEGINNING OF THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING INDULGENCES.

POPE Alexander VI. the most flagitious of men, died in the year 1503. After the short interval of the dominion of Pius III. who ruled the Church less than a year, Julius II. was elected pontiff. A circumstance attended this election which deserves to be recorded* as a memorable indication of those times. The cardinals agreed upon oath before the election, and obliged the new pontiff after his election to take the same oath, that a general council should be called within two years, to reform the Church. The effect of this measure, which so strongly implied the consent of the Christian world to the necessity of a re-

Death of
Alexander
VI.
A. D. 1503.

* Ps. lxxviii. 9.

* Seckendorf, Vol. I. p. 3.

formation, was the council of Pisa. But nothing good was to be expected from Julius, a man, in the language of worldly greatness, renowned for military ambition. By his intrigues the council of Pisa was dissolved, and Julius died in 1513, after he had filled the Christian world with blood and confusion by his violence and rapacity.

Leo X.* a man famous for the encouragement of letters and the fine arts, and deservedly celebrated among the patrons of learned men, succeeded. But historical veracity can scarcely admit any further eulogium on his character. He was a Florentine of the illustrious house of the Medici, and inherited the elegant taste and magnificent spirit of that family. He was elected pope in the thirty-seventh year of his age. Though refined and humanized by his love of the liberal arts, and extremely abhorrent from the savage manners of Alexander and of Julius, he possessed other qualities no less inconsistent than theirs with the character of a pastor of the Church of Christ. An excessive magnificence, a voluptuous indolence, and above all a total want of religious principle, rendered him perhaps more strikingly void of every sacerdotal qualification than any pontiffs before him. He has been accused of open infidelity; but the proofs are said to be only negative; certainly, however, he at no time took the least pains to discover to mankind that he had a sincere reverence for religion. It was during the pontificate of this man, that Providence gave the severest blow to the authority of the Roman hierarchy, which it had ever received since the days of Gregory II.

Both before his exaltation and after it,

* This prelate, the son of Lorenzo, the Magnificent, was ordained at the age of seven years, made an abbot before he was eight years old, and at the age of thirteen became a cardinal! Such was the influence of his father in the court of Rome! Lorenzo, in a prudential letter to his son, tells him, that he had heard with pleasure of his attention to communion and confession; and that there was no better way for him to obtain the favour of heaven, than by habituating himself to the performance of such duties. Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de Medici.—Lorenzo appears to have known the art of rising in this world, better than the narrow road to eternal life.

he opposed with dexterity and success the laudable attempts after a reformation, which have been mentioned. A council called by this pope, and held in the Lateran palace, was directed under his auspices against the determinations of the council of Pisa. Afterwards, in the year 1517, the university of Paris, renowned at that time through Europe for learning and knowledge, appealed from its decisions to a future general council. It is not necessary to enter into the detail of these transactions. They are here briefly mentioned in a general way, for the purpose of showing that common sense and the voice of natural conscience had agreed to the necessity of a reformation, though men knew not the principles on which it ought to proceed. The greatest personages of the times had delivered their sentiments to the same effect. The existence of the distemper was admitted. The true remedy was unknown; that was to be drawn only from the word of God; and almost all parties were equally ignorant of the contents of the sacred volumes. In the same year, however, the spirit of Luther was raised up, to instruct the ignorant, to rouse the negligent, and to oppose the scandalous practices of interested and ambitious ecclesiastical rulers.

No reformer had ever an opportunity more favourable to his designs. Such was the temerity of the existing hierarchy, that they might seem even to have purposely afforded to their opponents an advantage for the beginning of a contest, or rather to have been providentially infatuated. Leo X. after he had presided almost five years, having reduced himself to straits by prodigal expenses of various kinds, and being desirous to complete the erection of St. Peter's church, began at Rome by his predecessor Julius II., after his example, had recourse to the sale of indulgences, the general nature of which Maimbourg describes much in the same manner as has been done in the foregoing chapter.* These he published

Appeal of the University of Paris, A. D. 1517.

Rise of Luther, A. D. 1517.

Sale of Indulgences.

* See kend. p. 8. Let the reader remember, that this incomparable author, Seckendorf, gives us all along the very words of his antagonist, whence the papal as well as the

throughout the Christian world, granting freely to all, who would pay money for the building of St. Peter's church, the license of eating eggs and cheese in the time of Lent. This is one of the many ridiculous circumstances which attended Leo's indulgences, and it is gravely related by the papal historians. The promulgation of these indulgences in Germany was committed to a prelate, the brother of the elector of Brandenburg. His name was Albert, a man who at that very time held two archbishoprics, namely, those of Mentz and of Magdeburg, and who himself received immense profits from the sale. Albert delegated the office to John Tetzel, a Dominican inquisitor, well qualified for an employment of this kind.

Character of Tetzel.

He was a bold and enterprising monk, of uncommon impudence, and had already distinguished himself in a similar transaction. He had proclaimed indulgences in support of the war against the Muscovites, and by that means had much enriched the Teutonic knights, who had undertaken that war. "This frontless monk," says a celebrated ecclesiastical historian,* "executed this iniquitous commission not only with matchless insolence, indecency, and fraud, but even carried his impiety so far as to derogate from the all-sufficient power and influence of the merits of Christ. Myconius assures us, that he himself heard Tetzel declaim with incredible effrontery, concerning the unlimited power of the pope and the efficacy of indulgences. The people believed, that the moment any person had paid the money for the indulgence, he became certain of his salvation, and that the souls, for whom the indulgences were bought, were instantly released out of purgatory. So Maimbourg allows; and if the people really believed the current doctrine of the times, and looked on the preachers of indulgences as men worthy of credit, they must have believed so. We have formerly seen popes themselves to hold this

confident language. John Tetzel boasted, that he had saved more souls from hell by his indulgences, than St. Peter had converted to Christianity by his preaching. He assured the purchasers of them, that their crimes, however enormous, would be forgiven; whence it became almost needless for him to bid them dismiss all fears concerning their salvation. For remission of sins being fully obtained, what doubt could there be of salvation? In the usual form of absolution, written by his own hand, he said, "May our Lord Jesus Christ have

The form of an Absolution.

mercy upon thee, and absolve thee by the merits of his most holy passion! And I, by his authority, that of his Apostles Peter and Paul, and of the most holy pope, granted and committed to me in these parts, do absolve thee, first, from all ecclesiastical censures, in whatever manner they have been incurred; and then from all the sins, transgressions, and excesses, how enormous soever they may be, even from such as are reserved for the cognizance of the holy see: and as far as the keys of the holy Church extend, I remit to thee all the punishment which thou deservest in purgatory on thy account; and I restore thee to the holy sacraments of the Church, to the unity of the faithful, and to that innocence and purity which thou possessedst at baptism; so that when thou diest, the gates of punishment shall be shut, and the gates of the paradise of delight shall be opened; and if thou shalt not die at present, this grace shall remain in full force when thou art at the point of death. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."* Such was the style in which these formulas were written. It is impertinent to blame the abuses committed by the officials; it is not to be supposed that these formulas were without papal authority; neither has anything of that kind ever been asserted. In regard to the effect of indulgences in delivering persons from the supposed torments of purgatory, the gross declarations of Tetzel in public are well known: "The moment the money tinkles in the chest, your father's soul mounts up out of purgatory." It does not appear that the rulers of the hierarchy ever found the least fault with Tet-

protestant materials are continually held up to view.

Even Du Pin allows, that Leo was naturally proud and lofty; and he confesses, that the erection of St. Peter's church was the occasion of that pope's having recourse to the sale of indulgences.—Book II. Chap. 1.

* Mosheim.

* Seckend. p. 14.

zel as exceeding his commission, till an opposition was openly made to the practice of indulgences. Whence it is evident, that the Protestants have not unjustly censured the corruptions of the court of Rome in this respect. Leo is declared to have granted, immediately and without hesitation,* the profits of the indulgences collected in Saxony and the neighbouring countries as far as the Baltic, to his sister, the wife of prince Cibus, by way of gratitude for personal favours which he had received from the family of the Cibi. The indulgences were farmed to the best bidders, and the undertakers employed such deputies to carry on the traffic, as they thought most likely to promote their lucrative views. The inferior officers concerned in this commerce were daily seen† in public houses, enjoying themselves in riot and voluptuousness: In fine, whatever the greatest enemy of popery could have wished, was at that time exhibited with the most undisguised impudence and temerity, as if on purpose to render that wicked ecclesiastical system infamous before all mankind.

It may not be improper to introduce the following anecdote concerning Tetzal, the audacious vender of the papal indulgences.

When the emperor Maximilian was at Inspruck, he was so offended at the wickedness and impudence of Tetzal, who had been convicted of adultery, that he condemned him to death, and had intended to have him seized and put into a bag, and flung into the river Gnoponte; but he was prevented by the solicitations of Frederic the elector of Saxony, who, fortunately for Tetzal, happened to be there at the time.‡

Burnet informs us, that the scandalous sale of pardons and indulgences had by no means so completely ceased in popish countries as is commonly taken for granted. He says, that in Spain and Portugal there is every where a commissary, who manages the sale with the most infamous circumstances imaginable. In Spain, the king, by an agreement with the pope, has the profits. In Portugal, the king and the pope go shares.

“In the year 1709 the privateers of Bristol took a galleon, in which they found five hundred bales of bulls” for

indulgences “and sixteen reams were in a bale. So that they reckon the whole came to 3,810,000. These bulls are imposed on the people and sold, the lowest at three ryals, a little more than twenty-pence, but to some at about eleven pounds of our money All are obliged to buy them in Lent.” The author adds, “Besides the account given of this in the cruising voyage, I have a particular attestation of it by Captain Dampier.”*

Protestants in our times are not sufficiently aware of the evils from which, under the blessing of God, a great part of Europe has been delivered, by the rational, animated, and persevering exertions of Luther, his associates, and other early reformers.

Indulgences were granted also under the pontificate of Leo X. on many PARTICULAR occasions. The consecrated Host had been lost at the parish church at Schiniedeberg in the diocese of Misnia: in consequence of which, the pastor had excommunicated the deacon and the porter of the church. These men, whom the superstition of the times had made culprits, had, however, recourse to the generosity of Tetzal, who was in the neighbourhood, and who furnished them with a diploma of absolution.† The prices of these indulgences were accommodated to the various circumstances of petitioners; and thus a plan was formed and was successfully carrying into execution, which would infallibly lay all orders of men under contribution. The prodigious sale of indulgences evinces both the profound ignorance of the age, and also the power of superstitious fears, with which the consciences of men were then distressed. This however was the very situation of things, which opened the way for the reception of the Gospel. But who was to proclaim the Gospel in its native beauty and simplicity? To give a satisfactory answer to this question was no easy matter. The princes, the bishops, and the learned men of the times, saw all this scandalous traffic respecting the pardon of sins; but none was found who possessed the knowledge, the courage, and the honesty necessary to detect the fraud, and to lay open to mankind the true doctrine of salvation by the remission of sins through Jesus

* Maimbourg, p. 11.

† Id. p. 12.

‡ Adam. Melch.

* Vol. III. Introd. p. 20.

† Seckend. p. 15.

Christ. But at length an obscure pastor appeared, who alone, and without help, began to erect the standard of sound religion. No man who believes that "the preparation of the heart is from the Lord," will doubt whether Martin Luther, in this great undertaking, was moved by the Spirit of God. This extraordinary person, at that time an Augustine monk, was professor or lecturer of the university of Wittemberg in Saxony. That academy was at once a college of students and a society of monks. Frederick the Wise, elector of Saxony, ardently desirous of promoting literary knowledge, had added the former character to the latter, and always showed a steady regard to Luther, on account of his skill and industry in advancing the reputation of that infant seminary of knowledge, which then was very low and abject both in its revenues and its exterior appearance. Luther

Luther takes
the alarm.
A. D. 1517.

preached also from time to time, and heard confessions.*

In the memorable year 1517, it happened, that certain persons, repeating their confessions before him, and owning themselves to be atrocious offenders, yet refused to comply with the penances which he enjoined them, because they said they were possessed of diplomas of indulgences. Luther was struck with the evident absurdity of such conduct, and ventured to refuse them absolution. The persons thus rejected complained loudly to Tetzel, who was preaching in a town at no great distance. The Dominican inquisitor had not been accustomed to contradiction. He stormed and frowned, and menaced every one who dared to oppose him; and sometimes he ordered a pile of wood to be constructed and set on fire, for the purpose of striking terror into the minds of heretics. Luther was at that time only thirty-four years old, vigorous both in mind and body, fresh from the schools, and fervent in the Scriptures. He saw crowds flock to Wittenberg and the neighbouring towns to purchase indulgences, and having no clear idea of the nature of that traffic, yet sensible of the obvious evils with which it must be attended, he began to signify, in a gentle manner, from the pulpit, that the people might be better employed than in running from place to place to procure INDUL-

GENCES. So cautiously did this great man begin a work, the consequence of which he then so little foresaw. He did not so much as know at that time who were the receivers of the money. In proof of this, we find he wrote to Albert, archbishop of Mentz, who, he understood, had appointed Tetzel to this employment, but with whose personal* concern in the gains he was then unacquainted, entreating him to withdraw the license of Tetzel, and expressing his fears of the evils which would attend the sale of indulgences. He sent him likewise certain theses, which he had drawn up in the form of queries, concerning this subject. He expressed himself with the greatest caution and modesty. In fact, he saw enough to alarm a tender conscience, but he knew not well where to fix the blame. He was not, as yet, fully satisfied in his own mind, either as to the extent of the growing mischief, or the precise nature of its cause. In this state of doubt and anxiety, he wrote also to other bishops, and particularly to his own diocesan, the bishop of Brandenburg,† with whom he was a particular favourite.

Nothing can be more orderly, candid, and open, than this conduct of our Reformer.‡ Zeal and charity were here united with the most perfect regard to ecclesiastical discipline. The bishop of Brandenburg revered the integrity of Luther, while he was aware of the dangerous ground on which he was advancing. "You will oppose the Church," he replied; "you cannot think in what troubles you will involve yourself; you had much better be still and quiet." This was not a language calculated to repress

* See p. 420 of this Vol.

† Seckend. p. 16.

‡ Du Pin, in conjunction with all the Roman-catholic writers, asserts that Luther's zeal for the interest of his own order, led him to oppose the doctrine of Indulgences. The best refutation of this calumny is to be derived from a fair statement of facts. It has been said likewise, that Staupitius, the vicar-general of Luther's order of monks, and that the elector of Saxony, stimulated Luther to commence his opposition. But there is nowhere to be found the smallest proof of these assertions. The love of truth itself appears from his whole conduct to have influenced his measures, and the story needs only to be fairly told, in order to convince any candid person that this was the case.

* Seckend. p. 17.

the firm and intrepid spirit of the Saxon monk; for, though by no means as yet a competent master of the points in debate, he saw they were of too great magnitude for a conscientious pastor to pass them by unnoticed: He knew too the manners of lower life, and could judge, far better than the bishops in general could do, of the mischievous consequences which were to be apprehended. With deliberate steadiness he ventured therefore to persevere; and having tried

Luther pub-
lishes 95
Propositions
against In-
dulgenes.

in vain to procure the concurrence of the dignitaries of the church, he published his Theses, ninety-five in number; and in fifteen days they were spread throughout Germany. Their effect on the minds of men was rapid and powerful, though Tetzel, by threats, had silenced some pastors who had faintly opposed him, and though bishops and doctors, through fear of the flames, remained perfectly silent.

"Thus," says Luther,—for much of the foregoing account is taken from his own words,—“I was commended as an excellent doctor, who, alone, had the spirit to attempt so great an undertaking; but the fame which I had acquired was by no means agreeable to my mind; because I had then some doubts concerning the nature of indulgences, and because I feared that the task was beyond my powers and capacity.”*

But the real motives of Luther will be discovered in the surest manner by a brief review of the manners and spirit of the man, previous to his open declarations respecting indulgences. This

Birth of
Luther.
A. D. 1483.

Saxon Reformer was born in the year 1483, at Isleben, a town belonging to the county of Mansfield. His father wrought in the mines of Mansfield, which were at that time very famous; and, after the birth of his son Martin Luther, removed to that town, became a proprietor in the mines, discharged public offices there, and was esteemed by all men for his integrity. He gave a very liberal education to Martin, who was remarkable for dutiful affection to his parents in general, though in one instance, to be mentioned presently, he was led away by the superstition of the times, so as to offend his father exceedingly.

* Seckend. p. 16.

After he had made great proficiency in his studies at Magdeburg, Eisenach, and Erfurt, he commenced master of arts in the university of Erfurt, at the age of twenty; and having now finished his course of philosophy, he began to give close attention to the science of the civil law, and is said to have intended to advance himself by pleading at the bar: but he was diverted from his purpose by an accident.* As he was walking in the fields with one of his most intimate friends, his companion was suddenly killed by lightning; and Luther himself was so terrified, partly by this event, and partly by the horrid noise of the thunder, that while his mind was in the utmost consternation, he formed the sudden resolution of withdrawing from the world, and of throwing himself into the monastery of Erfurt. His father, a man of plain, but sound understanding, strongly remonstrated. The son as strongly pleaded what he considered as a terrible call from heaven, to take upon himself the monastic vow. “Take care,” replied the father, “that you are not ensnared by a delusion of the devil.” But the mind of Martin was determined; and filial disobedience, in such a case, was looked on as a virtue. To the great grief and mortification of his father, he entered the monastery in the year 1505.

Luther enters the monastery, A. D. 1505.

In one of his letters he owns, that from the very beginning of his monastic life he was constantly sad and dejected;† and being unable to give peace to his mind, he at length opened his griefs to John Staupitius, vicar-general of the Augustine monks in Germany, a man highly esteemed by Frederic the Wise, and consulted by him particularly in things which concerned the university of Wittenberg. Staupitius himself appears to have had some serious views of religion, and a degree of knowledge at that time very uncommon. After Luther had explained to him the uneasy thoughts with which he was burdened. “You do not know,” said he, “how useful and necessary this trial may be to you; God does

* Du Pin.—Morcri.—Maimbourg.

Some authors say, that Luther's intimate friend was found murdered about the same time that he himself was so terrified by the thunder.

† Seckend. p. 19.

not thus exercise you for nothing; you will one day see that he will employ you as his servant for great purposes." The event gave ample honour to the sagacity of Staupitius, and it is very evident, that a deep and solid conviction of sin, leading the mind to the search of Scripture truth, and the investigation of the way of peace, was the main-spring of Luther's whole after-conduct; and indeed this view of our Reformer's state of mind furnishes the only key to the discovery of the real motives by which he was influenced in his public transactions. Rash and prejudiced writers, of the popish persuasion, choose to represent him as having been under the dominion of avarice or ambition; but till they can produce some proofs beyond their own suspicions or bare affirmations, all such slanderous accusations must fall to the ground. In truth, no man was ever more free from avarice and ambition: the fear of God predominated to a very high degree in Luther's mind; and a nice sensibility of conscience, attended with an uncommon insight into the depth of our natural depravity, allowed him no rest. As yet he understood not the Scriptures, nor felt that peace of God which passeth understanding. He had too much light to sit down in slothful content and indifference, and too little to discern the rich treasures of the Gospel, and apply its healing promises to deep convictions of sin and misery. He remained for above a year not only in constant anxiety and suspense, but in perpetual dread and alarm. All these things are abundantly evident, and beyond all contradiction, to those who are acquainted with his writings.

In the second year after Luther had entered into the monastery, he accidentally met with a Latin Bible in the library. It proved to him a treasure. Then he first discovered that there were more scripture-passages extant than those which were read to the people: for the Scriptures were at that time very little known in the world. In reading the word of God with prayer, his understanding was gradually enlightened, and he found some beams of evangelical comfort to dart into his soul. The same year he was refreshed in his sickness by the discourse of an old monk, who showed him that remission of sins was to be apprehended by faith alone, and referred him to a passage in Bernard's sermon on

the annunciation, where the same doctrine was taught. With incredible ardour he now gave himself up to the study of the Scriptures, and the books of Augustine. He was at length regarded as the most ingenious and learned man of his order in Germany. But the soul of Luther was constantly panting for something very different from secular glory.

He was ordained in the year 1507, and in the next year was called to the professorship at Wittenberg by Staupitius, where a theatre was opened for the display of his talents both as a teacher of philosophy and as a popular preacher. He excelled in both capacities.

Luther was
ordained.
A. D. 1507.

Eloquent by nature, and powerful in moving the affections, acquainted also in a very uncommon manner with the elegancies and energy of his native tongue, he became the wonder of his age. These things are allowed very liberally by his enemies;* but it ought to be observed, that the exercises of his own mind, by which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he was led more and more into Christian truth, would naturally add a strength to his oratory, unattainable by those who speak not from the heart. Martin Polichius, a doctor of law and medicine, exclaimed, "This monk will confound all the doctors, will exhibit new doctrine, and reform the whole Roman church; for he is intent on reading the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, and he depends on the word of Jesus Christ; this, neither the philosophers nor the sophists can subvert." He who spake thus was himself looked on as a prodigy of wisdom; and, I suppose, a degree of discernment less than his might have shown an attentive observer, that the didactic plan of Luther was that of an original thinker, who was not likely to confine himself to the beaten track, but to produce something new to mankind. Melancthon's concise account entirely agrees with this statement: "Polichius," says he, "often declared, that there was a strength of intellect in this man, which he plainly foresaw would produce a revolution in the popular and scholastic religion of the times." Nor does it seem at all improbable, that if Luther had followed merely the dictates of his own adventurous genius, he might

* Page 18, Maimbourg. Page 22, Varrillas.

have been the inventor of some novel theological schemes and doctrines. But all tendency to fanciful excursions in the important concerns of religion, was effectually restrained and chastised in the mind of our Reformer, by his profound reverence for the written word: moreover, from his first entrance into the monastery, he appears to have been taught of God, and to have been led more and more into such discoveries of native depravity, as render a man low in his own eyes, and dispose him to receive the genuine Gospel of Christ.

In the year 1510, he was sent to Rome on some business, which related to his own monastery; and this he discharged with so much ability and success, that on his return he was compelled

Luther sent to Rome, A. D. 1510.

by the vicar-general to assume the degree of doctor of divinity. He writes, that he did this with great reluctance, and entirely from obedience to his superiors. It is easy indeed for a man to say this; but from the mouth of Luther, it is with me decisive of its truth. For veracity and integrity do evidently appear to have remarkably entered into the character of this Reformer, as indeed these virtues are always to be eminently found in those who have had the most genuine experience of Christianity. The expenses attending this high degree were defrayed by the elector of Saxony, who always admired Luther, and was perfectly convinced of the profundity of his learning and the rectitude of his views in religion. While he had been at Rome, he had discovered something of the singularity of his character, which had attracted the attention of the Italian priests. The external rites of religion, which to them were matter of political formality, with him were serious exercises. While they hurried over their exercises of the mass, he performed his with a solemnity and devotion which excited their ridicule, and they bad him to repeat them with more rapidity. A thoughtful mind like his could not conceive that religious employments should be discharged with levity, and he returned to his monastery more fully convinced than ever, that Rome was not the scene in which a serious pastor could properly learn the rudiments of religion. He studied and taught the Scriptures with increasing ardour and alacrity, and after he had been created a doctor, in the year 1512, he expounded

the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans, to the great satisfaction of his audience. He studied the Hebrew and the Greek languages, and highly valued the philological labours of the famous Erasmus of Rotterdam, the renowned reviver of classical literature; and while he concurred with that great man in his contempt of monastic trifles, he was intensely studious to learn better and more scriptural notions of God and his attributes, than those which Erasmus so ingeniously satirized. To build was, however, found much more arduous, as it is certainly a far more important work, than to pull down; and from the time that Luther was created a doctor of divinity, he conscientiously devoted his time and talents to the sacred office. Already he was suspected of heresy, because of his dislike of the scholastic doctrines; and he was induced, both from the natural soundness of his understanding, and from the spiritual exercises of his own heart, to reject the Aristotelian corruptions of theology, and to study the genuine doctrines of Scripture.

Luther created Doctor of Divinity, A. D. 1512.

In 1516, he thus wrote to a friend: * "I desire to know what your soul is doing; whether, wearied at length of its own righteousness, it learns to refresh itself and to rest in the righteousness of Christ.

A letter of Luther, A. D. 1516.

The temptation of presumption in our age is strong in many, and specially in those who labour to be just and good with all their might, and at the same time are ignorant of the righteousness of God, which in Christ is conferred upon us with a rich exuberance of gratuitous liberality. They seek in themselves to work that which is good, in order that they may have a confidence of standing before God, adorned with virtues and merits, which is an impossible attempt. You, my friend, used to be of this same opinion, or rather this same mistake; so was I, but now I am fighting against the error, but have not yet prevailed."

This interesting and instructive letter demonstrates what was the religious frame of our monk at that time. He had received the grace of Christ, and knew the true and only way of salvation; though, in his own eyes at least, he was weak in the faith. He both felt and

* Seeckend. p. 20.

preached the fundamentals of the Gospel, before he appeared in the field against popery; and if he had not been absolutely persecuted into a secession, such was his modesty and love of peace and order, and so little had he then studied the particular corruptions of the hierarchy, that he would, in all probability, have continued to his death an obedient son of the Roman church. Many excellent men had done so before him; because, through inadvertency, they had remained unconscious of the absurdities of the predominant religion. The methods of Providence were, however, admirable in conducting Luther into the depths of a controversy, to which he seems to have had no inclination. Indulgences were preached, and he saw the evil of them in a practical, rather than a theoretical light, and was thence drawn undesignedly into a contest, the effects of which were salutary to so many nations. Those who apprehended that when he began the contest, he was ignorant of the nature of the Gospel, appear not to have known the order and method by which the mind of the Saxon Reformer was conducted into religious truth.

In the same year he was appointed by Staupitius, subaltern vicar; by which office he was authorized to visit about forty monasteries in Misnia and Thuringia. Returning to Wittemberg in June, he wrote to Spalatinus, who was the secretary of the elector, and always showed himself a steady friend of Luther, in terms which expressed the frank effusions of his own heart, on a review of the state of religion in the country, which the visitation had given him an opportunity of accurately observing. "Many things please your prince, and look great in his eyes, which are displeasing to God. In secular wisdom, I confess that he is of all men, most knowing; but, in things pertaining to God, and which relate to the salvation of souls, I must own that he is blind sevenfold." This was the true character of Frederick at that time, though justly esteemed the wisest prince of the age; and though he was sincerely and ingenuously desirous of promoting religion and virtue. In fact, his good understanding was oppressed with a heavy load of the most pitiable superstitions. He was, however, by no means displeased with Luther for using freedom of speech; and there is reason to believe that, afterwards,

he learnt more of the true nature of the Gospel, though by very slow degrees.

In the October of the same year, Luther communicated to his learned friend Spalatinus, his thoughts concerning certain of the fathers, and also concerning Erasmus's method of interpreting Scripture.* This memorable epistle deserves the particular attention of the reader, as it furnishes judicious and connected observations on Augustine and his contemporaries, and on the fathers both who preceded and who followed them; and as it likewise suggests very useful reflections on the comparative merits of the theologians in different periods, from the days of Cyprian to those of Luther and Erasmus.

Luther's character of Erasmus as a divine.

Luther, to Georg. Spalatinus:—"That which strikes my mind in considering Erasmus, is this: In interpreting the Apostle's account of the righteousness of works, or, of the law, he understands by these terms ceremonial observances only. In the next place, though he admits the doctrine of original sin, he will not allow that the Apostle speaks of it in the fifth chapter to the Romans. Now, if he had carefully read Augustine's Anti-Pelagian tracts, especially his account of the spirit and the letter, of the guilt of sin and the remission of it; and had observed how he speaks in perfect unison with the best of the fathers, from Cyprian to Ambrose, he might have better understood the Apostle Paul, and also have conceived more highly of Augustine as an expositor, than he has hitherto done. In dissenting from Erasmus's judgment in this point, I must frankly declare, that I as much prefer Augustine's expositions to those of Jerome, as he prefers those of Jerome to Augustine's. I am, it is true, an Augustine monk; but that circumstance has no influence on my judgment; for till I had read this father's works, I had not the least prejudice in his favour. But I see that Jerome studiously endeavours to draw everything to a merely historical meaning;† and, what is very extraordinary, where he expounds the Scriptures as it were occasionally or accidentally, as in his epistles, for instance,

* Lib. I. Ep. 20. See also the Appendix, Spalatinus.

† A merely historical meaning. A mere narration of facts, as opposed to a spiritual meaning, and a practical application to every man's conscience.

he does it in a much sounder manner than when he interprets professedly and on purpose. The righteousness of the law is by no means confined to ceremonies; for, though it includes these, it still more directly respects an obedience to the whole Decalogue, which obedience, when it takes place to a certain degree, and yet has not Christ for its foundation, though it may produce such men as your Fabricius's, and your Regulus's, that is, very upright moralists according to man's judgment, has nothing in it of the nature of genuine righteousness. For men are not made truly righteous, as Aristotle supposes, by performing certain actions which are externally good,—for they may still be counterfeit characters;—but, men must have righteous principles in the first place, and then they will not fail to perform righteous actions. God first respects Abel, and then his offering.* I beg you would put Erasmus in mind of these things. In so doing, you will discharge the duties both of a friend and of a Christian. As on the one hand, I hope and wish that he may be celebrated through the Christian world, so on the other I fear many may be induced, by the authority of his name, to patronize that literal and lifeless mode of interpreting Scripture, into which almost all commentators have fallen since the time of Augustine. I may be thought presumptuous and perhaps severe, in thus criticising many great men: my apology is, that I feel a concern for the cause of true theology, and for the salvation of the brethren."

A little before the controversy concerning indulgences, George, duke of Saxony, entreated Staupitius to send him some learned and worthy preacher. The vicar-

Luther preaches at Dresden before the duke George.

general, in compliance with his request, despatched Luther with strong recommendations to Dresden. George gave him an order to preach; the sum of Luther's sermon was this; † That no man ought to despair of the possibility of salvation; that those who heard the word of God with attentive minds, were true disciples of Christ, and were elected, and predestinated to eternal life. He enlarged on the subject, and showed that the whole doctrine of predestination, if the foundation be laid in

Christ, was of singular efficacy to dispel that fear, by which men, trembling under the sense of their own unworthiness, are tempted to fly from God, who ought to be our sovereign refuge. An honourable matron, who attended the palace, and who had heard Luther, was asked by George, the duke, at dinner, how she liked the discourse. "I should die in peace," she said, "if I could hear such another sermon." The duke, in much anger, replied, "I would give a large sum of money, that a sermon of this sort, which encourages men in a licentious course of life, had never been preached." And he repeated this several times. Within the space of a month, the lady was confined in bed by sickness, and soon after died, rejoicing in her prospects of future glory. Fabricius concludes the account with saying,* "From that time Luther came no more to Dresden." That capital of modern Saxony was then part of the dukedom of George, who proved one of the most virulent enemies of Lutheranism. He was the uncle of prince Frederic the Wise. Like pharisaic formalists in all ages, he perversely misconstrued the doctrine of free salvation by Jesus Christ, which Luther preached, and which is intended to enable humble and repenting souls to serve God with lively faith and cheerful hope. The duke of Saxony, I observe, perversely misconstrued this doctrine, as though it had a tendency to persuade men to live in sin; but the good matron above-mentioned, who resided at his court, appears to have tasted of that bitterness of true conviction of sin, which only can render the doctrine of grace delightful and salutary to the mind.

How precious this doctrine must have been to the mind of Luther himself, may be conceived from a well authenticated circumstance, † which evinces the state of mental bondage in which he had been held. Having for many days neglected, through the intenseness of his studies, to recite the canonical hours, he, in compliance with the pope's decrees, and to satisfy his conscience, actually shut himself up in his closet, and recited what he had omitted with punctilious exactness, and with such severe attention and abstinence, as reduced his strength exceedingly, brought on nearly a total want of

* Gen. iv.

† Seck. p. 23.

* Orig. Sax. Lib. vii.

† Vol. I. p. 344. Bavar. Seck. p. 21.

sleep for the space of five weeks, and almost produced symptoms of a weakened intellect. Is it to be wondered at, that he, who at length found relief and liberty by the grace of Christ, should be zealous to preach the mystery of the Cross to his fellow-creatures?*

I have now laid before the curious reader some interesting particulars of the private life of Luther, previous to his assumption of that public character, which has made his name immortal. The serious Christian will adore the wisdom and goodness of Divine Providence, which, by preparatory exercises of soul, had directed this extraordinary personage into the true light and liberty of the Gospel of Christ, and fitted him for the great work to which he was called. At the same time it seems a certain fact, that the Saxon Reformer was not induced to act the part, which has given so great a celebrity to his name, from motives of personal malice, or of ambition, or of avarice, but purely from the fear of God, from a conscientious regard to evangelical truth, from a zeal for the divine glory, and for the profit of the souls of his fellow-creatures.

There are two points concerning Luther, on which all the most respectable, even of the papal party, unanimously concur in their testimony. The one is, That his learning, genius, and capacity, were of the first magnitude. It may seem proper to mention this, because some modern writers, who appear almost wholly ignorant of the real character of the man, have rashly represented him as a person of contemptible knowledge. But this is the common method of treating many great men, whose studies and attainments have happened to be but little connected with the pursuits and discoveries of the eighteenth century; and till readers learn the practice of so much candour, as may dispose them to make equitable allowances for the taste of the times in which men of great abilities and great accomplishments have made their appearance, such superficial authors will always find admirers. The other particular, relative to our illustrious Reformer, is this, That his life is allowed to be without blemish. In fact, the Romanists, for the purpose of indulging the spirit of censure, are obliged to have recourse to

surmises, for want of realities. When we are much out of humour with a person, it is human nature to ascribe his very best actions to bad motives. But the slanderous representations of enemies ought never to be substituted in the place of authentic documents. The writers alluded to may FANCY that Luther's conduct is best accounted for on the supposition, that pride, vanity, ambition, and resentment, were the ruling passions of the man they dislike; nevertheless, all readers of cool judgment will take care to distinguish between their prejudiced, ill-natured conjectures, and substantial proofs.

Far be it, however, from the historian's design to insinuate, that there were no faults or defects in the character which he so much admires. Besides the incessant ebullitions of native depravity, in the confession of which no man was ever more earnest than Luther, all real Christians, the most eminent saints not excepted, have their infirmities and their faults, which cost them much inward pain and sorrow; yet, it should ever be remembered, that in judging of true followers of Christ, by whatever name we may choose to call either their defective attainments or their positive blemishes, no fault, no imperfection, no falling short of the "perfect man in Christ Jesus," can be allowed, but what is absolutely consistent with sincerity of heart. The very candid and accurate memorialist Seckendorf, who is so useful to my researches, defies all the adversaries of Luther to fix any just censure on his character, except what may be ranked under two heads, namely, a disposition to anger, and an indulgence in jesting. Beyond all doubt, the Saxon Reformer was of a choleric temper, and he too often gave way to this constitutional evil, as he himself bitterly laments. Neither is it to be denied, that he also too much encouraged his natural propensity to facetiousness. The monks of his time were, in general, guilty of the like fault, and often to so great a degree, as very improperly to mix scurrilities with sacred subjects. Moreover, the vices and the follies of those whom Luther opposed, afforded a strong temptation both to a spirit of anger and of ridicule. For, however severe he may be thought in many of his invectives, we are compelled by unquestionable evidence to confess, that his keenest satirical pieces never

* See Appendix, Luther, for a further account of Luther by Melancthon.

reached the demerits of those who ruled the Church in that age. But, after all that can be said in mitigation, it must be owned, that a reformer ought to have considered not so much what they deserved, as what became the character he had to support; namely, that of a serious Christian, zealous for the honour of his God, displeased with the vices of his clerical brethren, and grieved on account of the pitiable ignorance of the people, yet more desirous of curing the prevailing evils than of exposing them.

These unhappy blemishes in Luther, doubtless appear much more offensive to us than they did in his own time among men of ruder manners, and accustomed to a greater freedom both of action and of expression in their mutual intercourse. They form the darkest shades in his writings, which, in all other respects, are truly admirable. One cannot but feel both some surprise and regret, that this great and good man should have failed, in so considerable a degree, to imitate his favourite author. An uniform spirit of meekness is the singular excellence which adorns the page of Augustine.

The defects, which we have mentioned, were too considerable to be passed over in silence; and, having now discharged the duty of an impartial historian, we leave it to the judicious reader himself to appreciate their just operation in lessening his esteem and veneration for this extraordinary personage. In contemplating the other qualities and endowments of our Reformer, we have no hesitation in affirming, that it is not easy to find a more blameless, or even a more excellent character. No man since the Apostles' days had penetrated into the sacred oracles with such singular felicity. He was endowed with a greatness of soul far beyond the common lot of men: Dangerous gift in a fallen creature! It was through divine grace, that he was enabled to display and persevere in a conduct the most consistent, uncorrupt, and disinterested. His bold and adventurous spirit never appears in any one instance to have made the smallest encroachment on the most perfect integrity. Humane, generous, and placable, he was rarely diverted from the path of equity; and, notwithstanding the uncommon vehemence of his temper, he was often submissive and condescending. With an exquisite sensibility and readiness of conception, with a zeal and an

imagination which never remitted their ardour for a single moment, he was most perfectly free from enthusiasm; and with great capacity and unparalleled intrepidity, he seems to have been devoid of ambition, and contented to live all his days in very moderate circumstances. ONLY the Wise Disposer of all events, for the glory of his own name, and for the revival of true religion in Europe, by the effectual operation of his Holy Spirit, could have produced, at the season when most wanted, so faithful a champion, and possessed of so much vigour of intellect, of so daring a spirit, and of so truly humble and Christian-like a temper.

Such was the illustrious Luther, when he was called upon by Divine Providence to enter the lists, alone and without one assured ally, against the hosts of the pretended successor of St. Peter, who was then domineering over the Christian world in all his grandeur and plenitude of power.

I shall conclude this chapter with laying before the reader several concise testimonies of the talents and virtues of Luther, extracted from the writings of popish authors, who will not be suspected of any partiality towards the man whom they have been accustomed to consider as a detestable heretic. To transcribe the various encomiums which have been written on this celebrated character, by his friends and admirers, by Protestant authors, and by historians in general, would be an endless labour.

The Jesuit Maimbourg, in his History of Lutheranism, records many particulars respecting the learning and abilities of this celebrated heretic, as he calls him, which have not yet been mentioned.

Maimbourg's character of Luther.

“He possessed a quick and penetrating genius: he was indefatigable in his studies, and frequently so absorbed in them as to abstain from meat for whole days together. He acquired great knowledge of languages and of the Fathers. He was remarkably strong and healthy, and of a sanguine, bilious temperament. His eyes were piercing, and full of fire. His voice sweet, and vehement when once fairly raised. He had a stern countenance; and though most intrepid and high spirited, he could assume the appearance of modesty and humility whenever he pleased, which, however, was not often the case. In his breast

was lodged plenty of fuel for pride and presumption: hence his indiscriminate contempt of whatever opposed his heresies; hence his brutal treatment of kings, emperors, the pope, and of everything in the world that is deemed most sacred and inviolable. Passionate, resentful, and domineering, he was continually aiming to distinguish himself by venting novel doctrines, and on no occasion could he be induced to retract what he had once advanced. He maintained that Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Scotus, Bonaventura, and others, had undermined the foundations of true philosophy and of Christian Theology; and he endeavoured to raise up a system of his own, upon the ruins of those very great geniuses. This is an exact portrait of Martin Luther, of whom it may be truly said, there was in the man a great mixture both of good and of bad qualities: the bad predominated, but he was abundantly more corrupt in his thoughts and sentiments, than in his life and manners. He was always reckoned to live sufficiently blameless while he remained in the monastery, and till he absolutely ruined all his good qualities by his heresies."

Varillas, a celebrated French historian, in his diffuse history of various heresies,

Varillas's character of the same.

speaks of Luther in the following manner: "This Augustine monk united in his single person all the good

and all the bad qualities of the heresiarchs of his time. To the robustness, health, and industry of a German, nature seems here to have added the spirit and vivacity of an Italian. Nobody exceeded him in philosophy and scholastic theology; nobody equalled him in the art of speaking. He was a most perfect master of eloquence. He had completely discovered where lay the strength or the weakness of the human mind; and, accordingly he knew how to render his attacks successful. However various or discordant might be the passions of his audience, he could manage them to his own purposes; for he presently saw the ground on which he stood; and even if the subject was too difficult for much argument, he carried his point by popular illustration and the use of figures. In ordinary conversations, he displayed the same power over the affections, which he had so often demonstrated in the professorial chair and the pulpit. He rarely attempted to convince; his

method was to inflame men's passions, and afterwards gradually to insinuate his opinions. No man, either of his own time or since, spoke or wrote the German language, or understood its niceties, better than Luther. Often, when he had made his first impression by bold strokes of eloquence, or by a bewitching pleantry of conversation, he completed his triumphs by the elegance of his German style. On the contrary, he was rude, satirical, ambitious, and ungrateful; disposed to anger on the slightest occasions, and for the most part implacable. He was much addicted to excesses at the table, and was CAPABLE of the usual concomitant vices; though his monastic life deprived him almost entirely of opportunities of indulging himself in them."

No remarks need be made on these entertaining descriptions of Luther. The surmises and the exaggerations they contain are sufficiently obvious: the reader will easily separate them from the truth, and will at the same time perceive how much the account, which we have given of our Reformer, is corroborated by these enemies of the reformation.

Moreri, in his Historical Miscellany, says of Luther, "This heresiarch gloried in his apostasy, and in the lamentable schism of the church, and filled his writings with his poisons. He composed various works; and it cannot be denied that he was a man of much learning and fire of genius. Vanity was his motive, whatever pains may have been taken to represent him as a person of integrity and moderation. Henry VIII. king of England, in answer to Luther, had sent to Pope Leo a learned defence of the seven sacraments. Luther replied to the monarch in so insolent a manner, that it was easy to see from this single instance, that a man of such a temper could not be under the influence of the Spirit of God. Besides, he published a seditious book against the bishops; and had the IMPUDENCE TO OPPOSE THE POPE'S BULL, in which he himself was excommunicated."

Moreri's account of Luther.

As my chief object in giving these extracts is to satisfy the reader, from the testimony of Luther's enemies, of his great learning and talents, I content myself with quoting briefly the substance of what has been repeatedly and distinctly conceded by the most noted Roman catholic writers, in regard to these points;

and I entirely omit many scandalous falsehoods which have been invented by malicious advocates for the papal system, with the view of defaming the character of our Reformer. His two blemishes have been mentioned above, as allowed by the incomparable Seckendorf, and these no judicious defender of protestants or of protestantism will ever undertake to defend.

Those who wish to see a full account, and also a confutation, of the idle inventions and abominable falsehoods here al-

luded to, may consult, with advantage, the celebrated *Historical and Critical Dictionary* by Peter Bayle. This author, though justly esteemed an infidel in religion, was a man of brilliant parts and acute intellect; and he has collected together much useful information respecting Martin Luther, and both his friends and his adversaries.

"I," says this writer, "shall chiefly insist on the many falsehoods which have been published respecting Luther. No regard has been paid, in this point, to the rules of the art of slandering. And yet the authors of them have assumed all the confidence of those who fully believe that the public will implicitly espouse their stories, be they ever so absurd. They accuse him of having confessed that he had struggled for ten years together with his conscience, and at last had become perfectly master of it, and fallen into atheism. They impudently maintain, that he denied the immortality of the soul. They charge him with having gross and carnal ideas of heaven, and with composing hymns in honour of drunkenness. Most of these calumnies are grounded upon some words in a certain book published by Luther's friends, to which his adversaries give a horrid meaning, and very different from this ecclesiastic's real thoughts. His greatest enemies could not deny that he had eminent qualities; and history affords nothing more surprising than his exploits. For a simple monk to give so rude a shock to popery, is what we cannot sufficiently admire. He had made great progress in scholastic learning, yet no one felt so foul upon the method of philosophizing at that time, nor was any man more vehemently bent against the great Aristotle."

The same author produces the following remarkable citation from a noted

French writer, who was one of Luther's slanderers.* "Luther was a perfect Atheist. His own disciple, Dr. Aurifa-ber, deposes, as an ear-witness, that he heard Luther himself say in the pulpit, he thanked God he felt no longer any disturbance of his conscience, and that he began to see the fruits of the Gospel among his disciples. "Nam post revelatum Evangelium meum," said he, "Virtus est occisa, justitia oppressa, temperantia, ligata, veritas lacerata, fides clauda, nequitia quotidiana, devotio pulsa, hæresis relicta." Mons. Garasse translates this passage thus: "I have fought with such success, that I have stifled the seeds of virtue, oppressed justice, extinguished sobriety, rent truth to pieces, broken the pillars of faith, made villany familiar, banished devotion, and introduced heresy." Upon which P. Bayle makes the following excellent observation: "There is no need to observe here, that all this is to be understood by the rules of contraries; the thing speaks for itself; and I am certain there is no honest man, whatever religion he is of, but will detest or pity the extravagance of such a slanderer." It is not at all improbable that Luther might use, in his pulpit, the very words here brought against him in accusation; nor is it necessary to suppose, that, in the warmth and haste of eloquence, and to make his meaning clear, he should even have used the words, *THEY SAID, OR, MINE ENEMIES CRIED OUT, &c.* Nothing can be more obvious than the sense of the citation, even as it stands. "After my way of expounding the Gospel became known," says Luther,† *THEY SAID, OR, MINE ENEMIES CRIED OUT, "virtue is stifled, justice is oppressed,"* and so on; and we are left to wonder how an omission, which is quite common in all vehement harangues, whatever be the language spoken, could possibly be made, by any reasonable man, the occasion of so much calumny. Those, however, will wonder less, who have been accustomed to observe, how frequently it happens in our times, that sound and zealous preachers of the Gospel are misrepresented and reviled, as though their interpretations of the nature of Christ's salvation had a tendency to promote licentiousness.

* Mons. Garasse.

† All becomes clear, by supposing the words here printed in capitals, to have been implied, though not actually said.

Let not the reader forget, that my present object is to produce evidences of Luther's learning and talents from the mouths of his adversaries, or at least from the mouths of those who have shown no particular predilection for the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. It would be with much pain and reluctance, that I should be compelled to place the famous Erasmus among either of these classes. His great learning, his elegant taste, and his acute understanding, are all unquestionable; neither is there any doubt how very serviceable his writings proved in preparing men's minds to approve the bolder and more decisive measures of Luther.* But still, in my judgment, the proofs of his love of ease, of fame, and of the esteem of persons of rank and consequence, are far more numerous, than any examples which can be produced of his sincere regard for the essential doctrines of Christianity, or of the evangelical humility of his own mind. Though it may be extremely difficult to delineate accurately the character of this sort, his observations, nevertheless, on the great men and great transactions of his own times, cannot fail to be valuable. Moreover, as Erasmus at no time, I believe, was very fond of Luther, and as they very much opposed and controverted each other's opinions, the judgment of this illustrious scholar respecting the great Saxon Reformer, may be laid before the reader in this place with much propriety. Indeed the following extracts are the more important and also suitable to be cited here, because, first, they decisively prove the ability of Luther; and, secondly, they contain many facts and circumstances which demonstrate the knowledge, learning, and integrity of our Reformer; and, lastly, they very materially corroborate the preceding account of the state of the religious world in general, when this extraordinary man began his opposition to the existing ecclesiastical tyranny.

Erasmus had so good an opinion of Luther's intentions, that in one of his epistles, he expresses his belief, "That

God has sent him to reform mankind."† Melancthon, in his Life of Luther, assures us from his own knowledge, that the elector of Saxony besought Erasmus,

The testimony of Erasmus.

in the very kindest manner, to tell him freely, whether he judged Luther to be mistaken respecting the principal controversies in which he was then engaged; and that Erasmus, on this occasion, spoke out, "That Luther's sentiments were true, but that he wished to see more mildness in his manner." In another letter he says, "The cause of Luther is invidious, because he at once attacks the bellies of the monks and the diadem of the pope."* In various other letters, and particularly in one written to cardinal Campegius in the year 1520, Erasmus opens his mind freely concerning Luther and his proceedings. He acknowledges that he possessed great natural talents; and that he had a genius particularly adapted to the explanation of difficult points of literature, and for rekindling the sparks of genuine evangelical doctrine, which were almost extinguished by the trifling subtilities of the schools. He adds, that men of the very best character, of the soundest learning, and of the most religious principles, were much pleased with Luther's books; further, that in proportion as any person was remarkable for upright morals and Gospel purity, he had the less objections to Luther's sentiments. "Besides," said he, "the life of the man is extolled, even by those who cannot bear his doctrines.—Some, indeed, in hatred to his person, condemn what is true, pervert and misinterpret what is right, and make him pass for a heretic, for saying the same things which they allow to have been pious and orthodox in Bernard and Austin." Erasmus declares, that he had endeavoured, to the utmost of his power, to hinder Luther from being oppressed by a faction of raging zealots. It grieved him that a man of such FINE PARTS should be rendered desperate by the mad cries and bellowsings of the monks. We ought, continued this sagacious writer, "to take notice of the source and spring of all this evil. The world was burdened with human inventions in the business of religion, loaded with the opinions and doctrines of the schools, and oppressed with the tyranny of the monks and begging friars. I do not condemn them all, but many of them are so mad, that for the sake of interest and rule, they ham-

Erasmus's letter to Campegius, A. D. 1520.

* See p. 198 of this Vol.

† Ep. Alberto pio. App. cccxxiii.

* This letter is to the elector of Saxony.

per the consciences of men on purpose. They lay aside Christ and modesty, they preach nothing but their own innovations, and oftentimes scandalous doctrines. They speak of indulgences after such a manner, as is insupportable even to the laity. By these and such like methods, the power of the Gospel is dwindled to nothing; and it is to be feared, that matters becoming continually worse, the little spark of Christian piety, by which the stifled spirit of charity might be rekindled, will be entirely quenched. The chief parts of religion are lost in ceremonies more than judaical. Good men lament and weep for these things; and even divines, who are not monks, acknowledge the truth of them, as also some of the monks in their private conversations. These things, I believe, first put Luther upon the dangerous work of opposing some of the most intolerable and shameless abuses. For what can we think otherwise of a person, who neither aims at worldly honour nor riches? I do not now consider the charges which they bring against the man; I speak only of the apparent grounds of their animosity towards him. Luther had the boldness to call in question the good of indulgences; but others had first spoken too much and too boldly for them. Luther has dared to speak indecently of the power of the pope of Rome; but others had first exalted it too indecently; and in particular, three preaching friars, Alvarus, Sylvester, and the cardinal of St. Sixtus. He dared to despise the decrees of Thomas Aquinas; but the Dominicans had extolled them almost above the Gospel. He dared to disclose some doubts in the matter of confession; but the monks continually perplexed the consciences of men upon that head. He dared to reject the conclusions of the schools in part; but others ascribed too much to them, and yet disagreed with them as well as he, altering them often, and introducing new notions in the place of those they abolished. It was matter of grief to pious minds, to hear almost nothing said in the schools of the doctrines of the Gospel, and that, in the sermons, little mention was made of Christ, but much of papal power, and of the opinions of recent writers. Luther has written a great deal that relishes more of imprudence than irreligion. But the greatest offence he has given, is, his want of respect to

Thomas Aquinas; his lessening of the profits of indulgences; his despising of the Mendicant friars; his perverting of the Gospel to the doctrines of the schools; his opposing of the sophistries of disputants: all these are intolerable heresies.”*

The reader, in this last instance, has had before him a witness, perfectly competent to decide on many of the points which usually afford matter for much controversy between papists and protestants; and as we trust the true character of the Saxon Reformer, in regard to his motives, abilities, and learning, is now fully ascertained, we return to the narrative of the progress of the dispute concerning the sale of indulgences.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROGRESS OF THE CONTROVERSY CONCERNING INDULGENCES, TILL THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONFERENCES BETWEEN LUTHER AND CAJETAN.

TETZEL, the Dominican, alarmed at the publication of Luther's Theses, opposed to them one hundred and six propositions, in which he attempted to refute the arguments of the Augustine monk; and not content with this, by virtue of his inquisitorial authority, he also directed Luther's compositions to be burnt. It appears from very authentic documents,† that this shameless monk was an experienced veteran in the traffic of indulgences. He himself, in the year 1507, that is, ten years before the present dispute with Luther, had collected at Friberg two thousand florins in the space of two days by the iniquitous sale of that article. The sale of indulgences, therefore, was no new thing in the papal system; and the instance before us proves, that, occasionally at least, the scandalous practice might be carried to a very great extent. It is, however, a relief to the indignant mind, to find that ecclesiastical history furnishes some few examples of pious Christians with enlightened understand-

Tetzel attempts to answer Luther's objections to Indulgences.

A. D. 1507.

* Vid. Erasm. Epis. and Brandt's History of the Reformation.

† Moller. Cron. Fribergen.

ing, who had bravely withstood the growing corruption. To mention one: John, bishop of Misnia, had effectually discharged from his own diocese the popish proclaimers of indulgences, who, like merchants, had been vending every where their certificates of pardon of sins, as if they were an ordinary commodity.* He had blamed the people for foolishly putting their money into a chest, of which they had not the key; and had declared that, by reading the Bible, he had discovered the Apostolical religion to be very different from that which prevailed at present. This good prelate, a little before his death, happening to hear that Tetzel was again employed in a similar way, prophesied he would be the last of the dealers in indulgences, on account of his shameless audacity.† Notwithstanding this, and every other warning or remonstrance, the Dominican commissioner persevered in the traffic with augmented industry; and so much incensed the minds of Luther's disciples at Wittemberg, that they ventured, by way of retaliation, to burn publicly his Propositions, or Theses,‡ as they were

* Chytr. Lib. II.

† "A soul," said Tetzel in his Theses, "may go to heaven, in the very moments, in which the money is cast into the chest. The man, who buys off his own sins by indulgences, merits more than he who gives alms to the poor, unless it be in extreme necessity." Other extraordinary assertions are likewise contained in his tracts, which demonstrate that protestant writers have not misrepresented the controversy before us. Suffice it to mention two sentences more. "The ministers of the church do not barely declare men's sins forgiven, but do really pardon them by virtue of the sacraments, and by the power of the keys.—They may impose a punishment to be suffered AFTER DEATH; and it is better to send a penitent with a small penance into purgatory, than by refusing him absolution to send him into hell." Du Pin, B. II. Seck. Lib. I.

‡ When Tetzel was at Leipsic, and had scraped together a great deal of money from all ranks of people, a nobleman, who suspected the imposture, put this question to him. "Can you grant absolution for a sin, which a man shall intend to commit in future?" "Yes," replied the frontless commissioner, "but on condition that the proper sum of money be actually paid down." The nobleman instantly produced the sum demanded; and in return, received a diploma sealed and signed by Tetzel, absolving him from the unexplained crime, which he se-

called, with every mark of disapprobation and ignominy. Luther was much grieved at this rash action; and finding himself to be accused of instigating his followers to commit it, writes thus, to a friend. "I wonder, you could believe, that I was the author of the deed. Think you that I am so destitute of common sense, as to stigmatize, in such a manner, a person in so high an office? I know better the rules of ecclesiastical subordination, and have more regard to my own character, both as a monk and as a theologian, than to act so." There were also persons, who, pretending to be in possession of court intrigues, were fond of circulating the report, that Luther had published his theses by the secret instigations of the elector Frederic. Luther, with great concern, takes notice of this false surmise. In a letter to his friend Spalatinus, he thus expresses his feelings: "I am heartily vexed at the scandalous report, which is diffused with much malignity, namely, that in all I do, I am only the ENGINE of our illustrious prince, for the purpose of disgracing the archbishop of Mentz. What do you think I ought to do on the occasion? Shall I open the matter to the Elector? I am extremely concerned, that the prince should be suspected on my account, and I cannot bear the thought of being the origin of contention among persons of so great dignity."

Luther also published a sermon, preached against indulgences, which Tetzel answered; and this produced a reply from Luther. About the same time, Henry, duke of Brunswic, who was afterwards distinguished among the most active enemies of

Luther
preaches
against
indulgences.

cretely intended to commit. Not long after, when Tetzel was about to leave Leipsic, the nobleman made inquiry respecting the road he would probably travel, waited for him in ambush at a convenient place, attacked and robbed him; then beat him soundly with a stick, sent him back again to Leipsic with his chest empty, and at parting, said: "This is the fault I intended to commit, and for which I have your absolution." This humorous story may seem scarcely worthy of the dignity of history: but it is recorded by the cautious Seckendorf, and may serve to show the almost incredible lengths to which the popish agents proceeded in the detestable traffic so clearly laid open by this anecdote.

Lutheranism, appeared in the contest; and in a public writing accused Frederic of secretly supporting Luther. The well known character of the elector, for caution and prudence, seems however to have prevented the report from gaining much credit. This prince took extraordinary care not to involve himself unnecessarily in the concerns of Luther. Our intrepid Reformer, in all his opposition to Tetzel, most certainly had no colleague or assistant; and he himself declared, that he never had conversed with the elector Frederic in his whole life.

Luther never did things by halves. Accordingly, as the affair of selling indulgences had laid firm hold of his mind, he could neither quiet his uneasiness nor smother his indignation. He still continued to preach and to write on the same subject, till the end of the year 1517. In the next year he went to Heidelberg, and was courteously received by Wolfgang, the brother of the elector Palatine, who was the scholar of Ecolampadius, a name afterwards renowned among the reformers. Luther had been advised by his friends not to go to Heidelberg, on account of the danger to which he might be exposed. But, as a general assembly of the Augustinian monks had been called at that place, he thought it right to obey his superiors, whatever might be the event. The official business of the assembly was of no great moment; and therefore we need not be surprised that the zealous and active spirit of Luther was not content with barely discharging the duties of his order. A providential opportunity was offered of propagating divine truth, and it behoved him not to neglect it. While, therefore, he remained at this place, he wrote some propositions, in which he opposed the prevailing notions* concerning justification, faith, and works. His capital object in them was to demonstrate the doctrine of justification, before God, by faith, and not by our works and deservings. The theses or positions which he intended to defend, were publicly exposed to view in writing, according to custom; and he called upon Leonard Bejar, a monk of the Augustinian order, to be his respondent. The professors of the university disapproved of the controversy; and therefore it was held in the Augustinian

monastery. A large concourse of people attended, and a number of the learned bore a part in the disputation. Among the hearers was Martin Bucer, and John Brentius, men afterwards eminent in the work of reformation. These and other persons, who in process of time became celebrated theologians, admired the acuteness, promptitude, and meekness of Luther, were struck with the truths of the Gospel, which were new to their ears, and desired further instruction of him in private. This was the seed-time of the Gospel in the Palatinate; and these were the beginnings of the reformation in that electorate. Luther's disciples cultivated and taught the same doctrines in private, and after a time ventured to teach them publicly in the university.

While the cause of evangelical truth was thus making gradual advances in Germany, two celebrated Romanists, Eckius of Ingolstadt, and Prierias a Dominican, master of the sacred palace at Rome, took up their pens against the theses of Luther, who by these means was led into a fresh literary contest. Luther published elaborate answers on all the disputed points; and managed this part of the controversy with so much moderation and gentleness, that his inimical historian, Maimbourg, has no way left of reviling the man he dislikes, but by saying, "on this occasion, he acted contrary to his natural disposition." Let the reader infer the real disposition of Luther from authenticated facts, and not from the insinuations of prejudiced papists. At this time he wrote also to his own diocesan, and to his vicar-general. To his diocesan, the bishop of Brandenburg, he declared, that he did not DETERMINE, but DISPUTE, using the liberty allowed to scholastic men in all ages. "I fear not," says he, "bulls and menaces; it is the audaciousness and the ignorance of men, that induce me to stand forth, though with much reluctance: were there not a weighty cause for it, no one, out of my own little sphere, should ever hear of me. If the cause I defend, be not the work of God, I would have nothing to do with it; let it perish. Let him alone have glory, to whom alone glory belongs." He endeavoured to rouse the spirit of his vicar-general, thus: "When I first heard you say, 'that true repentance begins with a

Luther is opposed by Eckius and by Prierias.

* Seeckend. 29. from a MS. Hist. of the Palatine Churches by Altingius.

love of righteousness, and of God,' the words made a deep and durable impression on my heart, as if they had come by a voice directly from heaven." Hence, he said, he was filled with grief to see the true doctrine of repentance superseded by indulgences. He expressed his great unwillingness to be drawn into the contest; but, being defamed as an enemy of the pope, he felt himself constrained to defend his own character. He therefore begged Staupitius to transmit his trifling writings, as he calls them, to Pope Leo X. that they might speak for him at Rome. "Not," says he, "that I would involve you in my dangers. I desire alone to stand the shock of the contest. Let Christ see to it, whether the cause be mine or his. To the kind admonitions of my friends, who would warn me of danger, my answer is, The poor man has no fears. I protest, that property, reputation, and honours, shall all be of no estimation with me, compared with the defence of truth. I have only a frail body to lose, and that weighed down with constant fatigue. If, in obedience to God, I lose it through violence or fraud, what is the loss of a few hours of life? Sufficient for me is the lovely Redeemer and Advocate, my Lord Jesus Christ, to whose praise I will sing as long as I live."

In a private letter of this kind, written to a friend much older than himself, and whom he honoured as his father, every candid person must see that Luther would open the genuine feelings of his soul. This single fact, therefore, is decisive against the constant, but groundless, assertion of his adversaries, "that he was secretly encouraged and supported in this perilous contest by Staupitius." There is no doubt that both his diocesan and his vicar-general valued him extremely for his talents and piety; nor were either of them destitute of some evangelical light: the latter especially, as we have seen, had been serviceable to the young Augustine monk in his early conflicts of temptation. But neither the former, nor the latter, had the knowledge, the courage, the faithfulness of Luther.

His controversial writings, published in the year 1518, in explanation and support of the various doctrines he had advanced, are full of important matter, and very much lay open the real state of his mind at that time. And

these writings also, such was his regard for ecclesiastical discipline, he thought proper to transmit both to his ordinary and to his vicar-general. Among many other positions maintained in them, are the following: "That every true Christian may become partaker of the grace of Christ without pontifical indulgences. A Christian," says he, "may glory that in Christ he has all things; that all the righteousness and merits of Christ are his own by virtue of that spiritual union with him, which he has by faith: On the other hand, that all his sins are no longer his, but that Christ, through the same union, bears the burden of them. And this is the confidence of Christians, this is the refreshment of their consciences, that by faith our sins cease to be ours judicially, because they are laid on him the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

"I was compelled," continues Luther, "in my conscience to expose the scandalous sale of indulgences. I saw some seduced by them into mischievous errors, others tempted into an audacious profaneness. In a word, the proclaiming and selling of pardons proceeded to such an unbounded licentiousness, that the holy church and its authorities became subjects of open derision in the public taverns. There was no occasion to excite the hatred of mankind against priests to a greater degree. The avarice and profligacy of the clergy had, for many years past, kindled the indignation of the laity. Alas! they have not a particle of respect or honour for the priesthood, except what solely arises from fear of punishment; and I speak plainly, unless their dislike and their objections be attended to and moderated, not by mere power, but by substantial reasons and reformations, all these evils will grow worse."

From these extracts* the reader will be enabled to form his own judgment of Luther, as a divine, as a statesman, and as an honest man. He wrote a letter to the pope himself, respecting the same

* The extracts here given are almost literal translations. But every one, who has been used to the making of extracts, knows, that in many cases where a great deal is omitted for the sake of brevity, it is necessary to add a few words to prevent obscurities. This, however, should always be done with the greatest care, so as not to affect the sense.

transactions, in which he expresses himself in so dutiful and ceremonious a manner, and even in strains of such submissive and prostrate subjection, as sufficiently show, that at that time he was far from meditating a separation from the church of Rome. Maimbourg himself appears to have very much felt the force of Luther's ingenuous declarations and general conduct in these proceedings. He thinks, he probably might have been sincere in his professions of obedience to the Roman See, "because," says he, "it was so contrary to his nature to play the hypocrite for any considerable time together." The same author adds, "Whether he was really sincere, or not, his modest and plausible manner of expressing his doubts, procured him the approbation of many. He was looked on as an honest inquirer after truth, who had detected the frauds of his adversaries, and, in that way, had unjustly brought upon himself the name of heretic."*

The preceding detail of facts and observations unavoidably lead the mind to this conclusion. Luther was far advanced in evangelical knowledge, and appears to have been an experienced Christian some time before he became known to the world. Yet was he still strongly wedded to the habits of superstition; and he slowly admitted the conviction of the antichristian character of the hierarchy. He dreaded the sin of schism: and the impetuous fire of his temper was perpetually checked by the admonitions of conscience, and by the fear of offending his Maker. In this singular character, there was certainly united an assemblage of qualities, rarely found together in the same person; in particular, the greatest caution in conduct with a temper remarkably ardent and choleric. Too often this last betrayed him into a blameable asperity of language, yet seldom does it seem to have influenced his measures or plans of action. The poet's simple, but sublime description of one of his dramatic heroes,† "he feared God, and he feared none besides," is eminently true of the Saxon theologian.

Whoever keeps in view the natural and religious dispositions of Luther, while he contemplates the critical situation of this Reformer, during the sus-

pense of his contest with the papal authorities, cannot fail to conclude, that he must have experienced great anxiety and even perturbation of mind in that memorable season. The precise nature of his feelings will be best understood from his own account of them, in a preface to the edition of his Theses, which was published by himself many years after the termination of the dispute. "I permit," says he, "the publication of my Propositions against Indulgences for this reason, that the greatness of the success may be attributed to God, and that I may not be exalted in mine own eyes. For, by those propositions* it will appear how weak and contemptible I was, and in how fluctuating a state of mind, when I began this business. I found myself involved in it alone, and, as it were, by surprise. And when it became impossible for me to retreat, I made many concessions to the pope; not, however, in many important points; but, certainly, at that time I adored him in earnest. In fact, how despised and wretched a monk was I then; more like a lifeless body than a human being! Whereas in regard to the pope, how great was his majesty! The potentates of the earth dreaded his nod. How distressed my heart was in that year, 1517, and the following; how submissive my mind was to the hierarchy, not feignedly but really; nay, how I was almost driven to despair, through the agitations of care and fear and doubt, those secure spirits little know, who at this day insult the majesty of the pope with much pride and arrogance! But I, who then alone sustained the danger, was not so certain, not so confident. I was ignorant of many things, which now, by the grace of God, I understand. I disputed, and I was open to conviction. Not finding satisfaction in the books of theologians and canonists, I wished to consult the living members of the church itself. There were indeed some godly souls, who entirely approved my propositions, but I did not consider their authority as of weight with me in spiritual concerns. The popes, cardinals, bishops, and monks, were the objects of my confidence. I waited for divine instruction with such ardent and continued eager-

Remarkable declarations of Luther.

* Maimb. p. 28. in Seek.

† Racine, in his Athaliah.

* It is not necessary to enter into a detail of these propositions or theses, because the cause of indulgences has now no advocates in this country.

ness, and was so overloaded with cares, that I became almost stupid, or distracted: I scarcely knew when I was asleep, or when awake. At length, after I became enabled to answer every objection that could be brought against me from the Scriptures, one difficulty still remained, and only one; namely, that the church ought to be obeyed. By the grace of Christ, I at last overcame this difficulty also. Most certainly I had formerly a much greater veneration for the Roman church than those have, who at this day, with a perverse spirit of opposition, extol popery so exceedingly against me."

Let us now listen to a few sentences of Luther, written so late as the year 1545, that is, about twenty-eight years after the beginning of the dispute concerning indulgences.* "Before all things, I entreat you, pious reader, for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to read my writings with

cool consideration, and even with much pity. I wish you to know, that when I began the affair of the indulgences at the very first, I was a monk, and a most mad papist. So intoxicated was I, and drenched in papal dogmas, that I would have been most ready at all times to murder, or assist others in murdering, any person who should have uttered a syllable against the duty of obedience to the pope. I was a complete SARK; and there are many such yet. There were, however, and are now, others, who appear to me to adhere to the pope on the principles of Epicurus; that is, for the sake of indulging their appetites; when secretly they even deride him, and are as cold as ice, if called upon to defend the papacy. I was never one of these: I was always a sincere believer; I was always earnest in defending the doctrines I professed; and I went seriously to work, as one who had a horrible dread of the day of judgment, and who, from his inmost soul, was anxious for salvation.

"You will find, therefore, in my earlier writings with how much humility, on many occasions, I gave up very considerable points to the pope, which I now detest as blasphemous and abominable in the highest degree. This ERROR, my

slanderers call INCONSISTENCY: but you, pious reader, will have the kindness to make some allowance on account of the times and my inexperience. I stood absolutely alone at first; and certainly I was very unlearned and very unfit to undertake matters of such vast importance. It was by accident, not willingly or by design, that I fell into these violent disputes: I call God to witness!

"In the year 1517, when I was a young preacher, and dissuaded the people from purchasing indulgences, telling them they might employ their time much better than in listening to the greedy proclaimers of that scandalous article of sale, I felt assured I should have the pope on my side, for he himself, in his public decrees, had condemned the excesses of his agents in that business.

"My next step was to complain to my own ordinary, and also to the archbishop of Mentz; but I knew not at that time, that half of the money went to this last-mentioned prelate, and the other half to the pope. The remonstrances of a low, mean, poor brother in Christ, had no weight. Thus despised, I published a brief account of the dispute, along with a sermon in the German language on the subject of indulgences; and very soon after I published also explanations of my sentiments, in which, for the honour of the pope, I contended, that the indulgences were not entirely to be condemned, but that real works of charity were of FAR MORE CONSEQUENCE.

"This was to set the world on fire, and disturb the whole order of the universe. At once and against me single, the whole popedom rose!"

It will be needless to proceed further with this extract: the account is in entire unison with the preceding one written many years before. The candid and ingenuous acknowledgments and declarations contained in each of them cannot fail to affect the reader's mind, particularly as they were all made by our Reformer long after the transactions to which they relate, and at times when disguise and misrepresentation could serve no imaginable purpose. A more complete answer to the unwarrantable censures of those, who accuse Luther of selfish motives in promoting the reformation, can scarcely be conceived. But after all, the best use to be made of the information here given is, to admire and adore the providence and grace of that

* Latin preface to the first volume of Luther's Works.

God, WHO IS WONDERFUL IN COUNCIL AND EXCELLENT IN WORKING.*

While the literary contest was carrying on between Luther and his antagonists, there were at Rome those, who blamed the pope for not interesting himself in a controversy, which, by exciting a spirit of resistance, and producing divisions, daily increased in magnitude and importance, and which, in its termination, might prove extremely injurious to the authority of the Romish church. With how much indifference and contempt Leo X. at first beheld the ecclesiastical disputes in Germany, how indolent was the disposition of this pontiff, and how improvident he showed himself in defending the papal jurisdiction, all this appears in the strongest light from the absurd and careless answer which he is said to have given to Silvester Prierias,†

Observation of Leo X. concerning Luther.

when that zealous and learned Dominican showed him some of Luther's heretical publications concerning indulgences. "BROTHER MARTIN," said he, "IS A MAN OF VERY FINE GENIUS, and these squabbles are the mere effusions of monastic envy." Prierias, however, undertook the support of the pontifical authority; but, in writing against the Reformer, he managed the Romish cause with so much heat and imprudence, that the pope himself presently directed him to be silent in future.‡ This writer, in the event, did much service to Lutheranism. In an affair, which required the utmost delicacy, he expressed his sentiments without the least caution or moderation; and exalted the pope's power even far beyond that of all general councils. Luther availed himself of the temerity of his adversary, and publicly exposed, with much severity, the odious doctrines which he had inculcated.

In the same year, 1518, a rash author of a similar description, attacked Luther with all the virulence of an enraged Roman Catholic. This was Hogostratus, a German Dominican inquisitor, who represented the growing heresy as now become incurable by any of the milder methods. Penal

Luther attacked by Hogostratus, A. D. 1518.

and compulsory remedies, he said, were absolutely necessary; and he exhorted the pontiff, by means of the sword and fire, to deliver mankind from the detestable innovator.* Many of the monks† joined in this clamour with incessant vociferation among the people. Scarcely a word came from their mouth, except Heresy! Blasphemy! Schism! "I relate," says Erasmus, "what I saw with my own eyes; and I am convinced that no one thing tended more to dispose the people in Luther's favour, than this imprudent conduct of the clergy. His propositions concerning indulgences were soberly stated; and if THEY had but argued the points in dispute in the same cool way, these ruinous consequences would never have taken place."

At length the Roman pontiff was roused from his state of indolence and security. Not only the avaricious venders of indulgences vociferated against Luther, as Demetrius and the silversmiths did against St. Paul, when their craft was in danger,‡ but, from all quarters, complaints of the progress of heresy were sent to Rome. Even the emperor Maximilian I. represented to the pope, how necessary his interference was become. The Augustine monk, he said, was disseminating heretical and destructive doctrines, was obstinate in adhering to his opinions, and active in propagating them; and he had made many converts, even among persons of rank and distinction.§

The imprudence of Leo X. at this critical moment, may seem almost the consequence of judicial infatuation.

At once he passed from the extremes of neglect and indifference to those of tyrannical violence and blind temerity. He ordered Luther to appear at Rome within sixty days, to answer for himself before certain judges, of whom his antagonist Silvester Prierias was appointed one. Our Reformer took the wisest method to protect himself against the impending storm. He instantly sent an account of the pope's citation to his friend Spalatinus, who was then with the elector Frederick at the diet of Augsburg; and in the strongest terms requested, that, through the interposition of the prince, his cause

Rash conduct of Leo X.

* Isaiah xxviii.

† Prierias was master of the sacred palace, and general of his order. He died of the plague in 1523.

‡ Erasm. Epis.

VOL. II.

* Maimb. p. 38.

† Erasm. Epis.

‡ Acts xix. 24.

§ Maximilian's Letter. Op. Luth. Vol. I.

might be heard in Germany and not at Rome. Frederic the Wise understood the arts and practice of the court of Rome, and was convinced of the propriety, and even the necessity, of seconding Luther's wishes. Accordingly he urged the competency of a German tribunal in an ecclesiastical controversy of that nature; and it seems entirely owing to the address, the penetration, and the firmness of this great prince, that the Roman pontiff at last consented, that cardinal Cajetan, who was then his legate at Augsburg, should take cognizance of the matter. If the delinquent showed proper marks of penitence and submission, he was to be kindly received again into the bosom of the church; but if he refused to appear before his appointed judge, the legate was commissioned then to denounce publicly, against him and his adherents, all the thunders and anathemas of papal indignation.*

Leo X. perceiving how great a favourite Luther was with the elector of Saxony, judged it expedient, by all the means in his power, to secure the support and concurrence of that prince in an affair, which he had now begun to consider of the greatest moment.

For this purpose, he acquainted Frederic, in a polite and affectionate, but very artful epistle, of the measures which he had been compelled to adopt, through the disobedience of an Augustine monk, whose very "order and profession should have perpetually reminded him of the duties of humility and obsequiousness." He styles Luther a son of iniquity, a prevaricator, who boasts of the protection of the elector, but, in fact, reverences no superior whatever. I know, says the pope, he has no ground for representing you as one, who encourages and supports him; nevertheless, I exhort you in the Lord, and as you would preserve the reputation and dignity of a good catholic prince, to be on your guard, lest the lustre of your highly honoured ancestors should be in any degree tarnished by this calumny. I know of no blame respecting you; but I would wish you to avoid the very suspicion of blame, in which the rashness of this man may involve you. He then proceeds: As many learned and religious

persons, and in particular, our beloved son, Prierias, the master of our sacred palace, have informed us of the heretical proceedings of Martin Luther, we have ordered him to be called upon to answer for himself; and for this purpose, we have given EXPLICIT DIRECTIONS to cardinal Cajetan, our legate. Lastly, he concludes with a strong exhortation and injunction, that Frederic, in virtue of the holy obedience which he owed to the Roman church, should contribute his utmost to secure the person of Luther, and deliver him up to the power of the holy See: he declared, however, at the same time, that if he was found innocent, he should be dismissed in peace and in favour; and even if he was guilty, he would exercise clemency towards him largely upon his repentance.*

It is well worthy of notice, that in this epistle, the pope suppresses a very material fact, namely, that Luther had, already and without trial, been condemned at Rome, as a heretic, by the bishop of Ascoli, the auditor of the Apostolic chamber. This clearly appears from the pope's OWN BRIEF, which he sent to cardinal Cajetan along with the above-mentioned directions; and the poor persecuted monk, in his writings, makes several pertinent observations upon the occasion. The pleasantest thing of all, says he, is this: The pope's BRIEF is dated August the twenty-third. I was cited and admonished, on the seventh of August, to appear at Rome within sixty days.

Thus it is very plain, that, either before the citation was delivered to me, or at most within sixteen days after, the bishop of Ascoli proceeded against me, judged me, and pronounced me an incorrigible heretic. If I should ask, What are become of the sixty days mentioned in the citation delivered to me, which are to be reckoned from the seventh of August, and would end about the seventh of October? Is it the usage of the pope's court to cite, admonish, accuse, judge, condemn, and pronounce sentence, all on the same day, and especially, when the supposed culprit is at a considerable distance, and totally ignorant of the proceedings? Again, how can they charge me with having abused the pope's kindness, and with persevering

Inconsistent
conduct of
Leo X.

* The Pope's directions to Cajetan, Luther, Op. Vol. I.

* Pope's letter to the elector of Saxony, Tom. I. Witt. p. 201.

obstinately in heresy? Would they be able to give any other answer to these questions, than that, when they fabricated the falsehoods respecting me, they had lost their memory, and stood in need of a few doses of hellebore.

The condemnation of Luther at Rome, previous to his examination before Cajetan, was so important a fact, and implied so much violence and animosity in Leo and his advisers, that it may well be doubted whether our Reformer, intrepid as he was, if he had been acquainted with all the circumstances of his disgrace and danger, would have ventured to have appeared at all at Augsburg. It is clear, from one of his letters to Spalatinus,* that, on his return from that place, he first learnt at Nuremberg the nature and extent of the papal commission to the cardinal, namely, that, already being pronounced a pertinacious heretic, his person was to be secured and kept in safety, till further orders for his removal to Rome.

The elector of Saxony conducted himself throughout this difficult transaction

Prudence of the elector of Saxony.

with the most extraordinary discretion. He was determined not to permit Luther to be sent to Rome, where he

would be at the mercy of his enraged adversaries; but, for the purpose of carrying this point the more easily, and also in the hope that an accommodation might take place with the Roman See, he promised the pope's legate that he would take effectual care to place the supposed heretic before him, for examination, at Augsburg. We have observed indeed, † that it was part of the pope's instructions to Cajetan, to show every kindness to Luther, provided he came voluntarily to confess his fault and sue for pardon; but, what was to be done in case he should refuse, which was the thing by far the more probable to happen? Luther himself in his account of this matter says, "Everything, I doubt not, would have been settled in the most peaceable and affectionate manner, if I would but have written down six letters, REVOCO, I RECANT."

Frederic provided for the safety of his favourite Luther in the following manner. He gave him letters of recommendation to the senate and principal inhabitants of Augsburg; who, instantly on his arrival,

exhorted him not to appear before the cardinal, till he had obtained a promise of safe conduct from the emperor, who was then hunting at some distance from the city. Through the influence of these same persons, this important request of safe conduct was granted; and after three days the emperor's council announced to the cardinal, that the public faith was pledged to Luther, and therefore he must take no violent steps against him. The cardinal answered, "It is very well, nevertheless I shall do my duty."

Luther informs us, that during those three days he was constantly pressed, by a very troublesome emissary of Cajetan, to recant. If I would but recant, he said, all would be right. He further relates a curious conversation which took place between himself and this emissary. He came on the third day, and expostulated as follows:

Luther's conversation with an Italian emissary of Cajetan.

Why will you not go to the cardinal? he is waiting to receive you in the kindest manner.

I must listen to the advice of those excellent persons to whom I am recommended by the elector; and they tell me, I must by no means go to him till I have obtained the public faith. The moment THAT is obtained, I am ready to go.

What, said he, evidently in much agitation, Do you think that prince Frederic will take up arms on your account?

It is very far from my wish.

Where do you mean to stay?

In the open air.

Pray, suppose you had the pope and his cardinals all in your power, what would you do with them?

I would treat them with the greatest respect and honour.

So; said he, waving his hand in the Italian manner, and went away, and returned no more.*

A short time before these transactions at Augsburg, the celebrated Melancthon had been received as Greek professor at the university of Wittemberg, in the twenty-second year of his age. The lectures of this truly learned and good man, together with those of Luther, were attended by crowds of students; and the university of Leipsic, a city wholly under Roman influence, on account of

* Lib. I. Epist.

† Page 23).

* Luth. Præf.

the principles of its sovereign, George of Saxony, declined in its lustre. The consequence was, that Luther became still more odious to the hierarchy. Add to this, his defence of his theses, and a sermon against the abuses of officials in excommunications, just published, had exasperated his adversaries to the highest degree. We learn, from his letters to Staupitius and Spalatinus, what were the feelings and reflections of our hero at this alarming conjuncture. To the former he said, "Doubt not but I mean to be free in searching and handling the word of God. These citations and menaces move me not." To the latter he writes thus: "From the bottom of my heart, I wish not to involve the elector in my perils. There is but one thing, which I hope he may be able to do for me,—namely, to prevent any violence on my person. And if he cannot do even that conveniently, I would have all the danger to be my own.—What I have undertaken to defend, I trust, I shall defend effectually. It may be found necessary to pay some regard to self-preservation, but a regard to truth is paramount to every consideration." This is the language of one, who was well instructed in Christian principles, and knew the practice of holy men in the purest times.

Certainly, at first, Luther seems to have doubted whether he should not be guilty of an unjustifiable temerity, in stirring a single step towards Augsburg, without the previous grant of a safe conduct. But his scruples were done away by the generous behaviour of the elector. This excellent prince not only gave him the above-mentioned letters of recommendation, but also furnished him with money for his journey; informed him, by Spalatinus, that he might proceed to Augsburg, without need of a safe conduct, such was the legate's benevolent intentions towards him; and encouraged him to believe that, whatever might happen, he would not permit him to be dragged to the papal tribunal at Rome. It is most probable, however, that Frederic the wise either foresaw the effect which his letters of recommendation would produce at Augsburg, or had otherwise secretly provided that the public faith should be engaged for the persecuted Reformer. He was a prince, says Luther,* of incredible capacity and

penetration, and was accustomed to take effectual measures for disconcerting the Romanists, long before they entertained the least suspicion that he was aware of their designs. It was much against the inclination of Cajetan, that the emperor Maximilian granted a safe conduct on this occasion. That irritated legate wrote to Frederic, and in much anger informed him, that he had expressly told the imperial council he would not have the name of Cajetan mentioned in that part of the transaction.* He is usually called Cajetan, though his real name was Thomas de Vio, of the town of Cajeta. He is allowed by Luther himself to have been naturally a man of a benevolent temper. Yet the choosing of this cardinal for the purpose of reconciling matters must not be produced as an example of discretion in Leo X. Thomas de Vio was excessively superstitious, and also entertained the most lofty ideas of papal authority. He wrote a book on the power of the Roman pontiff, which is said to have procured for him the archbishopric of Palermo and a cardinal's hat. Add to all this, he was a Dominican, and consequently the declared enemy of Luther and the friend of Tetzel. Such a person was ill fitted to sit as judge or arbitrator in this nice and perilous controversy.

At the first interview, Luther prostrated himself before the cardinal, and was courteously received. But, at the same time, he was required to retract his errors, to avoid them in future, and to abstain from everything which might disturb the peace of the church. And these three things were stated expressly to be the order of the most holy pope. Luther desired that he might be permitted to see the pope's BRIEF. But this request was peremptorily refused.†

Luther appears before cardinal Cajetan.

* Epist. Cajet. ad Sax. duc. Father Paul, C. Trent, B. I.

† This important circumstance is not taken notice of by the ecclesiastical historians; though I find Luther himself in his celebrated letter to the elector of Saxony, written after the conference with Cajetan, uses the words, "nam exemplar BREVIS penitenti denegabat." Dominus Legatus. It is easy enough to understand why the legate, who was affecting to treat Luther with the greatest kindness, should not choose to show him a BRIEF, in which it appeared, that, at

* Luther. Op. Vol. I.

The heaviest charge against him seems to have been, that he had transgressed the bull of Clement VI. which had defined the nature and extent of indulgences; and it may easily be conceived, with how much indignation the cardinal would hear the defence of Luther, namely, that the Holy Scriptures, which he could produce in support of his own doctrines, had abundantly more weight with him than a pontifical bull, which in fact proved nothing, but merely recited the opinion of Thomas Aquinas.—Cajetan, in answer, exalted the authority of the pope above all councils, above the church, and even above the Scriptures themselves. To this Luther opposed the appeal of the university of Paris, whose reputation had always stood high, as the parent of science, and the defender of the purest Christianity. Cajetan, in a rage, declared that the Parisians would meet with due punishment; and that Gerson,* whose writings Luther had quoted, was DAMNED, together with all his followers. So extravagantly high were the ideas of papal power conceived by this cardinal, that even the very moderate contradiction, given in France to the pontiff, appeared in his eyes an unpardonable sin. Little did he then imagine how much more openly his magnificent lord and master was to be opposed within the short space of a few months.

Frowns and menaces were by no means adapted to intimidate the determined mind of the Saxon Reformer. He continued to insist on the authority of Scripture. He owned he might have erred, but he thought it reasonable that his errors should be pointed out, on SCRIPTURAL grounds, before he should be required to retract.

When Luther found that not the smallest progress was made by conversation

that very moment, he stood condemned as a heretic at Rome, though he had never been heard. On a view of all the circumstances, it seems by no means improbable, that the cardinal, pursuant to his instructions, was intending to make the poor heretic a prisoner, notwithstanding the emperor's promise of safe conduct. But a sight of the BRIEF could not have failed to alarm and put on his guard any man in so critical a situation.

* The reader will remember, that this celebrated chancellor of the university of Paris maintained, at the council of Constance, the superiority of a general council over the pope.

with the cardinal, and that all his fine promises of kind treatment amounted precisely to this, "you must either recant, or suffer punishment," he wisely determined to commit his answers to writing. In so doing, says he, the oppressed find comfort in two ways; in the first place, what is written, may be submitted to the judgment of others; and in the second, one has a better opportunity of working upon the fears and the conscience of an arrogant despot, who would otherwise overpower one by his imperious language.*

Agreeably to this resolution, he appeared before the cardinal with a notary and witnesses, repeated his protestations of general obedience to the church, and his perfect readiness to recant any error of which he could be convicted. Cajetan replied with so much acrimony, that the accused monk had no opportunity of explaining or of vindicating his sentiments. He absolutely refused to dispute with Luther, either in public or in private; he would not even consent that a single word of his own answers should be put down in writing. He continued to press for a recantation.

Staupitius, who was present at the scene, and who hitherto had acted the part of a steady friend of Luther, rose up, and entreated the legate to permit the accused to return his answers at length in writing. To which request, he, with great difficulty at last acceded.

At the next conference, Luther exhibited his written explanation and defence, which the cardinal treated with the greatest contempt. He told him, he had filled his paper with passages of Scripture, which were irrelevant, and in general, that his answers were those of a perfect idiot. He condescended, however, to say, he would send them to Rome. Lastly, he ordered Luther to depart, and to come no more into his sight, unless he was disposed to recant.

Notwithstanding this rough treatment, it was Luther's firm opinion, that it would have given the cardinal great pleasure to hear him recant. It may be thought some confirmation of this sentiment, that in the evening of the very day in which this last conference took place, he sent for the vicar-general Staupitius, and desired him to persuade his young monk to retract. Staupitius pro-

* Luther's Letter to Fred.

mised to do his utmost. "You must answer his scriptural arguments," said Cajetan. Staupitius replied ingenuously, "That is above my power. I am his inferior both in capacity and in knowledge of the Scriptures."

Throughout this whole conference at Augsburg, cardinal Cajetan appears to have been conscious how ill qualified he was to enter the lists with Luther, as a disputant in theological questions. Indeed the doctrines of the Gospel, as far as we can judge, gave him little concern. His anxiety was, how he might best insure obedience to the pontifical mandates. He inquired not whether these mandates were reasonable or repugnant to Scripture, it was sufficient for him to know that they were the dictates of a pope. The decretal of pope Clement VI. which he urged with so much heat and positiveness against Luther in the dispute respecting indulgences, maintained, that, "One drop of Christ's blood being sufficient to redeem the whole human race, the remaining quantity, that was shed in the garden and upon the cross, was left as a legacy to the church, to be a TREASURE FROM WHENCE INDULGENCES were to be drawn and administered by the Roman pontiffs."* The Augustine monk had, for some time past, been too much enlightened to digest such wild superstitious inventions; and the man who could call upon him, upon these grounds, to renounce his errors, was not to be reasoned with. Still it required extraordinary courage to deliver in a formal protest against the belief of tenets, which at that time were both established by the highest authority, and also supposed to have been dictated by an infallible judgment.

Some objections were made to Luther's idea of justification by faith; but Cajetan did not scruple, to confess, that if he would but have retracted his opposition to the indulgences, all other differences might have been composed in an amicable manner; and that his opinions concerning the efficacy of faith in justification and in the sacrament, admitted of being modified and interpreted, so as to be inoffensive. When Staupitius was informed of this circumstance, he expressed a wish, that the cardinal had avowed that sentiment in

The terms of reconciliation.

the presence of the notary and the witnesses; Because then, said he, there would have been clear proof that, at Rome, MONEY was held in greater estimation than FAITH.

Luther, on the contrary, considered the scripture doctrine of justification by faith as of infinite importance. He declared, that he would rather retract everything which he had said upon other subjects, than THAT, which he must adhere to with his dying breath. That in regard to indulgences, their intrinsic nature, whatever it might be, could not be altered by ostentatious praises and honours, but that if he gave up the article of justification by faith, he should, in fact, deny Jesus Christ himself. That, though the cardinal had promised to conduct the inquiry according to the sacred Scriptures, and the rules of the church, he had not produced a single text of Scripture against him, nor any one authority from the holy fathers. Lastly, that he was confident no answer could ever be given to the scriptural arguments and the authorities, which he had produced in support of the doctrine in question.* Our peace, says he, consists in coming to Christ in lively faith: if a man believe not the promise, he may practise confession to all the world, and he may be absolved a thousand thousand times even by the pope himself, but he will never obtain, on good grounds, a quiet conscience.†

It was on Friday the fourteenth of October 1518, that Luther made his last appearance before the pope's legate. A report was spread, that, notwithstanding the engagement of a safe conduct, he was to be seized and confined in irons. He remained, however, at Augsburg, till the succeeding Monday. He heard nothing from the cardinal. How great must have been his anxiety! On the Monday, by a letter couched in the most respectful terms, he begged pardon for any irreverent or unbecoming language towards the pontiff, which might have escaped him in the heat and hurry of the debate; he even promised to desist from treating the subject of indulgences any more, provided his antagonists were enjoined to observe a similar silence. But to retract his sentiment, or give up the truth,

Dangerous situation of Luther, in A. D. 1518.

* Maclaine in Mosheim, Vol. II. Chap. II.

* Epist. ad Fred.

† Resolut. de Indulg.

he absolutely refused. He said, his conscience would not permit him to act in that manner. He acknowledged that his friends, and especially his vicar-general, had taken great pains to make him think humbly, submit his own opinion, and form a right judgment: But, said he, neither the favour nor the advice, nor the command of any man, ought ever to make me do or say what is contrary to my conscience. To this letter he received no answer.

On the next day he sent another letter to Cajetan, expressed in more spirited language and nearer to his usual strain.

He writes a spirited letter to Cajetan.

“He conceived he had done everything which became an obedient son of the church.

He had undertaken a long and dangerous journey; he was a man of a weak body, and had very little money to spend. He had laid the book, which contained his opinions, at the feet of his holiness the pope; he had appeared before his most reverend father the cardinal; and he was now waiting to be instructed how far he was right in his opinions, and how far wrong.—It could no longer serve any good purpose to spend his time there, and be a burden to his friends. He was really in want of money. Besides, the cardinal had told him, *vivâ voce*, to come no more into his sight, unless he would recant;” and, said Luther, “In my former letter I have distinctly pointed out all the recantation I can possibly make.” He then signified his positive determination to leave the place; but not before he had formally appealed from the pope’s legate, nay, from the pope himself, “ill informed, to the same most holy Leo X. that he might be better informed.” In prosecuting this appeal, he confessed that he acted rather from the judgment of some persons of distinction than from his own. If he had been left entirely to himself, he should have thought an appeal unnecessary in this case. He wished to refer everything to the determination of the church. What could he do more?—He was not a contentious adversary, but a tractable scholar. Even the elector Frederic, he knew, would be better pleased with his appeal than his recantation. He therefore besought the cardinal to consider both his departure and his appeal as the effect of necessity and of the authority of his friends. They said, WHAT will you retract? Is

your retraction to be the rule of our FAITH? If anything, which you have advanced, is to be condemned, let the church decide and do you obey. This reasoning, in his mind, was irresistible.

Luther waited four whole days, reckoning from the day of his dismissal by the cardinal; and still received no further orders. The suspense was extremely afflicting; and both himself and his friends began to suspect that this TOTAL SILENCE portended violence to his person. To prevent being seized and imprisoned, he quitted Augsburg very early in the morning of the nineteenth* of October 1518.

Anxiety of Luther.

He quits Augsburg.

A friendly senator ordered the gates of the city to be opened, and he mounted a horse, which Staupitius had procured for him. He had neither boots nor spurs, nor sword; and he was so fatigued with that day’s journey, that when he descended from his horse, he was not able to stand, but fell down instantly among the straw in the stable.† He had, however, taken care before his departure, that everything relative to his appeal should be done in a proper manner and in the presence of a notary public.

Such was the conclusion of the conferences at Augsburg, in which the firmness and plain dealing of Luther was no less conspicuous than the unreasonable and imperious behaviour of the cardinal.

Whatever might be the cause of that SILENCE for several days, on the part of Cajetan, which our Reformer and his friends beheld with so much just suspicion and jealousy; whether the legate still hoped to bring the affair to a happy termination by the milder methods of influence and persuasion; or whether his ambiguous conduct is best explained on the supposition that he was intending to seize the person of Luther, but did not dare to proceed to extremities, in defiance of the imperial grant of safe conduct,

* Some historians say, this happened on the 20th October, others on the 18th; but I think Luther’s own account of the proceedings at Augsburg show that he must have left that city on the 19th. It is unnecessary to trouble the reader further respecting a matter of so little consequence.

† Tom. I. Altemb. p. 150.—Paul Sarpi says, what is not at all improbable, that Luther had John Huss’s case in his head.

without further orders from the Roman See; on almost every imaginable view of his motives, it seems natural to conclude that he must have been much mortified at the sudden departure of Luther. He had neither punished the heretic nor reduced him to submission. The court of Rome would probably be highly displeased when they heard of his escape; and, in their disappointment, would be apt to forget the difficult circumstances under which the cardinal acted, and to attribute both the present and the consequent mischiefs to his bad management. In fact, as soon as the events at Augsburg were known at Rome, the pope's legate was blamed exceedingly for his severe and illiberal treatment of Luther, at the very moment, it is said, when he ought to have promised him great riches, a bishopric, or even a cardinal's hat.*

Cajetan, no doubt, understood the disposition of the court of Rome sufficiently to foresee how harsh a construction would be put upon his conduct in a business which had terminated so unfavourably to their wishes and expectations. In the bitterness of his heart, he complained to the elector of Saxony, of Luther's insolent and insincere behaviour; and even reproached his highness for supporting such a character. He said, that he had conversed for many hours privately with Staupitius, and one or two more learned friends respecting this business; that his object had been to preserve the dignity of the Apostolic See, without disgracing BROTHER MARTIN; and that when he had put matters into such a train as to have reasonable hopes of the success of his plan, he had found himself completely deluded. Martin, his several associates, and his vicar-general, had suddenly disappeared. Martin indeed had written letters, in which he pretended to beg pardon, but he had retracted not one word of the scandalous language he had used. Lastly, Cajetan warned the prince to consider, how much he was bound in honour and conscience, either to send brother Martin to Rome, or to banish him from his dominions. As to himself, he said, he had washed his hands of so pestilential a business, but his highness might be assured the cause would go on at Rome. It was too

important to be passed over in silence; and he entreated him not to sully the glory of himself and his illustrious house, for the sake of a paltry mendicant monk.

Every pious reader will lament the effect which these turbulent and contentious scenes produced upon the mind of the venerable Staupitius. It should seem, that partly an apprehension of danger, and partly his private conversation with cardinal Cajetan, influenced this good man to leave his friend, withdraw all further opposition to the pope, and retire to Saltzburg. Our more determined and adventurous Reformer did not hesitate to tell him, that "he stuck fast between Christ and the pope."† Let us hope, however, that this judgment of Luther was of the harsher sort; and that, in passing it, sufficient allowances were not made for the different tempers and ages of men, and for inveterate habits.

Two reasons induce me to conclude with certainty, that Staupitius acted towards Luther with perfect faithfulness at Augsburg. First, it is beyond all dispute, that he affronted Cajetan by leaving that place suddenly and without taking leave; which he would never have done, if he had betrayed his friend by dishonourably entering into any plans for seizing his person. Secondly, by way of encouraging the persecuted monk in his difficult circumstances, he used this language to him, "Remember, my brother, you undertook this business in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Luther himself, three years afterwards, owned these precious words "sunk deep into his mind." The truth is, this reverend vicar-general was a man of a timid temper, and well advanced in years; also his views of the Gospel were far from being bright or distinct; and lastly, the prospect of peace with the hierarchy, at least at Wittemberg, was extremely gloomy.

Moreover, we cannot doubt but the pope's legate, in his private conversation with Staupitius, would use both conciliatory and threatening language. Each would tend to shake the resolution of such a man. And besides the direct and immediate effect of that conversation on the mind of the timorous vicar-gene-

* Luth. Op. Vol. I. The letter is dated Oct. 25, 1518.

† Lib. I. ep.

* Father Paul.

ral, we may fairly trace some other important consequences to the same origin. While he was agitated with the discussion, and perhaps yielding to the legate's menaces and advice, he exhorted his less pliable monk to exhibit to his superiors some plainer marks of obedience and humility. The firm temper of Luther, which had resisted the imperious dictates of a haughty cardinal, instantly relented under the entreaties of a mild and affectionate friend. Hence, that submissive letter which our Reformer wrote to Cajetan* on Monday the seventeenth of October; and hence those apologies and concessions which are contained in it, to the very limit of what his conscience would permit. Probably no part of his own conduct, on a review of the proceedings at Augsburg, would afford him less satisfaction than this; and though Luther never reproached Staupitius for having recommended so extremely injudicious and suppliant a measure, yet the latter might possibly observe in the former some dissatisfaction on that account; and, at any rate, he could not fail to be convinced, from many circumstances, that his own disposition was not calculated, like that of his friend, to encounter such difficulties and hazards as were likely to arise in a righteous and determined opposition to the popedom. These considerations may help further to explain, why it might not be disagreeable to Staupitius to remove from Wittemberg, and thereby avoid the dangerous fellowship and importunities of a man, who, in his opinion, was apt to be impetuous and turbulent in his public conduct.

But perhaps the circumstance, which may be thought most unfavourable to the reputation of Staupitius, is, that, in the year 1523, we find him preferred to an abbacy at Saltzburg. Luther's affectionate regard and veneration for his vicar-general, restrained him from saying anything harsh or severe on this occasion, but he could not dissemble his doubts and anxieties respecting the consequences of this preference. We will conclude this chapter with two valuable extracts of his letters. The first is dated 1522, and is an answer to a letter received from Staupitius, at a time when Luther had heard an un-

Staupitius is made an abbot. A. D. 1523.

founded rumour, that his friend was actually made an abbot.

"The report of your being made an abbot is so general, that if I had not received your own letter in contradiction, I must have been compelled to believe it. It is, I suppose, in the same way that you receive UN-
TRUTHS concerning me. May Luther to Staupitius. the Providence of God attend

you! but, I confess, my plain understanding does not point out to me, how it can be advisable for you to accept an abbacy at this time. I would not, however, interfere with your judgment. One thing I entreat you, by the bowels of Christ, not readily to believe those who calumniate me. In regard to what you inform me, that my doctrines are the delight of debauchees, and that many scandalous practices have been the consequence of my recent publications, I am neither afraid of such censorious representations, nor surprised to hear of them. Certainly I have laboured, and am labouring, that the pure word of God may be spread about without tumult. But you know that I am not master of events. My object has been to attack, by means of the written word, that system of impieties, which hath been introduced in opposition to sound doctrine. The abominations, my father, the abominations of the pope, with his whole kingdom, must be destroyed. And the Lord does this 'without hand,* by the word alone. The subject exceeds all human comprehension; and, therefore, we need not wonder that great commotions, scandals, and even prodigies, should arise. Let not these things disturb you, my father. I cherish the best hopes. The counsel and the stretched out arm of God is plain in this matter. Remember how my cause from the very first gave the highest offence to the world, and yet it hath continually prevailed. Satan feels his wound: hence he rages the more, and endeavours to throw all into confusion."

The second letter, dated 1523, is addressed to the reverend abbot of St. Peter's in Saltzburg.

"Reverend father, Your silence is unkind. But though I cease to find favour in your eyes, I ought never to forget you, through whose means, the light of the Gospel first dawned in my heart. I must tell you the truth; it

Luther writes again to Staupitius.

* Pages 234, 235.

* Dan. viii. 25.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONTROVERSY CONTINUED.—THE ATTEMPTS OF MILTITZ AND OF ECKIUS.

would have been more agreeable to me, if you had not been appointed an abbot: but since it is so, let neither of us interfere with our respective rights of private judgment. Your best friends are sorry for your leaving us, but still much more sorry that you are so near the infamous cardinal Langius, and that you will be compelled to bear in silence all his outrageous behaviour. I shall wonder if you are not in danger of denying Christ. . . . We still hope the best of you, though your long silence disheartens us. If you are become another man, which may Christ forbid! I speak plainly, I shall throw away no more words, but have recourse to prayer, that God may be pleased to show mercy upon you, and us all. You observe, reverend father, how doubtfully I express myself. The reason is, your long silence leaves us ignorant of the disposition of your mind; whereas you very well know our most secret thoughts and wishes. Permit me, however, to speak positively on one point,—We are confident, that we are not really objects of your contempt, even though you should dislike all our proceedings. I shall not cease to pray that you may be as much estranged from the popedom, as I am at this moment, and, indeed, as you were formerly. May the Lord hear me, and take you and us to himself.”

These letters may deserve the reader's diligent consideration. They throw light on the general character both of the writer and of his friend: they intimate an evident progress of knowledge, in Luther's mind, respecting the nature of the papacy, which took place between the years 1518 and 1523: they manifest the strength of divine grace, which enabled him to withstand that threatening storm which alarmed Staupitius, and drove him into a dishonourable shelter: and, lastly, they compel the mind to entertain painful fears and conjectures respecting the perfect uprightness of the new abbot of Saltzburg, however we may be inclined to indulge cheerful hopes, that at the last day he will be found not to have gone the length of actually denying his Lord and Master.—Staupitius enjoyed his abbacy only for a very short time. He died in the year 1524.

THE condition of Luther, after his return to Wittenburg, was peculiarly afflictive. Before himself he saw the total ruin of his worldly circumstances, the hardships of poverty and of exile, and the fear of a violent death from papal vengeance. He was not without hope of the protection of the elector, partly from the well-known justice and humanity of that prince's character, and partly from the good offices of his secretary Spalatinus. Moreover, as yet, the interference of Frederic in the ecclesiastical controversy had not only been firm and discreet, but also as spirited and friendly as could reasonably be expected in behalf of one who was looked on by the hierarchy as a turbulent and an abandoned heretic. Still it behoved our Reformer not to be over-confident in his expectations of future support. He had abundant cause to be thankful for the past exertions of his prince, which had been found so useful and effective; but trying times were coming on apace. Every day the contest grew more and more perilous. Luther himself had a single eye to the prosperity of the kingdom of Christ; but he could not be answerable for the zeal or the perseverance of others: he was well acquainted with the human heart; and he foresaw that political and secular concerns might clash with the interests of the Gospel. He would not wonder if the love of many began to wax cold; * even his much esteemed friend Staupitius had already quitted Saxony; and, though the elector had hitherto manfully defended him against the tyrannical machinations of the court of Rome, it might well be doubted, whether the chief motives of this magnanimous conduct were a regard for the honour of God and the religion of Jesus. †

* Matt. xii.

† Some account of the religious character of the elector was given in page 216 of this Volume. Seekendorf doubts whether his principal reason for supporting Luther, who was then the public teacher of divinity and philosophy in the university of Wittenburg, might not be the ardent desire which that prince always showed for the prosperity of his favourite seminary of learning. Be this as it may, it is certain, that even before

It was an excellent part of Luther's character, that in the most critical and difficult situations he could commit his cause to the God whom he served, with firm and entire reliance on HIS WILL; and at the same time be as active and indefatigable in using all prudential means, as if the events depended solely on human exertions. In his present danger and perplexity, he cast his eyes on France, where formerly some opposition had been made to the fulness of papal domination; and where he hoped that he might profess and preach divine truth with greater security than in Germany. "Not," said he in a letter to Spalatinus, "that I care much on my own account; for in fact, I am concerned, that I should not be thought worthy to suffer for the truth; especially, as by going to Augsburg, I exposed myself to many dangers, and almost tempted God to bring evil upon me. It grieves me, however, to see the fair prospect of our rising seminary thus suddenly clouded, and the studies of our young men at Wittemberg, who are wonderfully zealous for the acquisition of sacred literature, blasted in the bud."—In another letter to the same friend, he said, "Every day I expect from Rome the arrival of the ecclesiastical anathemas; and I am, therefore, disposing my affairs in such a manner, that when those curses shall arrive, I may be ready, like Abraham, to depart, not knowing whither. Yet, in another sense, I do know whither I shall go, for God is every where. However, I leave you this farewell letter. See that you have the courage to read the letter of a man excommunicated and accursed!" In a third letter he declared, he was ready either to go or stay. "Some friends,"

the conferences at Augsburg, in a letter to cardinal Raphael, he expressed himself with great coolness and indifference respecting the DOCTRINES of Luther. "I have never," says he, "taken upon me to defend either the writings or the sermons of Dr. Martin L. and I proved the same, which I now assert, both to Cajetan the pope's legate and to Miltitz his nuncio." Some authors consider this as a confession on the part of Frederic, that he had not so much as read a line of Luther's publications, or heard him deliver his sermons: Others suppose that, in his concerns with the papal agents, he might dissemble his regard for the Reformer, with a view of supporting him and his cause more effectually in the end. Luth. Op. Witt. Vol. I. p. 228.

said he, "advise me to deliver myself up to the elector, who will protect me in some safe place, and at the same time inform the pope's legate, that my person is under confinement, and that I am ready to give answers to such questions as shall be proposed to me. I commit this plan to your prudence. I am in the hands of God and of my friends. It vexes me to think, that it should be so commonly believed, that the prince in secret supports me. This report, if anything can, will drive me hence, that I may not involve him in my dangers. To be brief: while I remain here, my liberty, both of writing and of speaking, is very much restrained; whereas, if I leave Germany, I will open my heart to the world, and offer up my life freely in the service of Christ."

Those who have most considered how great a trial, to a thought fulmind, a state of suspense is in dangerous and critical seasons, will form the best judgment of Luther's situation towards the end of the year 1518. The foregoing extracts lay open his secret feelings and resolutions, at the same time that they also exhibit his extraordinary faith, patience, and resignation.

In this conjuncture, the elector of Saxony signified his earnest wish that Luther would not leave Wittemberg.* This spirited resolution is to be ascribed, partly to the interference and supplication of the university of that place in behalf of their beloved professor, and partly to the imperious and threatening language of cardinal Cajetan.† Frederic, with a calmness and dignity suitable to his character, declared that he could not expel Luther from Wittemberg, without doing much injury to his university, and further, that he should not consider him as a heretic till he had been heard and was convicted. Animated with this favourable determination of the prince, the professor of theology resolved to remain on the spot; and, in a discourse from the pulpit, he requested the people, in case his person should at length become the victim of papal severity, not to harbour the least ill-will against the pope or any human being whatever, but to commit the cause to God.

It will be proper to mention here, that besides the literary and controversial em-

The elector of Saxony, in A. D. 1518, desires Luther not to leave Wittemberg.

poyments of the professor at Wittemberg, he had for some time discharged the office of pastor of the same town, as the substitute of Simon Heinsius, the ordinary minister, who then laboured under bodily infirmities; and thus this industrious Reformer supported at once the character of a theological teacher and disputant, and also of a popular preacher and parochial clergyman.

Luther foreseeing the manner in which he should probably be treated at Rome, and desirous of anticipating the papal censures, of which he was in daily expectation, had recourse to the wise expedient of appealing formally to a general council. In the instrument of his appeal, he still professes obedience to the authority of the Apostolic See; but as the pope was only a man, and, like other men, liable to err, and as St. Peter, the most holy of all his predecessors, had actually erred, he appealed to the next general council, which, when legally assembled, was a power superior to that of the pope, and could afford redress to the oppressed.

It soon appeared, that Luther was not mistaken in his conjectures respecting the intentions of the Romish court. His appeal to a future council is dated November 28, 1518. But Leo X. without mentioning the name of Luther, on the 9th of November of the same year issued a bull, in which he confirmed the doctrine of indulgences in the most absolute manner. By this step, no less improvident than impious, he put it out of the power of the friends of the papacy to vindicate or even to extenuate its conduct. The grossest venality and contempt of true piety and salutary discipline had prevailed in Germany, through the sale of indulgences. To maintain the rectitude of the practice, without the least correction of excesses, at a time when the memory of the transactions was recent, prevented every attempt that might be made to reconcile Luther to the hierarchy. The providence of God was admirable in thus barring up his return to the church of Rome, while, as yet, he was far from being convinced of the totally antichristian state of the popedom.*

But the mercenary prostitution of in-

* Op. Luth. I. 217—232. Wit. Luther's first appeal, mentioned in p. 235, was dated Oct. 16, 1518.

dulgences had not been confined to Germany. In the summer of this same year 1518, Samson, a Franciscan of Milan, came to Zurich, to prosecute the scandalous traffic. There he was opposed by Huldric Zuinglius, afterwards the famous Swiss Reformer.* In the month of September, Samson came to Zug, where a servant seeing the people press in crowds, addressed them: "Be not so importunate, I beseech you; let those enter first, who are furnished with money; care shall be taken afterwards of the poor."† At Bern, the enormities exceeded, if possible, those which had been practised in Germany. When the sale of the indulgences was over, BAPTISMAL INNOCENCE was restored to all present, who should confess their sins, and thrice recite the Lord's prayer and the Angelic salutation: Those also, who thrice went round the great church daily, repeating prayers, might free what souls they pleased from purgatory. Still grosser corruptions than these were practised. But the infatuation of the hierarchy was incurable. Evangelical light and liberty were fast advancing to the relief both of Germany and Switzerland, yet the rulers of the church shut their eyes, and hardened their hearts. Scarcely roused from a state of shameful sloth and sensuality, they seem to have instantly fallen into the opposite extreme of blind presumption and impetuous rage. Pride, rashness, and a most tyrannical ambition, appeared in all their councils.

During the whole progress of the reformation, the pious reader has reason to admire the providential circumstances, which, both in succession and in concurrence, favoured the happy deliverance of the nations from papal captivity. We have just seen how the late haughty conduct of Cajetan tended to fix the mind of Frederic more steadily in the interests of the Reformer; and this was a consequence which proved extremely influential upon the subsequent events. Immediately this wise prince solicited the emperor to exert all his authority at Rome, that the present ecclesiastical controversy might be settled in Germany by impartial judges. What would have been the ultimate effect of this prudent

The sale of indulgences at Zurich opposed by Zuinglie, in 1518.

* Father Paul, B. I. p. 8.

† Page 60. Seckendorf.—Hottinger.

step, we are unable to say. Maximilian died in the beginning of the year 1519; and during the INTERREGNUM the prince elector, duke of Saxony, as vicar of the empire, possessed sufficient power to protect and cherish Lutheranism in its infancy. "The violent tempest," says Luther, "subsided by little and little; and the pontifical thunders of excommunication were gradually more and more despised."* The resolutions of Frederick were not a little confirmed by a letter which he received in the spring of 1519, from the learned Erasmus. Brevity does not permit me to present the reader with this elegant composition, in which the writer manages his subject with wonderful address, dexterity, and politeness. By the following answer, however, a judgment may be formed both of the matter contained in it, and also of the effect it produced on the mind of the prince.

"The elector, duke of Saxony, to Erasmus: It gives me the greatest satisfaction to be informed by you, that Lutheranism is not disapproved by the learned, and that the writings of doctor Martin are read with the greatest avidity. He is a person almost unanimously admired, at home and abroad, both for the integrity of his life, and for his solid erudition. That he has remained hitherto in Saxony under our protection, is indeed owing rather to the just cause he defends, than to the man himself.—Nothing can be more contrary to our principles, than to suffer a man, who has deserved reward, to be oppressed and punished: Nor, with the help of Almighty God, will we ever allow an innocent person to become a victim to the selfish malice of the wicked."

The court of Rome, finding it impossible to stop the proceedings of Luther, by mere authority and threatening, had now recourse to the arts of negotiation. The haughty pontiff had become sensible of his imprudence in having entrusted the management of the controversy to such a commissioner as Cajetan; but we shall soon see, that still he had learnt no lessons of true wisdom and moderation, from what hap-

pened at Augsburg. He condescended indeed to employ a person of a different stamp; one, who by his insinuating manners and gentle treatment of the Reformer, raised considerable expectations of at least a temporary peace; but, happily for the reformation, this judicious and temperate policy was presently succeeded by measures most unaccountably imprudent and disgusting. This new legate was Charles Miltitz, a Saxon knight, who, as a lay character, might be supposed less under the dominion of party and prejudice, than the Dominican cardinal, his predecessor. He was commissioned to present to the elector Frederic the golden consecrated rose;* and, if possible, to put an end to all the ecclesiastical disputes which had produced the rupture between Luther and the Roman See. Frederic had formerly solicited the favour of the rose with much earnestness; but on this occasion, he is said to have received it with a cool and almost contemptuous politeness; and in nowise could he be induced to change his measures respecting his favourite Professor of Wittemberg.

Miltitz, thus foiled in his attempts to influence the mind of the prince elector, repaired to Leipsic, and there finding Tetzl, he twice rebuked him with the greatest severity before his own Provincial, † on account of his iniquitous practices in the business of indulgences. It appears from Miltitz's own letters, that as he passed through Germany, he had obtained perfect intelligence of the frauds and private vices of Tetzl; and probably he was the more desirous of exposing them, because, by abandoning that audacious Dominican, he imagined he should at once gratify the advocates for reformation, and shelter the Roman pontiff from censure. With Luther himself the new legate had several conferences, which proved fruitless, as to the essential points: and the only effect of these negotiations in the former part of 1519, seems to have been, that the electors of Saxony and of Treves agreed to defer the complete examination of the matters in dispute to the first German diet of the new emperor Charles V.; and

Death of Maximilian, A. D. 1519.

A letter of Erasmus written to the Elector of Saxony, A. D. 1519.

The Elector's answer.

The pope sends a new legate named Miltitz, into Germany.

The new legate rebukes Tetzl.

He confers with Luther, A. D. 1519.

* Luth. Op. Praef.

* This used to be considered as a peculiar mark of the pope's favour and esteem.

† Seck. p. 62.

that, in the mean time, Luther should write a submissive letter to the pope. To this our Reformer readily consented, for he was by no means disposed to break with the pontiff; and it is not improbable he would have continued an obedient subject of the Roman See all his days, if he might have been permitted, without molestation, to discharge the office of a faithful pastor of Christ. The learned translator of Mosheim* seems out of humour with him, for having made "weak submissions" on this occasion; and yet he owns that, "properly speaking, there was no retraction of his former tenets, nor the smallest degree of respect shown to the infamous traffic of indulgences." If so, every judicious protestant, though he may entirely agree with this excellent writer, that Luther's "views were not, as yet, very extensive, his former prejudices entirely dispelled, or his reforming principles steadily fixed,"† may nevertheless maintain that his submissive conduct at this time, taken with all the circumstances which accompanied it, indicated STRENGTH of mind, not weakness, and a spirit of discrimination rather than of blind acquiescence. We ought not to judge of this great man by the feelings and habits of protestants of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

His inimical historian Maimbourg‡ says, "his letter to the pope was rather civil than humble, but that it contained nothing to the purpose." Let the reader judge from the following concise account of it, whether Luther, according to the light which he then possessed, did not take effectual care not to entangle his conscience by any improper concessions.

He said, it was a great grief to him to find himself accused of want of respect to the church of Rome: that his design, in all he had done, was to maintain the honour of that church; and that, as his writings were now spread throughout all Germany, he could not retract his assertions without dishonouring the said church: that the persons who really injured the holy See, were the very preachers whom he had opposed: they disgraced their sacred office by the most absurd discourses, and by seeking only to gratify their avarice under the protection of his Holiness. Lastly,

he declared, that he was ready to observe silence in future respecting indulgences, provided his adversaries would also forbear their provocations. In concluding, he solemnly protested, that all along he had aimed at nothing but to prevent the mother-church from being polluted by the vile imputation of avarice, and the people from being seduced by a false notion, that the indulgences were preferable to truly benevolent actions.*

Of his personal conferences with Miltitz, the following compressed account is extracted from his own letters, and from the Latin edition of his works. "Charles Miltitz saw me at Altenburg, and complained, that I had united the whole world to myself, and drawn it aside from the pope; that he had discovered this at the inns, as he travelled. 'Martin,' said he, 'I took you for some solitary old theologian; whereas I find you a person in all the vigour of life. Then you are so much favoured with the popular opinion, that I could not expect, with the help of twenty-five thousand soldiers, to force you with me to Rome.' After this flattery, he entreated me to consult for pacific measures, and promised, that he would endeavour that the pope should do the same. We supped together, and I was treated with the greatest courtesy. I conducted myself in such a manner as if I had not seen through these Italian arts.† I could only promise, that I would do all, which I could do, consistently with truth and a good conscience; that I also loved peace, and was driven into these broils by mere necessity. This Charles Miltitz was esteemed a frivolous character, and his advice was frivolous; nevertheless it is my judgment, that if the friends of the papacy and the pope himself had treated me in this manner at first, matters would never have come to so great a rupture. Instead of that, the pope condemned me unheard, and raged with his BULLS; and the crafty archbishop of Mentz became the dupe of his own cunning. All the blame is at his door; for, his sole object in suppressing my doctrine, was to save his own part of the money, which should be collected by the indulgences. But now all the papal plans and attempts are to no purpose. The Lord hath awaked, and stands to

Account of their conferences.

Luther writes to the pope.

* Mosh. Vol. II. Chap. II. sect. ix.
† Id. ‡ Sect. 24.

* Luth. Op. Vol. I.—Du Pin, Cent. 16.
† Italitates.

judge the people; and though they slay us, they will not gain their point."

Luther was always distinguished by a spirit of respect and obedience towards his superiors, whether in church or state. In this negotiation with Miltitz, and also in his letter to the pope, we discern much of this spirit, joined to great tenderness of conscience, and an amiable sensibility of temper on account of the humane treatment he had received. Keep in view, that, as yet, he apprehended the papal power to have just foundations, however it might have been abused; keep in view his own description of his feelings,* penned in moments of the greatest deliberation, and long after the turbulent scenes were passed; keep in view the state of the rest of mankind in Christendom, and you will acknowledge the Saxon Reformer to have exhibited a rare example of courage and firmness in these memorable transactions. In proposing a compromise of silence on both sides in the affair of indulgences, he may be thought to have acted inconsistently with his former declarations, and to have conceded too much to the hierarchy; but the answer is, he had already manfully resisted the Roman See in that abominable traffic; and he began to hesitate how far it was his proper business to proceed further in a matter of that sort: In a word, his conscience was at present puzzled respecting the EXTENT of the obedience which he owed to the rulers whose authority he then allowed. Harassed with doubts, and perfectly aware of the danger that threatened him, he would have given the world for a sound and discreet counsellor: of the danger he sought no partner: but alas, his best and wisest friends, when pressed closely concerning the most critical and perilous part of the contest, absolutely stood aloof.† After long and diligent reflection on the best authenticated facts, and the peculiar situation of Luther, the very doubts which arose in his mind, appear to me, I confess, to imply both extraordinary integrity of principle, and great vigour of intellect.

* Page 228.

† After he had conferred with Miltitz, he wrote to his friend Spalatinus; and he also particularly entreated the elector Frederic, that, for the sake of Almighty God, he would use so much clemency towards him, as freely to say, what he wished him to do in the present circumstances. Seeck. p. 63.

But whatever were the secret motives of our Reformer, in making his concessions, Leo X. disdained to accept the submission, and open the door of reconciliation. The serious reader will not think me troublesome in repeatedly drawing his attention to the kind providence of God, which appeared so remarkably in many particulars of the contest before us. While the Roman pontiff, rejecting counsels of peace, was listening to enraged bigots, greedy Dominicans, and ambitious cardinals, the inquisitive spirit of the humble Professor of Wittenberg was enabled, by degrees, and a constant study of the Scriptures, to acquire a practical conviction that the tyranny of the papal hierarchy was no longer to be endured. Luther's letter to the pope was written in the former part of 1519; and by his two letters to Staupitius, we have seen how much better he understood the true principles of the papal system in 1522 and 1523.* It was undoubtedly this gradual insight into the enormities of the popedom, which co-operating with the infatuation of the pontifical advisers in their unaccountable aversion to healing and pacific measures, raised that general spirit of indignation, and of opposition to the established religion, which at length terminated in the blessed Reformation.

While the pope's nuncio was negotiating a reconciliation in Germany, Tetzel, the wretched subaltern, whose scandalous conduct had so much disgraced his employers, met with the reward which frequently awaits the ministers of iniquity. He found himself deserted by all the world.

Miltitz, in particular, had treated him so roughly, that this daring and boisterous instrument of papal avarice and extortion actually fell sick, wasted away, and at last died of a broken heart. A dreadful lesson! This unhappy man left the world, as far as appears, destitute of comfort in his own soul, after he had administered a false peace to thousands! It became necessary for those whom he had served to discard him, and he had no resources in his own conscience. The pontiff's displeasure is said to have affected him exceedingly; but we have

Aburd
conduct of
Leo X.

Wretched
situation of
Tetzel.

His death.

* Page 237, 238.

no evidence that he searched the word of God in true penitence and humility. A little before his death, Luther, hearing of his anguish of mind, and sympathizing with him in his distress, wrote to him in the most kind and consolatory strains, and begged him not to be distressed with the recollection of anything that had passed between them.* If the letter had been extant, we should have found in it, I apprehend, instructions concerning repentance, and warm exhortations to lay hold of the promises of the Gospel. If the French historians, Maimbourg and Varillas, had been acquainted with this fact, they would hardly, one would think, have represented Luther as a man of vindictive, implacable temper.†

About the middle of the year 1519, Erasmus wrote from Lovain, an epistle to Luther, which proves with what caution and temper that great man had beheld the progress of the contest. He takes care not to appear a partisan of Luther; he speaks of him with a studied ambiguity; commends him so far as he could consistently with his determined purpose not to expose himself to trouble or rebuke, and recommends to him moderation and mildness in his proceedings. In this last point, he certainly deserved the thanks of Luther. Let us remember, however, that timid and artful politicians were never employed, to any good purpose, in the service of Jesus Christ.

No man understood better than Erasmus the art of suggesting advice, in nice and difficult cases, without giving offence. The latter part of his letter to Luther runs thus: "In England you have persons of the greatest distinction, who think highly of your writings. Here also you have advocates, and among them there is one most excellent character. For my part, I keep clear of all party, with a view to be of as much service as I can to the revival of literature. And I think one does more good by civility and moderation than by violence. In that way Christ has brought mankind under his government: In that way St. Paul abro-

gated the Jewish ritual. It is better to complain of those who abuse the authority of the pontiffs, than of the pontiffs themselves; and I would make the same remark respecting kings. We may argue as strongly as we can against notions that have long prevailed, but we should never contradict them positively. It is more effectual to treat acrimonious abuse with contempt than to confute it. On every occasion we should guard against arrogant and factious LANGUAGE; nothing can be more opposite to the spirit of Christianity. At the same time we should keep a strict watch over our MOTIVES. Anger, hatred, vain-glory, lay snares for us, even when we are most piously employed. I do not say these things to you by way of admonition, for you do observe the very rules here recommended. I mention them rather for the purpose of exhorting you to persevere in the same conduct always. Your commentaries on the Psalms please me exceedingly; and I hope they will do much good. The prior of the monastery at Antwerp says, he was formerly one of your scholars. He is a man of real primitive Christianity, and loves you most cordially. He is almost the only one who preaches Jesus Christ. The rest, in general, either aim at lucre, or treat the people with old wives' fables. May the Lord Jesus daily bestow upon you more plentifully HIS OWN SPIRIT, for the glory of his name and the public good! Farewell."*

There are many excellent observations interspersed throughout this composition. It is written in Latin, and is a good specimen of that elegant adroitness with which the accomplished author always conducted himself in affairs of peculiar delicacy.

But it was not only the wary Erasmus† and the timid Staupitius, who shrunk from the dangerous contest with the hierarchy in which Luther was involved; even Spalatinus himself was not a little intimidated by the daring measures of his adventurous friend. Several of the elector's court also were alarmed in a similar way. And thus the Saxon Reformer, whose righteous cause was eminently that of mankind in general, and who himself needed encouragement in

* Luth. Op. Witt.

† Maimb. in Seek. p. 18.—Varillas, in eod. p. 22.—See also pp. 220, &c. of this Vol.

* Ep. Erasmi. 427. Vol. I.

† Vid. Appendix, Erasmus.

his perils and anxieties, was called upon to rouse and animate the drooping minds of his best supporters, who began to waver and complain that matters were carried too far. This departure from a steady and consistent conduct in his more enlightened adherents was, no doubt, a trial peculiarly severe and vexatious to Luther. Men expect, from their enemies, reproach, misrepresentation, calumny; they are prepared for these things; they even triumph in them, and are stirred up by them to defence and victory; it is when their friends become tame or treacherous, when they deceive or desert them in critical moments, that the firmest mind, acting on principles merely human, is apt to give way. Conscious of integrity and disinterestedness, and overcome with chagrin and disappointment, a man, in such a case, abandons altogether a dangerous conflict, where his solitary efforts, against a host of adversaries, will prove inevitably abortive. Not so, however, where the cause is that of true religion, and where the Gospel of Christ has laid a strong hold both of the understanding and the affections. We then look for the operation of other motives besides those of mere human nature. As we then serve a MASTER who MUST be obeyed, we have promises of help, directions for resignation, and grounds of comfort in the issue of ill success, such as belong to no worldly enterprises whatever.—The following extract of a letter to Spalatinus will illustrate these observations.

Luther to Spalatinus:—

“Do not give way to fear too much, my dear Spalatinus; neither tease your mind by filling it with human imaginations. You know I must have perished long ago in my various struggles with the supporters of papal abominations, unless Christ had taken care of me and my concerns. Was there a single person, who did not expect that my ruin would have taken place before this time? I assure you, I suppress many things, which, if I were elsewhere, I should freely publish, concerning the enormities of Rome. But you must never hope that I shall be free from persecution and danger, unless I were entirely to give up the cause of sound divinity. My friends, if they please, may suppose me beside myself; nevertheless I say, if this contest be really of God, it will not be ended, till TRUTH effectually save itself by its own right hand; not

by mine, nor by yours. From the very first I have been expecting matters to come to the situation in which they are at this moment. However, I always told you, that I would quit the country, if my residence in Saxony was attended with any danger to the prince.”

From this letter, which plainly implies a previous communication from Spalatinus, expressive of much apprehension and uneasiness, a judgment may be formed of the sentiments respecting Luther, which probably prevailed at the elector's court in the former part of the year 1519. Spalatinus resided with Frederic in the capacity both of secretary and domestic chaplain; and therefore would take no step of importance without the secret knowledge and approbation of that prince. Luther was perfectly aware of this; and in his letter to his friend, would, no doubt, consider the fears and anxieties which he was endeavouring to quiet, as in reality, the fears and anxieties of the elector himself. Hence he wisely repeats his readiness at all times to quit Saxony, if his presence there should be judged injurious to the interests of the prince.

On this occasion, however, neither the elector of Saxony nor his court should be accused of downright insincerity. In the main, they certainly favoured the principles of Luther, and rejoiced in his success; but they disliked any material share of the HAZARD of the controversy, Hence they became cold, supine, and irresolute; and hence, their communications, which ought to have furnished spirited counsel and encouragement, dwindled into prudential lessons of caution and remonstrance. Modern protestants should know the extreme disadvantages under which the great CHAMPION of Christian liberty laboured in the beginning of the reformation.

The immediate circumstance, which seems to have given the alarm at this time* to the friends of Luther, was the bold declarations of this theologian, in his answers to the positions of Eckius, respecting the foundation of the pope's authority. He had written to Spalatinus very explicitly on this subject, but seems not completely to have satisfied his scruples. To call in question the origin of the power of the pope, was to tread on tender ground; the nations, as

* Viz. about the middle of 1519.

yet, secretly revered his majesty, and dreaded his vengeance; though, in regard to ecclesiastical abuses in general, they had indeed begun to open their eyes, and were receiving fresh light apace.

The name of Eckius of Ingolstadt has already been mentioned* among the adversaries of Luther. This able and learned doctor of divinity had formerly been the friend of our Reformer; but a thirst of fame and a prospect of worldly advantages seduced him from the cause of TRUTH. The facts we have to produce, indicate but too plainly the motives of Eckius. After his literary defeat in the affair of indulgences, he circulated thirteen propositions, all of them levelled against the heresies of Lutheranism. One of these propositions affirmed the grand article of a papist's faith, namely, "That the pontiffs are vicars of Christ, and the successors of St. Peter."† Luther had the sagacity instantly to see through his design, and expressed himself to the following effect: "I never so much as touched upon this subject in any of my discourses. Eckius now brings it forward to serve several purposes. He thinks, he shall hereby cast an odium upon me, and at the same time flatter the court of Rome to his own profit, and to the ruin of his brother Martin Luther."

It will here be proper to give a brief account of the famous disputation which was carried on publicly at Leipsic, for many days together, in the course of this year.

Eckius, relying on the brilliancy of his own talents and the popularity of his cause, earnestly sought for a public exhibition of theological skill; and, with this view, challenged Carolstadt, the colleague and adherent of Luther, and even Luther himself, to try their strength with him in a contest on the points in dispute. Carolstadt was a doctor of divinity, and archdeacon of Wittemberg, and is esteemed one of the first open defenders of Luther. The challenge was accepted; and George, duke of Saxony, uncle of the elector, offered the combatants his city of Leipsic, as the scene of debate, with an engagement for their security, and a promise of every conve-

nience. He was himself a strenuous Roman catholic, and he expected that great glory would accrue to the papal cause from the well-known abilities and attainments of Eckius. Luther obtained leave to be present at the contest as a spectator, but was expressly denied the grant of a safe conduct, if he attempted to appear in the character of a disputant. The assembly was splendid, the expectations of mankind were strongly fixed; and it was vainly imagined that some decision would be made concerning the objects of contention.

The first subject of debate between Eckius and Carolstadt, respected the limits of nature and grace. The latter disputant defended the whole doctrine of Augustine concerning grace, which, Luther observes, Eckius did not oppose by argument, or with any real difference of sentiment, but only in mere words and in appearance. He granted that FREE-WILL without grace could effect nothing but sin. "It avails then," continues Luther, "not to good but evil. Where then is its liberty? Moreover, every illiterate person, who hears the expression FREE-WILL, naturally supposes that it implies man to be equally capable of good and evil; whence he will presume on his own strength, and think that he can convert himself to God. Eckius knows very well the impiety of this notion, yet he supports and spreads it. I too admit that man's will is free in a certain sense; not because it is now in the same state as it was in Paradise, but because it was made free originally, and may, through God's grace, become so again."

Such were the sentiments of Luther on this difficult subject; and, if due allowance be made for the impropriety of the term free-will, his ideas appear sufficiently in harmony with what the most evangelical persons, in all ages, have maintained. The whole controversy was carried on with much clamour and confusion; the Roman party prevailed in popularity at Leipsic; Eckius delivered what he had to say with prodigious animation, and is allowed to have far exceeded Carolstadt in energetic exertions of voice and action. Luther protests, in the most solemn manner, that as long as an appeal to books and written documents were admitted, his friend Carolstadt defended himself with a rich va-

Enmity of Eckius.

Eckius and Carolstadt dispute publicly for six days.

The disputation at Leipsic, in 1519.

* Page 225 of this Vol.

† Propos. Ecc. Luth. Op. Vol. I.

riety of apt and excellent quotations, "But," says he, "Eckius made a proposal, that all books should be laid aside, and the dispute go on without them; the multitude gave a shout of approbation; and then, I freely own, that Eckius, who had the better memory and a greater flow of words, supported his side of the question in a more plausible manner than his opponent."*

This disputation continued for six days; † during which time, the superior eloquence and acuteness of Eckius seems to have afforded a temporary triumph to the enemies of the reformation. Flushed with success, and thirsting for glory, this champion of the papal system, came to Luther at his lodgings, and, with an air of confidence, said, "I understand you will not dispute with me in public." "How can I dispute with you," said Luther, "when the duke George refuses me my request of a safe conduct?" Eckius replied, "If I am not to combat you, I will spend no more time on Carolstadt. It was on your account that I came here. Suppose I could obtain the public faith for your safety, would you then meet me and try your strength?" ‡ Luther consented; and very soon after he had the duke's leave to take Carolstadt's place in the public debate.

This second theological conflict was carried on for ten days, with uncommon ardour and without intermission. Among the articles of controversy were the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, the nature of repentance and remission of sins, and, particularly, the foundation of the supremacy of the Roman pontiffs. It was in this last article of the controversy, that Eckius placed his chief strength and expectation of victory. His numerous audience in general, with the duke of Saxony at their head, favoured the papal cause: Long habits of ignorance, superstition, and prejudice, in religious matters, had established the Romish doctrines; and the few, who ventured to inquire for reasons of their faith, were deemed impious and accursed, and worthy of expulsion from the community.

Moreover, this question concerning the superiority of the Roman See was well calculated to promote the ambitious designs of Eckius in every way. Luther, it was foreseen, must either shun the main point in debate by disgraceful evasions; or, by a direct avowal of his doctrines, expose himself to the charge of open heresy. He must either yield the palm of eloquence and of theological skill to his crafty adversary, or he would inevitably furnish such decisive proofs of rebellion against the hierarchy as would ensure his own condemnation at the court of Rome. Thus the troublesome innovator was supposed to be entangled in an inexplicable dilemma; while the prudent defender of the established religion, looking forward to nothing but conquest and glory, anticipated the praises and honours of the Roman pontiff. Luther, whom we have observed to have been fully sensible, in how nice and critical a situation he was placed,* was much hurt by the ungenerous conduct of Eckius in this business, and severely reproached him for it afterwards.

To the talents and the artifices of the popish advocate, the Saxon Reformer, besides his superior abilities and more intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, opposed a good conscience, a firm determination to hazard everything in the cause of TRUTH, and a confident expectation of the blessing of the Almighty. In particular, against Eckius's doctrine of the divine right of the popes, he advanced the following proposition: "All the proofs, which can be produced to show that the Church of Rome is superior to other churches, are taken out of insipid decretals of the popes themselves, made within these four hundred years; and against this notion of supremacy, there are passages of the Holy Scriptures, approved histories for eleven hundred years, and the determinations of the council of Nice."

When Eckius contended, that the expressions, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church," "And I will give unto thee the keys," evinced the supremacy of St. Peter and his successors; that this was the explanation given by the holy fathers, and that the contrary opinion was among the errors of Wickliff and John Huss; Luther in reply said, that he could produce more pas-

Again they dispute for the space of ten days.

* Seck. 73.

† From June 27, 1519, to July 4.

‡ Melch. Ad.

sages from the fathers in support of his own interpretation of the passages in question than Eckius could of his; but that he had no hesitation to add, that even if all the fathers, without exception, had understood the passages in that sense, he would confute them by the authority of St. Paul, and St. Peter himself, who say, that Jesus Christ is the only foundation and corner-stone of his church. He further observed, that the words, "Thou art Peter," . . . if construed strictly, must be confined to the person of Peter, and therefore the authority conveyed by them ceased when that Apostle died; and that if their meaning was to be extended to the church and to Peter's successors, no reason could be given, why ALL the Apostles and ALL their successors should not be understood to be the successors of Peter. Lastly, he intimated that his adversary had been very unfortunate in appealing to the authority of Cyprian. "If," said Luther, "the learned doctor will agree to stand or fall by the authority of Cyprian, we shall quickly put an end to this controversy: For, in the first place, Cyprian never addresses Cornelius, the bishop of Rome, in any other manner than 'My dear brother;' and in the second, he expressly says, that every bishop has a distinct jurisdiction of his own, and that bishops ought not to interfere with each other, but wait for the day of judgment by our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Eckius was so much struck with the reasonings of Luther, and especially with the neat and well digested order in which his materials were arranged, that he was compelled to acknowledge, before a splendid audience, the "qualifications and attainments of his Reverend opponent." He even besought their illustrious and magnificent Mightinesses to pardon himself, who was so much occupied with other concerns, if he should not be able to produce such a mass of accurate testimonies as the learned doctor had laid before them. He came to Leipsic, he said, not to write books, but to dispute.

It will be unnecessary to trouble the protestant reader with a minute detail of a multitude of arguments, which were brought forward in this debate, with great warmth, eloquence and dexterity, on both sides. We shall make a few concise ob-

servations on several of the controverted points, and also take notice of some instructive facts and circumstances which are connected with this famous disputation at Leipsic, and then dismiss the subject.

Though Luther judged it impious to maintain the DIVINE RIGHT of the pope in that strict sense, which makes him the successor of St. Peter and vicar of Christ, his extreme reverence for the Scriptures, and his tenderness of conscience, disposed him, as yet, to allow the superiority of the Roman See, but on different grounds. It could not be denied, that the pontiffs had possessed a decided pre-eminence from age to age, and therefore, he conceived, it was his duty not to resist "the powers that be." This scriptural argument, which for a long time appeared to his mind in itself unanswerable, was still further strengthened by two powerful reasons. Firstly, the will of God, he thought, might be clearly collected from the facts, independent of Scripture. Unless it had been the will of God, the popes could never have obtained so great and durable a dominion. Secondly, "The whole body of Christians," he said, "own themselves to be under the Roman pontiff: This universal consent is a consideration of the greatest weight: the unity of the church should be preserved in everything that is not directly contrary to the word of God."*

Entirely agreeable to these sentiments is the declaration of Luther in one of his letters to Spalatinus, who, it should seem, had been directed by the elector of Saxony to admonish him most seriously, in all things to observe a reverential obedience towards the pope. "To separate myself," says he, "from the Apostolical See of Rome is a thing that has never yet entered my mind."† However, his next letter to the same friend intimates a further insight into the essence of popery. "That I may be the better qualified," says he, "for the ensuing debate at Leipsic, I am turning over the decretals of the popes; and I would whisper into your ear, that I begin to entertain doubts, whether the Roman pontiff be not the very Antichrist of the Scriptures, or his Messenger; so

Luther's sentiments on the supremacy of the pope.

Luther suspects the pope to be Antichrist.

* Revolut. Lutheri.

* Revolut. Lutheri. † Ep. p. 99.

wretchedly corrupted by him, in the decretals, are the pure doctrines of Christ.* As long as this new sentiment remained crude and unsettled in the mind of Luther, it certainly behoved him not to act upon it; but it is not difficult to understand how the divulging of so important a secret to Spalatinus must have startled the elector Frederic and his court, who, we have seen, were sufficiently alarmed with the liberties which had already been taken with the pontifical authority.†

How different were the views and motives of the persons who took part in the affairs of religion, about the time of the public controversy at Leipsic, and some months before! Leo X. was indolent and ill advised; perfectly indifferent in regard to religion and piety; only anxious to advance the opulence, grandeur and dominion of the Roman See. His ostentatious champion Eckius, on the one hand, flattered and misled his lordly master, who pretended to be infallible; and, on the other, menaced and calumniated the Augustine monk, while in reality he was seeking his own aggrandisement. Frederic the wise, and some of his court, grieved for several of the reigning abuses, which were obvious and undeniable, but still remained in a wretched bondage, confirmed by long habits of superstitious submission. Though friendly to improvements in religion, they dreaded the rude hand of the Saxon Reformer, and were in general too much disposed to bow to the majesty of the pope. Lastly, Luther was daily approaching, by firm but gradual advances, to that evangelical liberty, of which he became, under God, the principal reviver in Europe. Let these facts and observations be kept in mind, and they will help us to discover, what must have been the feelings of our Reformer at Leipsic, while he was disputing with Eckius concerning the pope's supremacy. To have denied the DIVINE RIGHT of the pontifical jurisdiction, according to the fullest and most extended interpretation of the words, was sufficiently dangerous; but to have dropped the slightest insinuation that the bishop of Rome was actually the Antichrist of the New Testament, or, that the Roman church was antichristian in principle, would probably have cost him his life.

The more thoroughly we examine the principles of Luther, the more exactly consistent do we find them with his practice, even in the most difficult circumstances. So in the present instance: He seriously believed, that long possession and the consent of the faithful,* were solid arguments for the papal supremacy; but some rays of fresh light burst in upon the mind of the honest inquirer at the very time when he was arming for the combat at Leipsic. He was then in no condition either to confirm or to do away his new suspicions of the antichristian character of the popedom. What was to be done? He determined to dismiss those suspicions for the present, till he should have leisure to weigh them; and in the mean time he adhered to the only principle, by which in his judgment, the duty of obedience to the existing hierarchy could be supported. He dared openly to assert,† that it was far better the Roman pontiff should, with fear and trembling, see the foundation of their authority in the permission of God and the consent of their subjects, than that, under a notion of DIVINE RIGHT, they should feel themselves secure, depend upon force and terror, and by degrees exercise an odious tyranny.

This declaration, though it fell greatly short of the creed of a true Roman Catholic, yet, by containing an actual acknowledgment of the pope's supremacy, manifested a spirit of obedience and reconciliation on the part of the Reformer. Nor was it possible for him, without doing the utmost violence to his conscience, to have exhibited a nearer consent to the doctrines of Eckius. There is even some reason to believe, that if his friends, namely, the elector of Saxony and his court, had not discovered so excessive an anxiety lest he should offend the pope by disrespectful treatment, he would have conceded less at this time to his opponent, respecting the grand article of Roman Catholic doctrine; or, at least, would have acted with more reserve on a point where his own faith, though modified and less offensive, was certainly beginning to waver. Before the public disputation at Leipsic, Luther printed and circulated his sentiments on the pope's supremacy, the same in sub-

* Ep. p. 100.

† See p. 245 of this Vol.

* Luth. Op. Resol.

† Resolut. de pot. Papæ.

stance as is related in the preceding pages. He took that step, he tells us, because he had great doubts, whether he should be allowed to enter the lists with Eckius as a public disputant. Three times by letters, he says, he put the question to the duke George, but could obtain no answer.* All this is, no doubt, strictly true. Yet whence, it is asked, arose the solicitude of Luther to appear, at all and on any principles, as the public defender of pontifical authority; the public defender of an unscriptural opinion, which he was soon going to abandon with abhorrence and detestation; and which, in his private letters, he was already beginning to reprobate in very significant language?

Seckendorf ascribes these conciliatory measures entirely to the fears and remonstrances of the elector Frederic and his court; and thinks that Luther in this instance acted contrary both to his own judgment and his inclination.† To differ from this very judicious and candid memorialist can never be pleasant, and will, in general, be found unsafe: Nevertheless, I cannot but think that, in estimating the motives of the Saxon Reformer, his friends as well as his adversaries have, on this and several other occasions, too much overlooked his profound veneration for established authorities. They seem to have scarcely supposed it possible, that a man, who was so deeply concerned in the confusions and divisions of the church, should still have been a friend to peace and good order. Whereas in fact, Luther's spirit of submission to legal establishments is as exemplary and unquestionable, as his courage and resolution in defending Christian liberty is truly wonderful and unparalleled. A proper attention to this part of his character will lead the candid inquirer to satisfactory explanations of his conduct in some cases where he has been too hastily accused of inconsistency.‡

* Lib. I. Ep. † Page 71. Seck.

‡ The reader will not suppose me to insinuate, that Luther's respect for the elector of Saxony and his court had no weight in determining him to treat the papal authority in a reverential manner during his controversy with Eckius; on the contrary, I believe it had considerable weight. But why is the consideration of other motives to be omitted; and particularly of such motives

Luther's own description of his feelings respecting the matters in dispute between Eckius and himself ought not to be omitted here; as it will, doubtless, be preferred to any conjectures either of Roman Catholics or of Protestants, especially by those, who have observed the integrity and the precision with which this faithful servant of God always lays open his mind on serious occasions. My own case, says he, is a notable example of the difficulty with which a man emerges from erroneous notions of long standing. How true is the proverb, Custom is a second nature! How true is that saying of Augustine, Habit, if not resisted, becomes necessity! I, who, both publicly and privately, had taught divinity with the greatest diligence for seven years, insomuch that I retained in my memory almost every word of my lectures, was in fact at that time only just initiated into the knowledge and faith of Christ; I had only just learned that a man must be justified and saved, not by works, but by the faith of Christ: and lastly, in regard to pontifical authority, though I publicly maintained that the pope was not the head of the church by a DIVINE RIGHT, yet I stumbled at the very next step, namely, that the whole papal system was a Satanic invention. This I did not see, but contended obstinately for the pope's RIGHT, FOUNDED ON HUMAN REASONS; so thoroughly deluded was I, by the example of others, by the title of HOLY CHURCH, and by my own habits. Hence I have learnt to have more candour for bigoted papists, especially if they are not much acquainted with sacred or perhaps even with profane history.*

The victory in the theological content at Leipsic, as might have been expected, was claimed by both sides.

But, instead of repeating many contradictory and positive assertions, that have originated in prejudice and party zeal, it will be better to mention several undeniable facts, which may assist the judgment in discovering what were the real sentiments of mankind at the time of this transaction, so celebrated in ecclesiastical history.

Consequences of the Leipsic disputations.

as are known to have been congenial with the man!

* Luth. Op. Vol. I. Præf.

1. George, the duke of Saxony, who, on all occasions was warmly attached to the papal interests, invited the disputants, after the debate was finished, to a convivial entertainment, and treated them with the greatest liberality and condescension. During dinner he laid his hands on the shoulders of Luther and Eckius, and gently stroking them, said, "Whether the pope exists by DIVINE or by HUMAN RIGHT, HE IS, HOWEVER, THE POPE." "This prince," said Luther, "would never have made this observation, if he had not felt the force of my arguments."*

2. Luther complains bitterly of the uncivil treatment which he met with in general from the inhabitants and the university of Leipsic; and, he observes, on the contrary, what kindness and honours they heaped upon his adversary Eckius. Yet, notwithstanding both their aversion to the Reformer, and their attachment to the popedom, Heffman, who was at that time rector of the university, and who had been appointed judge of the arguments alleged on both sides, refused to declare to whom the victory belonged; so that the decision was left to the universities of Erfurt and Paris.† The former of these, in spite of the importunate solicitations of George, the duke of Saxony, remained perfectly silent; the latter, also, gave no judgment concerning the controversy at Leipsic, though, some time afterwards,‡ contrary to the favourable hopes which Luther had conceived of that learned body, they censured, as heretical, several of his positions, or theses, collected from his various writings.

3. The Romish advocate Maimbourg allows, "that both the disputants displayed much ingenuity and erudition during their combat in the castle of Leipsic, but with this difference; that THE TRUTH, defended by a man of sound principles, like Eckius, vanquished error, though supported with all the knowledge and subtilty of a fine genius." This testimony of an inimical historian, proves the celebrity of the talents of Luther. But the FACT of which I would here particularly take notice, is, the undeniable consequence which the exertion

of those talents, in vehement and subtle disputation for ten days together, produced on the mind of Eckius. His bitterness and enmity against his opponent is well known to have suddenly increased, from this period, beyond all bounds. The sequel of our narrative will show with how much personal malice and resentment he sought the destruction of the Saxon Reformer, and also how mischievous his rash counsels proved to the interests of the Roman See. The reader will then judge for himself, whether the furious conduct of the papal champion is best explained, on the supposition of his consciousness of superiority and of victory in the affairs at Leipsic, or a revengeful sense of the humiliation and defeat which he suffered in that memorable contest.*

It was an accurate acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and with ecclesiastical history, that Luther more particularly manifested his superiority over Eckius. Very full and exact documents are in existence, both of what was said and what was written in the disputation; and no well-informed Roman catholic will deny this to be a fair statement of the case. But, notwithstanding the increased reputation with which the German theologian departed from the scene of controversy, it was easy to foresee, that the court of Rome would now be more incensed against him than ever. He had indeed almost agreed with his adversary on some of the disputed points; he had even defended the authority of the Roman See, by placing it on the best foundation in his power; in short, he had exhibited a spirit of fidelity, moderation and obedience; but all this could not expiate the unpardonable offence of searching the sacred oracles for himself, of confuting the papal pretensions to Divine appointment and infallibility, and, what was deemed, perhaps, if not the most heinous, the most dangerous crime of all, of resisting and exposing the flagitious practices of the inferior agents and instruments of ecclesiastical rapine and tyranny. The man, who had proceeded to such extremities, was not to be managed by mild and gentle admonitions; neither was he to be gained over by bribes and flattery; he was an enemy of the holy church, and justly merited all

* Luth. Op. Vol. I.—Mclch. Adam.—Seck. p. 74.

† Mosheim, Vol. II.

‡ Not till the year 1521.

* Mosheim, Vol. II. Chap. ii. sect. x. and Mr. Maclane's notc.

she could inflict in her utmost fury and indignation.

Moreover, popery was not a religion which betrayed only occasional defects and errors: It had long been a SYSTEM of corruption; all the parts of which were thoroughly connected with each other, and conspired together, to deceive, defraud, and domineer over mankind. The members of the system sympathized with their head in a remarkable manner: they saw their very existence in its safety; and flew to its defence on the slightest appearance of danger. In return, the sovereign head of this vast body superintended the respective interests of all the members with exquisite care, and even with paternal solicitude. If, in some instances, the conduct of the Roman pontiffs does not exactly accord with this representation, the deviation will be found to have arisen, never from a relaxation or a change of principle, but from pride, contempt, indolence, and a sense of security. This was the case, we have seen, with Leo X. in the very early stages of Lutheranism.

Striking examples of this reciprocal sort of sensibility and inutual protection were furnished, in the latter part of this

year, 1519, by the two universities of Louvain and Cologne, and the cardinal de Tortosa. There can be no doubt but that this dignified ecclesiastic, who himself afterwards succeeded Leo X. in the pontificate, acted, in all he did, by the direction of the court of Rome. Accordingly we find one of his letters, addressed to the principal academies of Louvain, full of hard terms against Luther and his writings, at the same time containing stimulative exhortations and admonitions, that they should give a public testimony of their disapprobation of such mischievous heresies. The divines of Louvain appear to have been of themselves sufficiently disposed to this measure, and even to have consulted the cardinal respecting its propriety. He commended their faithful zeal; and the result of this mutual communication was a public decree of the rulers of the university, in which they condemn many of Luther's propositions and doctrines, and pronounced them false, scandalous, and heretical. These warm advocates for the established faith did not stop here. They sent one of Martin Luther's books to the

to censure its heretical contents in a public manner. These presently pronounced it full of errors and heresies, directed it to be suppressed; and declared, that it ought to be burnt, and the author of it obliged to make a public recantation.* Thus, by management of this sort, the friends of the papacy, very soon after their defeat and disgrace at Leipsic, obtained the sanction of two universities in favour of the reigning corruptions; while those learned seminaries, on their part, failed not to secure themselves the approbation and applause of the Roman See.

It would be an useless employment to detail the particulars of what passed at the conferences at Leipsic, respecting several Romish doctrines, which in our times give not the smallest concern to any intelligent protestant.

On the superstitious notion of PURGATORY, many arguments and distinctions were produced on both sides. In general, Luther admitted his firm belief of the existence of such a place, and even that some obscure hints

Purgatory. of it were to be found in Scripture. But he denied that anything clear and convincing was revealed in any part of the Sacred writings, concerning this doctrine.† As the researches of this great man grew deeper, he gradually doubted of several points, which he then held sacred; and, in process of time, he dismissed them from his creed entirely. The Roman catholic sentiment, of the number of the sacraments, and of the communion under ONE KIND, might be mentioned here.

It was not by accident that Eckius brought forward several propositions concerning the nature of INDULGENCES. This was the grand question which had produced all the present Indulgences. dissensions in the church. It was closely connected with every inquiry that related to pontifical authority: it was, IN PRACTICE, the exercise of a very material part of that power, which, in THEORY, was pretended to originate in a divine right. To entangle, therefore, or crush the Reformer on this point, in a public debate and before a splendid audience, would furnish such a proof of zeal for the faith, of ability to defend it, and of obedience to the hierarchy, as

* Vol. II. Luth. Op. Witt.

† Disput. Leips.

would infallibly ensure every reward, which ambition could wish for, or which gratitude could bestow.

Luther extricated himself from the difficulty in which his artful adversary had placed him, with a success which, before the conflict, he had not ventured to expect. Eckius happened to affirm, that a sort of medium of opinion ought to be held with respect to indulgences: "On the one hand, they ought not to be condemned, and, on the other, they should not be entirely RELIED ON." To the same effect he taught the people in the most public manner. In fact, he seems not to have foreseen, how great an advantage he gave his adversary by this unwary concession. "I had supposed," says Luther, "that this affair of the indulgences would be by far the most difficult point that I should have to manage, and that our disputation would have turned chiefly upon it; whereas it created little or no trouble. I found I could nearly agree to Eckius's explanation. Never on any occasion did papal indulgences receive a more wretched and unfortunate support. They were treated in a way that almost produced laughter. If the proclaimers of the indulgences had held the same doctrine at the time of vending them, the NAME OF LUTHER would probably have remained unknown. I say, if the people had been informed that the diplomas of indulgences were not to be RELIED ON, these imaginary pardons would have lost all their reputation, and the commissioners, who conducted the sale of them, would have died of hunger."—The acuteness of Luther, as a theological disputant, ready to avail himself of the smallest indiscretion of his adversary, appears very manifest from this instance.

His heart, however, was not in these noisy and contentious scenes. Instruction of youth in divinity, and preaching of the

Gospel of Christ, he considered as his proper business. He used to lament the peculiar infelicity of the age, by

which he was obliged to waste in controversy so many hours, that might have been far better employed in guiding souls into the way of salvation. "How long," cried he, "am I to spend my time and strength in frivolous discussions about indulgences and pontifical authority,—subjects, which have not the remotest tendency to bene-

fit the church, or promote practical godliness."*

That some good might result from the contentions at Leipsic, and that mankind might be less bewildered in the mazes of subtle disputation, this diligent servant of God determined to review carefully all his own positions, which had been the subject of debate in his conference with Eckius, and to publish them with concise explanations, and with arguments in their support, consisting of appeals to Scripture and ecclesiastical history. These positions, or, as they were sometimes called, theses or conclusions, amounted in number to thirteen, and related chiefly to Roman catholic peculiarities. Several of them, however, gave the author occasion to state and studiously illustrate the scriptural doctrine of GRACE, and the nature of in-dwelling sin, as described by St. Paul in the seventh chapter to the Romans. In fallen man, he observes, there remains an internal principle of evil, even after he is renewed by the grace of God. Every Christian needs daily repentance, because he sins daily, not indeed by daily perpetrating flagrant crimes, but by falling short of perfect obedience. Hence there is not a just man upon earth, because even in actions that are good in themselves, there is precisely so much sin as there is repugnance, or difficulty, or want of cheerfulness in the will. He owns, that divines were accustomed to evade the positive testimony of such passages of Scripture, as, 'There is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not;' but, says he, let us listen to St. Paul: 'The good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.' And again: 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind. Let human reasoning and human authority, whether of the church or of councils, give place and submit: If an angel from heaven should teach the contrary, I would not believe him.'

If, continues Luther, the evil principle, called the flesh, prevented the operation

* Luther's Letter to Emscr.

† This word, though not a very common one, has been thought, by excellent divines, to express St. Paul's meaning in Romans vii. verse 20. better than any other "Sin that dwelleth in me."

of the good principle, called the spirit, in a man so holy and full of grace as the apostle Paul, how can our theologians maintain that there is no sin in good works? 'It is not,' say they, 'sin; it is defect, it is infirmity.'—This is an unscriptural and a dangerous way of speaking. In fact, every Christian feels a continual conflict between the flesh and the spirit as long as he lives; and therefore in the very best actions there is, in this world, a mixture of the effects of the flesh: but it is not so in heaven. Wherefore, what knowledge other persons may have derived from the scholastic divinity of the times, it is for them to consider: In regard to myself, I am sure I learnt from it nothing of the real nature of sin, of righteousness, of baptism, or of the whole Christian life; nor anything of the excellency of God or his works, his grace, his justice. Faith, hope, charity, were to me words without meaning. In short, I not only learnt nothing right; but I had to UNLEARN everything which I had acquired in that way. I shall be much surprised if others have succeeded better; but should there be any such, I sincerely congratulate them. In the schools I lost Jesus Christ; I have now found him in St. Paul.

"Search the Scriptures" is the precept, which of all others seems to have most deeply impressed the anxious, inquisitive mind of Luther. And further, in his inquiries, he never forgot that he himself was personally interested in the great truths of revealed religion. He studied the Bible, not through curiosity, or the love of fame, but from a sense of the importance of its contents, and of his own dangerous situation. How little have those understood the real character of this Reformer, who have looked on him as a turbulent, ambitious innovator, impelled by selfish and worldly motives! Nothing can be more affecting than the following account, which he himself gives of his own internal troubles. "However blameless a life I might lead as a monk, I experienced a most unquiet conscience; I perceived myself a sinner before God; I saw that I could do nothing to appease him, and I hated the idea of a just God that punishes sinners. I was well versed in all St. Paul's writings; and, in particular, I had a most wonderful desire to understand the epistle to the Romans. But

I was puzzled with the expression, 'THEREIN is the righteousness of God revealed.' My heart rose almost against God with a silent sort of blasphemy: At least in secret I said with great murmur and indignation, Was it not enough that wretched man, already eternally ruined by the curse of original depravity, should be oppressed with every species of misery through the condemning power of the commandment, but that, even through the GOSPEL, God should threaten us with his anger and justice, and thereby add affliction to affliction? Thus I raged with a troubled conscience. Over and over I turned the abovementioned passage to the Romans most importunately. My thirst to know the apostle's meaning was insatiable.

"At length, while I was meditating day and night on the words, and their connexion with what immediately follows, namely, 'the just shall live by faith,' it pleased God to have pity upon me, to open mine eyes, and to show me, that the righteousness of God, which is here said in the Gospel to be REVEALED from faith to faith, relates to the method by which God, in his mercy, justifies a sinner through faith, agreeably to what is written, 'the just shall live by faith.' Hence I felt myself a new man, and all the Scriptures appeared to have a new face. I ran quickly through them as my memory enabled me; I collected together the leading terms; and I observed, in their meaning, a strict analogy, according to my new views. Thus, in many instances, the WORK of God, means that which he works in us; and the power, and wisdom of God, mean the power and wisdom, which his Spirit operates in the minds of the faithful; and in the same manner are to be understood the PATIENCE, the SALVATION, the GLORY, of God.

"The expression, 'RIGHTEOUSNESS of God,' now became as sweet to my mind as it had been hateful before; and this very passage of St. Paul proved to me the entrance into paradise."*

This interesting account of the steps by which Luther was led to evangelical light in the important doctrine of justification by faith, evidently refers to what passed in his mind about the time of the celebrated disputation at Leipsic; and for that reason may seem not improperly introduced in this place. One of his con-

* Luth. Op. Præf. Vol. I.

clusions in that contest led to a discussion on faith, repentance, and free-will; and we find, in his defence of that conclusion, a similar mode of argumentation. He even produces the very same passage of St. Paul, from the first chapter to the Romans; and blames divines of the stamp of Eckius, for adding to the words, 'the just shall live by faith,' other words, namely, 'but not by faith ONLY,' as necessary to prevent mistakes. He quotes also the tenth chapter of the same epistle, 'with the heart man believeth unto righteousness,' and takes notice that, likewise in this verse, righteousness is attributed to faith only. "The works of faith," continues he, "don't produce the faith, but the faith produces the works. The meaning of the apostle is not, that justified persons neglect good works, but that justification is prior to good works; and that good works can be performed by justified persons only."

Eckius had maintained, that some of the actions of good men, and particularly their last actions in dying, were perfectly free from sin. Luther had too high ideas of the holiness of the divine law, and too deep a sense of the evil of sin, and of the depravity of human nature, to admit this position. Accordingly he opposed it with all his might, and used strong language in support of the contrary sentiment. "There has not," said he, "for three thousand years, been started a more mischievous, pestilential notion, than that God does not demand a perfect fulfilling of all his laws. This is directly to contradict Jesus Christ. God never alters his perfect law; though he pardons us when we break it. Observe, however, he does not pardon those who are asleep, but those who labour, those who fear, and who say with Job, 'I know thou wilt not hold me innocent.' Never suppose that God does not require an exact regard to every tittle of his law; such a notion will soon engender pride, and make you despise that grace, through which his holy law, as a schoolmaster, should compel you to seek deliverance."

One of Eckius's propositions, concerning the natural powers of the human mind since the fall of our first parents, seemed strongly tinged with Pelagian sentiments; and these were diametrically opposite to Luther's views of the Gospel. In this matter, therefore, he did not confine himself merely to the de-

fence of his own conclusions, but exposed the doctrines of Eckius with force and animation, terming them impious and heretical in the highest degree, and inconsistent with the apostle Paul, and the whole Gospel of Christ. Again, he pressed the grand doctrine of Christianity, that we are justified, before God, by faith only: he showed, that this article of belief was the test of orthodoxy or heresy, according as it was held soundly or corruptly; that all other points were subordinate and centered in this; and that every objection to it, which could possibly be devised, was done away by this single consideration, namely, that a right faith, was necessarily productive of good works. "St. Paul," says he, "speaks of a living, not a dead, faith; for a dead faith is merely a speculative opinion. But observe how theologians, building on a solitary passage of St. James, in his second chapter, have dared to oppose the whole current of Scripture. Mankind are exceedingly prone to place confidence in their own works: hence, the great danger of pharisaical doctrine. On the contrary, if you do but take care to instruct the people properly concerning the nature of pure Christian faith, they will then understand the power of such a faith to produce good works: they will see that good works can be produced in no other way; and lastly, that these works are, in fact, the spontaneous and infallible consequence of a right faith."

The contemplation of the ways of Providence, at all times a rational employment, is never more instructive than when we can trace the gradual progress of divine light, as it breaks in upon the mind of honest, industrious inquirers after religious truth. Let not therefore the modern critic, whose ideas of the justification of a sinner may, PERHAPS, be more exact and digested than those of Luther were at the time of his controversy with Eckius, hastily condemn, or treat with disrespect, the sentiments and explanations which have been laid before him on this essential point. Let him, rather first, advert to the prevailing ignorance and errors of the clergy in the days of the Reformer; and then, with pleasure and surprise, he will observe the immense strides, towards a complete system of Christian principles, which were taken by an Augustine monk during the year 1519, in the midst of his persecutions:

and moreover, on a strict examination, he may be astonished to find how perfectly evangelical also at that time Luther was, in the particular article of justification by faith, as to the substance and general view of this important doctrine. Afterwards he defended and explained it with probably as much accuracy and precision, as most succeeding divines have done, though the question has now been agitated and debated for several centuries.

The rigorous laws of history oblige us not to omit, that Luther, in the same treatise, which contains the defence of

Luther doubts the authority of the epistle of St. James.

his own conclusions against Eckius, hastily expressed a doubt of the divine authority of the epistle of St. James.* Want of a just insight into the views of the inspired writer may account for this temerity, but will not excuse it; however, he seems not to have insisted on his scruples, much less to have persevered in them. In regard to his misapprehension of the meaning of this part of Holy Writ, we may the less wonder, when we reflect, that even the very best modern interpreters of the Bible do not agree in their explanation of the second chapter of St. James. Luther conceived that chapter to militate against the doctrine of justification by faith. Truth is seldom seen at once in its full order and proportion of parts. But who can doubt that the Saxon Reformer was under a divine influence, which daily taught him his natural sinfulness? All men, who know themselves as he did, can never find rest to their consciences but in Christ alone. Necessity, experience, and the word of God, unite in convincing them, that no other way of peace can be found for sinners but through the Redeemer; and, also, that this is the only way by which they can heartily serve God, love their neighbours, and, in general, be fruitful in good works. But more of this important subject hereafter.

In his literary contest with Eckius, Luther apologizes for the inelegance of his style. He confesses that it was negligent and slovenly, and that he had taken no pains to make it accurate, because he had no expectation of immortal fame, nor a desire for it. I am drawn, says he, by force into this contest. I mean, as soon as I can consistently with my conscience, to retire into a corner.

* Resol. Lips. disp.

Some other persons shall appear on the stage, God willing. Such was the real modesty of Luther; and so little did he apprehend, that the less he sought for glory, the more he should attain it.

In fact, the publications of Luther were circulated throughout Germany, and were read with the greatest avidity by all ranks and orders. Eckius and other advocates of the Roman Catholic cause, answered the heretic with great heat and indignation. Luther replied with the promptitude and precision, and also with the zeal and confidence, of a man who was perfectly master of the arguments on both sides of the questions in dispute, felt deeply interested in the establishment of truth, and had thoroughly examined the foundations of his opposition to the prevailing corruptions. By these means the discussions at Leipsic were detailed with minuteness, and continued with spirit; they every where became topics of common conversation; and, as Luther constantly appealed to plain sense, and the written word of God, the scholastic subtleties of Eckius lost their weight and reputation among the people. It is not difficult to see, that the advantages, which in this way, the cause of the Reformation derived from the public contest at Leipsic, and its consequences, must have been very considerable.

The Reformation derived advantages from this dispute.

Particular and important instances might be mentioned.

The elector of Saxony was the only prince who publicly favoured the Reformation; and there is good reason to believe, that both his knowledge of the Scriptures and his kindness towards Luther were much increased by what he read and heard from others, relative to the controversy in 1519. It appears from very authentic memoirs by Spalatinus, that the mind of Frederic had been much exercised about divine things, even before his Wittenberg theologian had dared to expose and withstand the corrupt practices of the Roman See. With much diligence and constant prayer he had read the word of God; and was extremely displeased with the usual modes of interpreting it. And when, through the grace of God and the instrumentality of Luther, some rays of evangelical light began to break forth, he opened himself explicitly to his chaplain, Spalatinus, to this effect: "I have always indulged a

secret hope, that in a short time we should be blest with a purer knowledge of what we ought to believe." Meanwhile he gave attention to practical sermons, and read the Scriptures with the greatest delight, especially the four Gospels, from which he collected many excellent passages, and so impressed them on his memory, that whenever occasion required, he could readily apply them with great advantage and comfort. He used particularly to insist on that saying of our Lord in the fifteenth chapter of St. John, "Without me ye can do nothing." "He would dwell on this passage," says Spalatinus, "more than any other. He considered it as decisive against the vulgar notion of free-will; and on this very ground he argued against it, long before Erasmus had dared to publish his miserable, unscriptural performance on the natural liberty of the human mind." "How can it possibly be," said the prince, "that mankind should be perfectly free from all corrupt bias, when Christ himself says, Without me ye can do nothing?"

Such were the reflections, which the disputation at Leipsic, concerning the necessity of GRACE, and the natural condition of man, since the fall of Adam, appear to have produced in the pious mind of Frederic the wise. While they imply considerable insight into several of the essential doctrines of Christianity, they also throw much light on the religious character of this prince. Frederic had a deep sense of his own weakness and sinfulness; a never-failing preparative this, for the hearty reception of the glad tidings of the Gospel! He felt much anxiety that the faith of Christ might be preached among the people in its purity; and this anxiety kept pace with his own progress in practical religion. Another excellent system of a divine teaching, and of truly spiritual affections. Still this excellent personage remained in bondage to papal authority, and papal superstitions; and hence, though his views of the Bible were in perfect harmony with those of Luther, and though he further agreed with the Reformer, that shameful abuses ought to be corrected, dangerous errors exposed, salutary truths propagated, and mankind put into possession of the words of eternal life, he nevertheless continued to feel most disquieting apprehensions, lest, in compassing these important purposes,

OFFENCE should be given to the majesty of the Roman pontiff's.

It may deserve notice, that soon after the conferences at Leipsic, the elector of Saxony had a severe illness; and that the industrious Luther, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his necessary employments, found time to compose a small tract, for the express purpose of comforting this good prince in his afflictions. The wisdom, the sincerity, and the Christian affection, which the author exhibited in this little treatise, would, no doubt, have a tendency to increase the estimation in which he was already held by Frederic.*

The celebrated Philip Melancthon, who is always numbered among the most illustrious and respectable instruments of the Reformation, was actually present at the public disputations with Eckius. Some say, that he placed himself near Carolstadt, and suggested so many things to him during the combat, that Eckius called out to him, "Philip, hold your tongue: mind your own business, and don't interfere with mine." However, he himself tells us, that he was a mere spectator and hearer; and that he sat among the crowd. As the dispute continued many days, the different accounts might perhaps appear sufficiently consistent, were we acquainted with all the circumstances. Melancthon concludes one of his letters to Ecolampadius in the following manner: "Eckius was much admired for his many and striking ingenuities. You know Carolstadt; he is certainly a man of worth and of extraordinary erudition. As to Luther, whom I

* The opinion, which Erasmus entertained of this little tract, is expressed in a letter, written several years after, to the bishop of Basil. "I send you a little book, of which Luther is the author. It is divided into fourteen heads, and is extremely approved, even by those, who, in general, have the greatest possible aversion to his doctrines. He wrote it before matters came to the present extremities. The man has been enraged by hostile treatment; I heartily wish, that, by the means of friendly admonitions, he might be brought back to moderate sentiments."—Seckendorf observes on this extract from Erasmus, "The disease of the church at that time was not of such a nature, that it could be cured by any of Erasmus's plasters."

have long known most intimately, his lively genius, his learning, and eloquence, are the objects of my admiration; and it is impossible not to be in love with his truly sincere and pure Christian spirit."

As the reader by this time must be tolerably acquainted with the ecclesiastical combat at Leipsic, it will be unnecessary to detain him any longer with particulars from Melancthon's report of that famous controversy. The name of this great man is here introduced, chiefly for the purpose of showing, how the Roman catholic expectations of the effect of the ostentatious challenge of Eckius were frustrated in every way. Melancthon was then only about twenty-three years of age; and, as yet, had employed his time principally in the duties of his Greek professorship, and in the cultivation of general literature. Already indeed he had favoured Luther's intentions of teaching pure Christianity, and of delivering it from the reigning darkness and superstition; but his wishes in this respect had hitherto originated in the native candour and benevolence of his temper, and in his abhorrence of all disguise, artifice, and tyranny, rather than in any distinct insight which he had acquired into particular instances of the corruption of Christian doctrine, or of the shameful practises of the ecclesiastical domination. The conferences at Leipsic seem to have had a mighty effect in first determining this elegant scholar to employ his talents in the study of theology. As Melancthon is said to have possessed the rare faculty of "discerning truth in its most intricate connexions and combinations," it was not probable that such a person should be moved either by the flimsy objections of Eckius, or by his pompous display of scholastic arguments. He was not, however, blind to the dangerous influence of a man, who had some pretensions to learning, who had a strong memory, and who, being constantly impelled by ambitious hopes of advancement, and unrestrained by modesty or conscience, was ever ready to make the most positive assertions. In listening to the sophistry of this papal advocate, Melancthon became better acquainted than before with the argumen-

tative resources of the Romish religion; at the same time that the solid reasonings of Luther, supported by constant appeals to the Scriptures, effectually convinced his mind of the soundness of the principles of his industrious and persecuted friend, and determined him to embark, in the cause of religious liberty, with zeal and fidelity. From the period of this famous public disputation, he applied himself most intensely to the interpretation of the Scriptures, and the defence of pure Christian doctrine; and he is justly esteemed by Protestants to have been, under Divine Providence, the most powerful coadjutor of the Saxon Reformer. His mild and peaceable temper, his aversion to schismatic contention, his reputation for piety and for knowledge, and, above all, his happy art of exposing error and maintaining truth in the most perspicuous language, all these endowments concurred to render him eminently serviceable to the revival of the religion of Christ. Little did Eckius imagine, that the public disputation, in which he had foreseen nothing but victory, and exultation, and the downfall of Lutheranism, would give rise to another theological champion, who should contend for Christian truth and Christian liberty with the primitive spirit of an apostle. At Wittemberg, Melancthon had probably been well acquainted with Luther's lectures on divinity; but it was in the citadel of Leipsic, that he heard the Romish tenets defended by all the arguments that ingenuity could devise; there his suspicions were strengthened respecting the evils of the existing hierarchy; and there his righteous spirit was roused to imitate, in the grand object of his future inquiries and exertions, the indefatigable endeavours of his zealous and adventurous friend.

The pious reader will not think this relation tedious. In the event and consequences of the ecclesiastical conflict between the Romish and the Protestant advocates, he will see much cause to adore the wisdom and goodness of that Being, "who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."*

* Ephes. i. 11.

CHAPTER V.

FROM THE ATTEMPTS OF MILTITZ AND ECKIUS,
TO THE CRITICAL SITUATION OF LUTHER IN
1520.

FURTHER ATTEMPTS OF MILTITZ.
THE COURAGE AND RESOLUTION OF LUTHER.
HIS LETTER TO LEO X.
HIS CRITICAL SITUATION IN 1520.

THE contest with Eckius, if we include the necessary preparations for the public debate at Leipsic, and also the continuation of the controversy, lengthened, as it was, by polemical tracts and letters, took up a considerable part of the year 1519. The abilities of this papal disputant, had been candidly acknowledged by Melancthon, in a letter to his friend Ecolampadius;* nevertheless, the general account which that letter contained of the Leipsic conflict provoked him so exceedingly, that, in the short space of three days, he published a most acrimonious reply to its author, in which he affects to treat this learned and excellent Reformer as a mere paltry grammarian, that might have some knowledge of Greek and Latin, but was unworthy the notice of a Divine who had any good pretensions to theological knowledge.

Melancthon's rejoinder to Eckius is elegant, acute, and temperate. It displays the scholar and the Christian; and at that time must have afforded no slight prognostic of the advantages which the Church of Christ would one day derive from the writings of a person of such extraordinary talents and religious dispositions. This performance consists of only five folio pages; but it did excellent service to the Lutheran cause.†

In the mean time, Miltitz, the pope's nuncio, was not inattentive to the object of his commission. Early in this year he had agreed with Luther, that the points in dispute should be discussed before some learned and dignified ecclesiastics in Germany, such as the archbishop, elector of Treves, or the bishop of Nuremberg. He had also personally conferred on this subject

with the former prelate, who approved the plan, wrote to the elector of Saxony in prosecution of it, and made Luther himself the fairest promises of safe conduct and handsome treatment. The unsuccessful effect of these negotiations is to be ascribed to several causes. 1. The ensuing debates at Leipsic excited the attention of all Germany. The questions concerning the pope's supremacy and the nature of pontifical indulgences were then of immense importance; and it was not consistent with the reputation of Luther, that he should be absent from such a scene. 2. Moreover, during the INTERREGNUM of the empire, it appeared doubtful whether any safe conduct could be obtained, in which it might be prudent for him to confide. 3. Then he augured no good from the information which he had received, that cardinal Cajetan was certainly at Coblenz with the archbishop of Treves. 4. Cajetan, while at Coblenz, wrote a most flattering letter to the elector of Saxony, but took care not to say a single syllable concerning Luther's business.—Frederic the wise understood this suspicious silence, and contrived to meet the archbishop of Treves at Francfort, where, as we have already observed,* it was agreed that the examination of the ecclesiastical matters should be postponed till the next German diet. 5. Miltitz himself, through the persuasions and authority of Frederic, AT LENGTH acceded to the same plan, and advised Luther to remain in Saxony, and not to think at present of undertaking a journey to Coblenz.

The Roman pontiff, it must be owned, had imposed on his nuncio a task, which was not very easy to be performed. Miltitz at first came armed with seventy attendants, for the express purpose of seizing the heretic, and carrying him prisoner to Rome. When this scheme had failed, on account of the extreme popularity of Luther, he appears to have done his utmost, in the way of kindness and condescension, to draw a recantation of errors from the Reformer. He told the elector of Saxony, that "peace and reconciliation were the objects of his wishes, but that he had great fears he should be driven to extremities. The pontiff," he said, "was highly indignant, that Luther's cause had been so long delayed, and that the culprit, in the

* See page 257.

† Op, Luth. I. 340. b.

* Page 241 of this Vol.

meantime, should be allowed to continue his offensive sermons."*

Neither promises nor threatenings appear to have materially affected the firm determinations of Martin Luther. When, through humane treatment, he was most softened and most inclined to make concessions, yet he never surrendered unwarily a single article of that belief which he thought authorized by the revealed word; and when most pressed and most alarmed by tyrannical and insolent mandates, still he always resisted the unchristian proposal of unconditional retraction. Invariably he offered to submit his tenets to the authority of the word of God, and continued to insist on the unreasonableness of requiring him to yield implicitly to the mere dictates of arbitrary power. Finding that no means were employed but those of imperious, pontifical despotism, he began more and more to suspect that the ecclesiastical monarch, who domineered in the church in so absolute and presumptuous a manner, must be the very Antichrist described in Scripture. But the conviction was gradual; the effect of sober thought and study. Sudden impressions on the imagination were little regarded by Luther. He particularly informs us, that he was not one of those, who pretended to see, at the first glance, the full force and meaning of the word of God.†

What might have been the result of a conference at Coblenz, under the direction of the elector of Treves, we are left to conjecture. Certainly Luther himself apprehended much danger from that measure, as circumstances then were. "Chas. Miltitz," said he, "is so ridiculous, that he would have me go to Coblenz, and defend myself before the archbishop, elector of Treves, in the presence of cardinal Cajetan; and yet this pleasant man owns, that he has received no precept from Rome concerning the matter. Every where, from all quarters, and by any method, I perceive, my life is sought!!!"‡

Towards the end of this same year 1519, Luther began to preach on the propriety of administering to the laity the communion in BOTH KINDS.

Luther's sentiments on the Eucharist: A. D. 1519. This step gave great offence to George, duke of Saxony, who complained to his nephew, the elector, of the vio-

lent proceedings of the Wittemberg theologian. He accused him of having published a sermon on the Eucharist, which contained great marks of pride and self-sufficiency. He admonished Frederic to beware of supporting a man, however eminent for learning and talents, who had the presumption to suppose that nobody but himself was sufficiently enlightened by the grace of God to teach true religion. The tenets of Luther, concerning the Sacrament, he said, very much resembled those of the Bohemian heretics; and that in fact, since the publication of his sermon on that subject, it was reported, the number of those disobedient sectarians amounted to more than six thousand. Lastly, he put the elector in mind, that for a long time he had justly merited the reputation of a wise prince and good Christian; but that at present he was in considerable danger of disgracing both himself and his country, by supporting licentious innovations in religion. "If he did not take care, Luther would soon cease to be called the professor of Wittemberg, and would become the bishop, or rather the heresiarch, of Bohemia."

The elector of Saxony replied with his usual caution, declaring, that he had never ventured, nor would venture, to defend either the sermons or the disputations of his Wittemberg professor of divinity. On that point, he said, he had constantly held precisely the same language, both to the cardinal legate, and also to Miltitz the nuncio of his holiness; and that he should continue to pursue the same system of conduct;—that is, he should not say one word on the merits of Luther's publication, but leave it to be defended by the author himself, who had appealed to the wisdom and authority of learned and impartial judges, and who was certainly bound to wait respectfully the event of their inquiry and decision. The elector owned, that, notwithstanding much clamour had been raised against the discourse or little treatise of his learned professor, he had heard that it was highly approved by many wise and skilful persons as a truly Christian composition. Whether the report was well founded, he knew not; but he felt it painful to be told, that in his own dominions heresies were spreading; and

George of Saxony accuses Luther to the elector.

The elector's answer to George.

* See. p. 63. † Luth. Op. præf. Vol. I.
‡ Luth. Epist. 110 and 111. Lib. I.

still more painful to be suspected of giving them his countenance.

In this business the dukes of Saxony conducted themselves agreeably to their respective characters. George was bigoted to the superstitious maxims in which he had been educated, and wished to restrain Luther by the strong hand of despotic power. Frederic, both more enlightened and more conscientious, at all times gladly promoted the progress of Evangelical truth, but dreaded to be held up as a principal actor in scenes of so much contention and danger, and which called for clearer and better digested principles than he had yet acquired. In the mean time Luther steadily followed the track pointed out to him by a diligent and persevering study of the Holy Scriptures. He had broached the question concerning the communion in both kinds, and it was not his way to abandon, for slight causes, such pursuits in religion as he conceived important.

Luther defends his sentiments on the Eucharist, A. D. 1530.

Early therefore, in the year 1520, he defended his sermon concerning the nature of the Sacrament, by publishing in the German language an explicit declaration of his sentiments on that subject. He did not insist upon the point as matter of strict right, but contented himself, as yet, with expressing a wish that the Church would pass a decree, for the purpose of granting to the laity the communion in BOTH kinds. He said, that the Bohemians, who had obtained liberty from the Church to administer the Lord's Supper in the manner which he now recommended, ought not to be accounted heretics; and that in regard to the remainder of the Hussite multitudes, he had no certain information of their doctrines. All he knew was, that they were a persecuted people, and were compelled to perform their religious services in dens and caverns. They were accused, indeed, of committing the most horrid crimes in those secret recesses; but the truth of the charges might well be doubted, as it was no new thing for those, who had been condemned by the court of Rome, to be calumniated with the most scandalous reports. "Take notice, reader," says Luther, "how peculiarly unfortunate I am! Hitherto I have been persecuted for my faith, and my conjectures. But now they find fault with me, merely because I express a wish that some new regulations might

be made by a future council." Then in support of his own conduct, he alleged the example of Pius II. who, before he was chosen pope, had most earnestly desired that a general council would decree liberty of marriage to the clergy.*

These spirited declarations of the Reformer did not altogether suit the temper of the elector's court. They exhorted him to peace and caution. But the tender conscience of Luther was not to be lulled by specious prudential lessons concerning moderation and decency. We have not Spalatinus's letter on this occasion, but Luther's answer will afford the necessary information. "I am oppressed with a multitude of concerns; and I heartily wish I could be relieved from the duty of teaching and reading lectures. Nothing could be more agreeable to me than to be loosed from this employment. But if I am to continue a teacher, I cannot comprehend the notion of yourself, my Spalatinus, and of the friends you mention, namely, that sacred theology may be taught without giving offence to the pontiffs. The Scriptures themselves, in the most explicit manner, lay open men's abuses of the Scriptures, which abuses the pontiffs cannot bear to have mentioned. I have given up myself to this work in the name of the Lord. May his will be done! The cause is that of mankind in general; let us, in faith and prayer, commit the event to God, and we shall be safe. For what can our adversaries do? Will they murder us? They cannot do that twice. Will they asperse us as heretics? Was not Christ himself treated as a malefactor? When I contemplate HIS sufferings, I blush for shame to think that my trials should be thought so considerable, when in reality they are nothing; and so we should reckon such trials, had we right views of mortification, of self-denial, and, in a word, of the Christian cross, to which in our days we are perfect strangers. Cease then your attempts to divert me from my purpose. My enemies may rage, but I shall smile in security. I am determined to abide the event, and not to give way to unbecoming fears. I should, indeed, be sorry to involve the prince in my concerns; otherwise, at this moment, the world should see a very explicit publication of my sentiments, a publication,

Courage of Luther.

* Seeck. p. 95.

which though it might still more provoke the FURIES, would at the same time expose their folly."

In much the same spirit of determined resolution and of confidence in the justice of his cause, he wrote to the new emperor Charles V. imploring, however, in modest and submissive terms,

the assistance and protection "of so great a prince." "Nothing," he said, "was nearer his heart, than that he might be permitted to discharge his duty quietly in his own little sphere. The violent and deceitful practices of others had compelled him to appear in public; but the very best men living, as well as his own conscience, would witness, that his sole object was the propagation of Evangelical truth, in opposition to the superstitions of human tradition. For this cause, continues he, during almost three years I have been persecuted in every way that my enemies could invent. In vain have I proposed terms of peace, in vain have I offered to be silent, in vain have I begged for information and correction of my errors. After having tried all methods without success, I have judged it advisable to follow the example of St. Athanasius, in applying to your imperial majesty, if so be it may please God in that way to protect his own cause. I humbly therefore beseech your most serene majesty, that as you bear the sword for the praise of the good and the punishment of the bad, you would deign to take under the shadow of your wings the cause of truth; and as to myself, I crave your support not one moment longer than while I shall appear to have reason on my side. Abandon me the instant I am found impious or heretical. All I beg is, that my doctrines, whether true or false, may not be condemned unheard and without examination. If your most sacred majesty, by your interposition, should prevent the exercise of tyrannical power, such a conduct would be worthy of your royal and imperial throne, would adorn your government, and consecrate to posterity the age in which you live."*

The various letters and publications of Luther, at the critical periods of these memorable years, contribute more towards laying open the real disposition and secret views of this Reformer, than

whole volumes of controversial writings. The curious and industrious reader will, therefore, excuse me for detailing many circumstances of this part of ecclesiastical history with more than ordinary minuteness. They are closely connected with the very essence of the Reformation and the revival of Evangelical doctrine.

When men's PRINCIPLES are unsettled, we naturally look for inconsistency in their PRACTICE. Yet, after a very diligent review of the most authentic records concerning the great Saxon Reformer, I am convinced, that it will be found no easy matter to fix on his character any charge of inconsistent conduct. The man never does violence to his conscience; he is always in quest of information from the purest sources; and he is constantly obedient "to the powers that be," as long as submission to those powers, in his judgment, does not clash with the Divine Will. On these grounds let his life be examined and tried, and it will not disappoint his greatest admirers. Luther will appear as honest and indefatigable in investigating truth, as he was resolute and intrepid in defending it.

It may be almost superfluous to mention, how entirely the preceding letters and declarations of our Reformer harmonize with this representation of his motives; and a similar observation is applicable to several other of his performances, which made their appearance about the same time.*

1. To the censures of the Divines of Louvain and Cologne, he published a very animated reply, following their strictures article by article. He said, they had not produced against him the shadow of a reason; but had treated him with more than Turkish cruelty and arrogance. In opposing Eckius and his advocates, he owned, he had been compelled to use some exertion; but on the contrary, in reading the empty and wretched sentence of these universities he felt his spirits depressed, so as to be more disposed to weep over them, than to write a reply. Antichrist could not be far off, when men set up themselves so impudently above the written word of God. It was to him a consolatory reflection, that

He replies to the Divines of Louvain and Cologne.

* Epistol. Luth. ad Carol. V.

* The beginning of 1520.

many worthy men had been unjustly condemned in a similar way, as Occam, Valla, Pious, Wesselus, and even the great Erasmus. He had no hesitation in adding to the list the names of John Huss, and Jerom of Prague, whose victorious fame at the council of Constance, —not to mention the celebrated letter of Poggins the Florentine,*—neither all the popes nor universities together would ever be able to extinguish. The theologians of Louvain and Cologne had been wanting both in charity and in justice. They had condemned him without warning, admonition, or hearing: all this was directly contrary to the maxims of Christianity. In regard to the pope, they had treated him with the greatest indecorum. They had passed sentence on a book which was dedicated to him, and humbly laid at his feet; and this at the very time, when the author was waiting for the judgment of his holiness. On the whole, Luther considers these Divines, as decidedly of the Pelagian stamp; as persons who did not submit cordially to Scripture, but fabricated a religion of their own imagination, which, in its nature was opposite to the grace and Gospel of Jesus Christ.

2. In the negotiations between Miltitz and Luther, it had been agreed that the latter should publish a concise protestation of his faith, and of his firm adherence to the Roman Catholic church; and that he should endeavour to express himself in the most obsequious and conciliatory terms. This protestation came out in January 1520, and runs very much in the same strain as the letter to the new emperor Charles V., which is already before the reader. He also calls God to witness, That, as far as he knew, he had never said a word, either in his school or the pulpit, which was adverse to the Word of God, or the salvation of men's souls; that he was so sincere and obedient to the Holy Church, as to be willing to die in her cause; that at any time, upon a safe conduct being ensured to him, he was ready to appear before judges both secular and spiritual; and that, though everything he had done was for the glory of God, and the good of all the Christian world, without the least prospect of private advantage in any imaginable

way, still he met with no other return but to be traduced as a heretic. From the bottom of his heart, he said, he forgave his enemies; and he entreated them, in the name of Almighty God, to form a more favourable judgment of his motives, and to abstain from calumniating him in so rash and unbecoming a manner.*

The native good sense of Luther, as well as his gratitude to the elector of Saxony, would, doubtless, induce him to be as temperate and conciliatory in his language, as was consistent with the convictions of a man who regulated his actions entirely by the Will of God. Therefore, among his reasons for writing, at this same time, modest and submissive letters to two German bishops, we may reckon his respect for the Saxon court. He entreated the archbishop of Mentz, not to give credit to his calumniators, who, he said, consisted of two classes;—one of which had never read his writings, and the other were actuated altogether by the most bitter animosity. On the same day and to the same purpose, he addressed the bishop of Mersburg. The archbishop replied, that as he had never read his writings, he was not disposed to censure them; but it was with great grief, that he heard of the violent disputes of celebrated professors respecting frivolous opinions and points of little consequence, such as of free-will, and the pope's power, whether it be of Divine or of human authority. Such amusements were by no means becoming a true Christian; but rather tended to excite a hurtful curiosity, and foment disobedience among the people. He understood also, that the authority of GENERAL COUNCILS had been disparaged by some persons, who adhered to their own opinions most pertinaciously. This sort of conduct produced much mischief. In private, and among learned persons, questions of that nature might, perhaps, be handled advantageously, and certainly with less danger than before an ignorant and ill-judging multitude. Lastly, he highly approved of his teaching the great truths of Scripture, provided he gave his lectures in a spirit of peace and obedience to the established church.

The answer of the bishop of Mersburg is concise, and borders on severity. He could not understand, and he exceedingly

* See p. 188 of this Vol.

* Seeck. p. 95. Luth. Op. Vol. I.

disliked, those heavy censures of the Roman pontiff. He lamented that Luther had injected scruples into the minds of the people concerning the Sacrament: and, in his judgment, a man of such signal industry might employ his talents in a manner, that should be more conducive to the promotion of Christian charity, and the salvation of mankind.—This bishop calls Luther his “Venerable brother.”—The archbishop of Mentz addresses him with the terms, “Honourable, religious, and beloved in Christ.”

But besides what have been mentioned, there are other writings of Luther, of nearly the same date, and of much greater importance.

His celebrated letter to the pontiff Leo X. in the year 1520, and his treatise on Christian Liberty, were the effect of the last effort of Charles Miltitz, to produce a reconciliation between the Reformer and the court of Rome. As

Luther's
letter to the
pope,
A. D. 1520.

Luther was an ecclesiastic of the Augustine order, Miltitz endeavoured to persuade the fathers of that fraternity to depute, from their general assembly, then held in Saxony, some persons who should persuade their refractory brother to desist from his opposition to the lawful commands of his superiors. This measure was tried; and Luther received the deputation with the most kind and dutiful attention; and very soon afterwards he had a friendly conference with Miltitz himself. A distinct account of this part of the negotiation of the pope's nuncio is contained in the following letter of Luther to Spalatinus;* and it is the more expedient that we should have recourse to this authentic document, because the whole affair has been miserably misrepresented by papal writers, and particularly by Maimbourg,† who compares Luther to the traitor Judas, and the Augustinian fathers to the holy apostles. “Miltitz and myself,” says Luther, “met at Litchtemberg; and we have agreed upon the following terms,—from which he entertains the most sanguine hopes. I am to print and publish some little tract, and preface it with a letter to the pontiff. That letter is to contain a narrative of my proceedings, and an assurance that I never intended any personal affront to his holiness; at the same

time I am allowed to lay a heavy load of blame upon Eckius. As this plan is founded in the most perfect truth, it is impossible that I should have the smallest objection to it. In the most submissive manner, I mean to propose silence on both sides; in order that nothing of a conciliatory nature may be omitted on my part. I need not tell you, that it has always been my wish to bring about peace. I shall have everything ready in a few days. If the event should answer our hopes, all will be well; but if it should not, I still have no doubt but good will be the consequence.”*

This is evidently the language of a man who was not very anxious concerning the success of the project in contemplation. The popish advocates go much further, and accuse the Reformer of actual insincerity towards the Roman See. His humble professions of obedience, his wishes for peace and unity, and his decorous treatment of the person of Leo X. they think, were all downright hypocrisy, and designed to serve no other purpose than that of gaining time, and rendering the pontificate ridiculous.† But these rash charges will not be regarded for a moment by any one who attends to the unfeigned disclosures which Luther repeatedly made of his most secret sentiments. Early in the year 1520, he writes to Spalatinus thus: “I am extremely distressed in my mind. I have not much doubt but the pope is the real Antichrist. The lives and conversation of the popes, their actions, their decrees, all agree most wonderfully to the descriptions of him in Holy Writ.”

Luther
writes to
Spalatinus.
A. D. 1520.

It is to these views of the true nature of the papacy,—which were every day becoming clearer in Luther's mind,—that we are to ascribe that species of indifference with which he looked to the termination of the present negotiation. The man who was almost convinced of the antichristian character of the whole Romish system, could feel no great anxiety to obtain the approbation of the sovereign pontiff. With a truly Christian spirit he seems to have resigned the event to the Divine disposal, and to have cherished a full persuasion in his own mind, that some great good to the Church of God would result from the step which

* Lib. I. Ep. 141.

† Maimbourg, in Seck. p. 94.

* Seck. p. 98.

† Pallavicini.—Maimbourg.

he was about to take. If the court of Rome should adopt prudent and temperate counsels, a reformation of abuses and a revival of pure religion might still take place under the established hierarchy; and if they continued to turn a deaf ear to entreaty, advice, and remonstrance, such presumption and arrogance would more strongly mark the features of Antichrist, and hasten his downfall.

It must be owned, however, that it was no easy matter for the Saxon Reformer, in his present state of mind and circumstances, to devise an epistle to a haughty pontiff, which should exhibit a becoming sense of subordination, do justice to his own conscience and cause, and, at the same time, escape the animadversion and censure of his enemies. But the honest mind of Luther, by simplicity and plain-dealing, often effected that, which it would have puzzled an intriguing minister of state to compass by the most artful policy. He has not indeed, on this occasion, escaped the opposite charges of hypocritical courtesy and of audacious insolence; but as these have been made only by bigoted and ill-informed zealots of the Roman religion, we may dismiss the slander without further notice.* The epistle to Leo, as well as the treatise on Christian Liberty which accompanied it, are extant, and are lasting monuments of the good sense, integrity, and firmness of their author. They also merit particular attention, on account of their being among the last, if not the very last, of Luther's writings, in which he professes obedience to the Romish church and to pontifical authority. Having already adverted, more than once,† to the motives which probably induced him to treat the rulers of that church in a reverential manner, long after he had seen just cause to mourn over their scandalous practices, it will be unnecessary to make further remarks on the civil and dutiful terms in which he addresses Leo X. Every considerate person must allow, that while Luther remained a member of the Roman catholic communion, he was bound upon all occasions of intercourse with his superiors, to use the decent and customary language of a subordinate ecclesiastic.

That truly excellent and judicious protestant, Seckendorf, in his Historical Commentary on Lutheranism, calls on all the bitterest enemies of the Reformation, to lay aside their prejudices, to read over and over again Luther's last letter to the pontiff, and not to stifle the honest convictions of their judgment and conscience. They cannot, he thinks, but admit, how well contrived it was to stir up the mind of Leo to a serious investigation and correction of abuses. It treated the pope himself with the greatest tenderness and respect, while the rash, impolitic proceedings of Cajetan and Eckius were exposed in just strains of censure and reproach. The whole letter is much too long to find a place in this history. A general account of it will, however, be expected; and the rather, as it may seem surprising that Seckendorf, who on most occasions is sufficiently copious in his extracts, and who reckons this composition among the few writings which are truly admirable, does not produce a syllable of it among his numerous articles and additions.*

In the exordium of his letter, Luther declares, that though he had been compelled, by the persecutions of such as flattered his holiness, to appeal from the Roman See to a future council, yet he had never harboured the least ill-will to the pontiff, but had always prayed God to bestow upon his person and See every kind of blessing. He had learnt, he said, to despise, in general, the threats of those who were continually alarming him with the pontifical vengeance; nevertheless it gave him pain to be represented as one who had not spared even the pope himself. Such an accusation he could not treat lightly, as it was in fact, he said, the true cause of that very letter to his holiness, which he was then writing.

He owned, that he had treated the impious doctrines of his adversaries with much severity; and he was so far from repenting of what he had done in that respect, that, whatever man's judgment might be, he intended zealously to persevere in the same practice. He was supported by the example of Christ, of St.

Luther's
letter to
the pope
Leo X.

* Pallavicini.—Maimbourg.

† Pages 246—7, and 253 of this Vol.

* Sleidan gives the substance of it in brief; and the whole is to be found in Luther's Works, Vol. II. Witt.

Paul, and the prophets: whereas the delicate ears of the present age, accustomed to nothing but most pernicious flattery, could not endure plain truths. He was not, however, conscious that he had in any instance spoken of the PERSON of the present pontiff in a manner which was not highly respectful; and if he had really done otherwise, there was nothing which he more thoroughly disapproved, or would be more ready to retract. Moreover, he said, that Leo X. was so generally celebrated for leading a blameless life, that it would not be in the power of the greatest character to injure his unsullied reputation. He was not yet so stupid as to think of attacking a man whom every body praised. Besides, it had never been, nor ever should be his practice, to inveigh even against those who were notorious for bad morals. It gave him no pleasure to dwell on the faults of any man; he was sufficiently conscious of the beam in his own eye, and would never be the first to cast a stone at the adulterous woman. His sole object, his sole contention, related to the DIVINE WORD. Everything else he was ready to give up to any person, but he could never give up his right to set forth the WORD OF TRUTH. Whoever had conceived differently, either of him or his writings, had mistaken the matter.

But the pope's SEE, or, in other words, the COURT OF ROME, neither Leo nor any man living could deny, was more corrupt than Babylon and Sodom. Luther declared, that he considered that court as desperately wicked; he detested it; he had withstood it, and should continue to withstand it as long as he preserved anything of the spirit of the Gospel. It was a most licentious den of thieves: Antichrist could add nothing to its impiety. What can a pope do among such monsters of wickedness, even supposing him to be supported by three or four learned and excellent cardinals? He is like a lamb in the midst of wolves, as a Daniel among the lions, or as an Ezekiel among scorpions.

He most sincerely wished that Leo X. could be induced to live on his own patrimony, or on some petty ecclesiastical preferment, and resign the pontificate, which in reality was now only fit for those sons of perdition who flattered him on account of his glorious pre-eminence. O! Leo, said he, you sit on a most inauspicious and dangerous throne. The

more wicked and execrable your court is, the more readily do they use your name and authority, to ruin the fortunes and the souls of the people, to multiply their villanies, and to oppress the whole Church of God. I speak the truth, because I wish you well. If Bernard, with an honest freedom, deplored the situation of pope Eugenius, at a time when there was room for better hopes of the court of Rome,—though even then very corrupt,—why may not we, after an accumulation of most ruinous corruptions for upwards of three hundred years, be allowed to speak freely? Those, who thus complain and execrate the court of Rome, are your best friends, and do you the best services. Nothing can be more opposite to Christ and his religion than the practices of the Roman See.

He said, he could go still further, and honestly declare, that to inveigh even against the corrupt court of Rome, was a thought which had never entered his mind. He had considered the case of that court as desperate; he had said, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still;"* and he had actually given himself up to the study of the Holy Scriptures, with the view of being useful to his brethren with whom he lived in the university.

While he was prosecuting this plan, in a peaceable and quiet manner, and with a fair prospect of success, John Eoikins, laying hold of a single word, which had casually escaped him, concerning the supremacy of the Roman church, had drawn him unexpectedly into a public disputation. This ostentatious Thraso pretended to venture everything for the glory of God and the honour of the apostolic See; whereas in reality he was seeking, not the supremacy of St. Peter, but his own rank and aggrandizement among the divines of the age; and, in this view, he had supposed it might be of considerable use to him, if he could drag Luther in triumph. Puffed up with the idea of being able to abuse the papal authority to his own purposes, the sophist had looked forward to certain victory; and now that he had utterly failed, he was carried away with the most outrageous passion, conscious that it was by his own fault, and not Luther's, if the latter, in defending himself, had said

* Revel. xxii. 11.

anything which might discredit the Roman See.

Luther then entreated the pope, that he might be permitted to say a word in support of his own cause, and also to point out those who are the real ENEMIES of his holiness. He took it for granted that Leo was well acquainted with the proceedings of his imprudent, unfortunate, nay, unfaithful legate, cardinal Cajetan. This man, he said, might have composed all the differences with a single word. He had only to prescribe to Luther's adversaries the same silence, which on that condition, Luther had promised to preserve. Whereas, not content with this fair compromise, he began to justify the licentious practices of his enemies, and to insist upon a recantation from him, even when the pontifical mandates by no means warranted so tyrannical a demand. Thus the pleasing hopes of an accommodation had been ruined, and the dissension much exasperated. All the mischief which followed was to be ascribed entirely to Cajetan, and not to Luther, who in vain had exerted every nerve to procure peace and silence.

Charles Miltitz, he said, had used his utmost endeavours to repair the harm which had been caused by the pride and temerity of Cajetan; but had been prevented from bringing matters to a successful issue, by the unseasonable disputations of Eckius. This was the name of the pope's real enemy. He was a man who did not seek truth, but glory; a man, who, by falsehood, pretence, and artifice, had from the beginning of these troubles done everything he could to confound men's judgments and inflame their passions; and who, it could not be denied, had brought to light, through his selfish and intemperate conduct, many of the ignominious corruptions of the court of Rome.

From this instance, he said, the pope might learn, that no enemy was more pernicious than a flatterer. At this very time the papal authority languished; even the name of the Roman court excited disgust; while its disgraceful ignorance was the topic of common conversation. Little or nothing might have been said of these things, if the conciliatory measures of Miltitz and himself had not been defeated by Eckius.

Lastly, Luther informed the pope, that some principal persons of his own order, at the particular instance of Miltitz, had

requested him to address his holiness in respectful terms; to defend at the same time his innocence with becoming humility; and to express a hope, that the native goodness of Leo X. would devise some expedient by which the misunderstanding between them might be prevented from being pushed to the last extremity. He said, this measure so entirely harmonized with what he had always offered and wished, that now, with the greatest humility, he besought his holiness to impose silence upon those flatterers, who, while they pretended peace, were enemies of peace. But no PERSON, he added, must desire him to RECANT, unless he intended to increase the dissensions. He further distinctly stated, that he could not permit ANY RULES to be prescribed to him for the interpretation of the word of God: the word of God ought not to be fettered. If these two points were granted, there was nothing that he would not most willingly either do or suffer. He hated contests, and would take care to irritate no man. His holiness, by an easy mandate, could bring the present cause before himself, and enjoin the parties to be silent and to live in peace. It had long been his wish that this step might be taken.

He concluded, with admonishing Leo not to be seduced by those flatterers, who would make him a sort of god, and would persuade him, that he can command and require everything; who call him the lord of the whole world, deny that anything truly Christian can exist without his authority, and idly prate concerning his power in heaven, in hell, and in purgatory. These, Luther said, were the real enemies of the pope, and sought the destruction of his soul: So says the prophet Isaiah, "O my people, they which call thee BLESSED, cause thee to err."* Those greatly erred, who placed the pope above a general council and the universal Church, and who attributed to him alone the right of interpreting Scripture. All such persons were at this moment endeavouring to establish their own impieties in the Church under the protection of Leo; and it was much to be lamented that, through people of this description, Satan had had great

* Chap. iii. ver. 12. There is a peculiar propriety in this quotation; Beatissime, et Beatitudo, being the terms commonly used in addressing the pope.

success, during the times of the predecessors of the present pope.

If he should be thought to have used too great freedom in addressing so dignified a personage, a strong sense of duty must be his apology. He well knew the infinite dangers to which Leo was exposed at Rome, insomuch that the smallest assistance, even from his meanest brother, might be serviceable. He might perhaps have forgotten the majesty of the pope, while he was discharging the duty of benevolence; but he had determined to avoid all flattery in a business so weighty and full of danger; and if, in what he had said, he was not considered as something more than the pope's most obedient subject, if he was not understood to be his true friend, **THERE WAS ONE WHO COULD BOTH UNDERSTAND AND JUDGE.**

That he might not approach his holiness empty, Luther said, he presented him a little treatise on Christian liberty. As an omen of his good hope and future reconciliation, he had ventured to dedicate it to Leo X. himself. From the perusal of it a judgment might be formed, in what kind of studies its author would have chosen to spend his time, if he might have been permitted.

The small treatise on Christian Liberty was regarded by its author as a **COMPENDIUM** of the Christian life. In the beginning of it he says, He was conscious of his want of knowledge, and he had no pretensions to elegance; but having struggled through many and various temptations, he hoped he had learnt something of the nature of faith, and could speak of it more practically than those subtle verbal disputants, who scarcely understood their own meaning.

He premises two axioms, which, in appearance, contradict each other, but which in reality, he said, would be found perfectly consistent.

1. A Christian man is of all men the most completely free; and is subject to none.

2. A Christian man is of all men the most ready to serve others, and is subject to every one.*

In illustration of the former, he shows that the Christian is justified and filled with all good, and made a true son of

God by faith alone. "And though," says he, "he is abundantly justified inwardly, according to the Spirit, through faith, possessing whatever he ought to have,—except that the principle of faith ought to grow stronger in him day by day,—yet, while he remains upon earth in this mortal state, he must keep his body in subjection, and perform those duties which result from an intercourse with his fellow-creatures. Here then it is, in the Christian scheme, that works are to be placed; here it is that sloth and indolence are forbidden; and here the convert is bound to take care that, by fasting, watching, labour, and other suitable means, his body be so exercised and subdued to the spirit, that it may obey and conform to the inward and new man, and not rebel and obstruct the operations of faith, as it is naturally inclined to do, if not restrained. For the inward man, being created after the image of God, by faith rejoices through Christ, in whom he possesses so great treasure; and hence his only employment and delight is to serve God freely in love."

He elucidates the second axiom by describing the secret reflections of a truly humble Christian. "Behold! on me, a miserable mortal and worthy of condemnation, God, of his mere pity and kindness, without the least merit on my part, hath bestowed all the riches of his righteousness and salvation, so that I no more stand in need of anything except faith, by which I may appropriate and secure these blessings. To such a Father, who overwhelms me with his inestimable loving-kindness, must I not liberally, cheerfully, and with my whole heart do everything which I shall know to be pleasing in his sight? I therefore, after the example of Christ, and as far as I am capable of imitating him, would give up myself to my neighbour, as Christ hath given up himself for me; I am determined to do nothing in this life, except what I shall see to be conducive to his good, since by faith I myself abound in all blessings through Christ."

He proceeds to show, that papal, episcopal, monastic, ecclesiastical, and political mandates, ought to be obeyed, in many instances, from a regard to the express will of God; in others, from a sense of the expediency of the injunctions; and again in others, from a principle of pure benevolence, which, in imi-

* 1 Cor. ix. 19. Id. vii. 22.

tation of our Lord, performs and endures many things not in their own nature necessary, for the sake of peace and order, and that offence may not be given to our fellow-creatures. "Thus," continues Luther, "a man who has a right notion of this subject, may decide for himself without danger in an infinity of cases. A free Christian man will say, 'I will fast, I will pray, I will do this, or that, because men have ordered me to do so. It is not that the thing is necessary to my justification or salvation, but I shall hereby comply with the wishes or directions of the pope, the bishop, the community, the magistrate, or lastly, my neighbour. I will do and suffer all things, as Christ voluntarily did and suffered much more for me, and became subject to the law on my account.' Nay, even though tyrants should use compulsion and violence, the rule of submission continues still the same, as long as nothing is required which is contrary to God's commandments. But then we must never think, that by such acts of external obedience, we make an atonement for our sins, or purchase salvation; for by these means Christian liberty is totally extinguished, as must ever be the case where the true principles of Christian faith are not known."

There were some, he said, who would vitiate the very best doctrines, and the very best discourses, by misunderstanding them. Let such persons try if they could understand the few words he was about to say. "Many impure characters, when they hear of this liberty of the Gospel, use it for an occasion to the flesh, and form no other idea of Christian freedom than an exemption from all rules and ordinances. They greedily lay hold of this exemption, and pay no regard to things which relate essentially to the Christian religion.—Let us hearken to the Scripture, and turn not from it to the right hand or to the left.* By that unerring guide it appears, that as no man is justified by his attention to works and ritual observances, so neither is he justified by the neglect and contempt of them. The faith of Christ does not free us from the necessity of performing good works, but from the presumption of seeking justification by them. Rules and precepts are necessary to be observed in human life. Impetuous and inexperienced youth

must be disciplined by useful labour, and the body must be brought into subjection by these means. A prudent and faithful minister of Christ will instruct his people in these things, but in so guarded a manner, as to prevent, so far as in him lies, the prevalence of a self-righteous spirit. For this is easily introduced, unless faith be constantly inculcated. If faith be kept out of sight, and human constitutions alone be taught, pestilent and impious traditions, which ruin the soul, will bear all the sway in the Church, as is at present the case of the Christian world; pontiffs and schoolmen will confound the minds of men by their decrees and sentences; and an infinite number of souls will be dragged into perdition; so that Antichrist will appear indeed in all his horrors."

Luther had repeatedly expressed a wish, that he might have leisure to attend to useful subjects, and not be continually diverted from them by polemical disputes. In the treatise, of which the substance of some remarkable passages has been laid before the reader, he seems to have given a specimen of what he conceived to be salutary, practical doctrine: And, though he cannot, as yet, be supposed to have arrived at perfect accuracy in his views of the Gospel, every intelligent student of divinity will see the lineaments of true Christianity. The subjects which he treats are in their own nature mysterious, and by no means agreeable to the prejudices of human nature in its present state. EVANGELICAL TRUTH itself appears to stand between two precipices, equally destructive, Self-righteousness and Antinomianism. To describe it in such a manner as to leave it liable to neither of these imputations, is no easy matter. Even those, who, by sound experience, are practical adepts in the Gospel mystery, are not always happy in conveying wholesome instruction to others. Language itself is apt to sink under the weight of the real doctrines of grace, and proves unequal to the description of that spiritual understanding which furnishes the CHRISTIAN HEART with conceptions peculiarly scriptural. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that the man, who, after a silence of many centuries, first undertook to arrange and methodize the doctrines of the Gospel according to the principles of the New Testament, should not always be able to do full justice to his subject? In explaining, how-

* Galatians v.

ever, the principles of Christian liberty, and in guarding them against evils and abuses on the right hand and the left, he seems, on the whole, to have preserved the due medium; and it is a marvellous instance of Divine goodness, that the first completely evangelical Reformer could unite such uncommon vehemence of spirit with so much good sense, and so great nicety of judicious discrimination.

From these extracts and quotations, we also see how far remote the author was from being a turbulent, schismatical, licentious demagogue. Convinced as he now was, that the bishop of Rome had no divine jurisdiction, he so far revered the providence of God in establishing systems of government, and continuing them for ages among mankind, that he was willing to try whether scriptural truths might not be taught and supported in the Christian world without the convulsion of a complete separation. Nor were his suspicions of the entirely antichristian nature of the popedom confirmed, till he found by experience that an evangelical ministry could not subsist under so corrupt an hierarchy.—With what extreme ignorance, then, of authentic ecclesiastical documents, do many factious spirits undertake to justify their turbulence and temerity by the example of Martin Luther!

The Romish writer, Maimbourg, gives the following account of the Treatise on Christian Liberty. "Luther sent it to the pope for the purpose of insulting him. He represents faith as doing everything. It justifies us, it makes us free, it saves us; and all this without the help of good works, which are of no use towards salvation, even though they proceed from faith."

From Mons. Du Pin, who, of all the papal advocates, is in general by far the most candid and the most to be relied on, one might have expected a more ingenuous and instructive criticism, especially on a work which lays aside all speculative disquisition, and treats only of the essential doctrines of the Gospel, and the way which every individual sinner must seek eternal salvation. Though sufficiently prolix in other matters, he gives but a sentence or two respecting this treatise. "It is," says he, "full of pious maxims, but he maintains in it his error of justification by faith alone. Yet, he tells us, he does not reject good

works, but, on the contrary, exhorts men to the practice of them; but he condemns those who do them with an opinion to be justified by them, and is persuaded that they make no man just."

The pious Christian will have no difficulty in determining where, in these instances, the charge of error and misrepresentation ought to rest, though he may, perhaps, be a little surprised to see, that in former, as well as in modern times, the leading truths of the Gospel, in spite of every care to interpret them clearly, and guard them from erroneous construction, were opposed, misunderstood, and misrepresented. The fact is, men, in all ages and under all circumstances, naturally dislike the pure doctrines of grace; they are ignorant of God's righteousness; they go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.* It was, I conceive, a strong conviction of this natural dislike, which induced the author of the treatise we have now reviewed, to put his readers, at the conclusion, in mind of the important truth,—namely,

"That there was therefore need of PRAYER to God, that he would be pleased to incline us towards himself and make us teachable, and write his laws in our hearts, according to his promise,—otherwise, we are ruined for ever. For unless he himself inwardly teach us this wisdom, which is so hidden in mystery, mere nature will constantly disapprove it and reject it. The reason is, nature looks on it as foolishness, and takes offence at it."—This is a most valuable observation of Luther. He had his eye on the great, essential doctrine of justification by faith, which was always his favourite theme. He had taken peculiar pains to secure it both from abuse and from misconception. It was only a little before, that he had said, "We are so far from rejecting good works, that we teach the necessity of them, and lay very great stress on their being done. We never say anything against them on their own account; it is the impious notion that they can justify, which we condemn." Still he well knew, that nothing he could say, would be effectual to reach the hearts, or even the understandings of mankind. Still they would infallibly exclaim, "This is a dangerous tenet, this

* Rom. x. 3.

is faith without works."—He therefore wisely admonishes us to pray for a divine influence; and he beseeches God to "show the light of his countenance, that HIS way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations."

If the least doubt could be entertained, whether the Saxon Reformer was a man both of acute understanding and indefatigable industry, it would be easy to particularize several of his excellent publications, during the years 1519, 1520, &c. which have not been mentioned. The established hierarchy had, as it could not fail to have, many supporters. The heretical innovator was attacked from all quarters; and it may be sufficient to add, that Luther always answered his enemies with perspicuity and vigour, and in several instances with great brilliancy of wit and poignant sarcasm: never was it more truly said of any man, THAT HE WAS HIMSELF A HOST.

Doubtless this extraordinary servant of God is the object of our admiration, much more than of our pity; nevertheless, when I view the champion of that Christian liberty which we at this day enjoy, calumniated, irritated, and provoked, hunted down, and almost struggling for his life, it is with infinite satisfaction that I find the eloquent pen of Melancthon begins about this time to

Luther is defended by Melancthon, A. D. 1520.

appear, in reply to some of Luther's adversaries. With what spirit he was treading in the steps of his academical friend, may in some measure be inferred from his answer to a declamatory composition which was published at Leipsic, under the name of Thomas Radin. A short extract must however suffice; important materials crowd upon us. "The very terms, grace, faith, hope, and charity, have an entirely different meaning in the Scriptures, from THAT which fashionable divines give them in their scholastic discussions. We have not only lost the doctrine, but even the very language of Christianity. GRACE is a word which denotes SOME GIFT of God through Christ: But where does it signify, as they interpret it, A FORM of SOUL? Or whence came the terms of FAITH INFUSED and ACQUIRED; FORMED and UNFORMED? Where is their authority for teaching, that Christian minds should hope for salvation from human merits? Nay, whence is the origin of the term itself,

the profane term of MERIT? Witness this madness of attributing virtue to human endeavours rather than to the work of the Divine Spirit? The Church, ye princes! appeals to your faith and piety: she entreats you, enslaved as she is by philosophy and human traditions, to emancipate her at length from her twofold Babylonian servitude." Melancthon then makes heavy complaints of the vices tolerated in the universities, and the corruptions there imbibed by youth. "I have seen," says he, "some young men, not ill-disposed, who would have wished to live and die in total ignorance of letters, rather than to have purchased knowledge at so dear a rate, who carried nothing away with them from the universities, except a guilty conscience."

If the conduct of Frederic the Wise had been influenced only by prudential and political considerations, he may seem to have been sufficiently tempted, about this period, to have entirely withdrawn his protection from Luther. He was informed by Valentine Deitleben, who was then his agent at Rome for the management of some particular business,—That, he could bring nothing to a successful issue with the Roman pontiff; That, whatever the pretence might be, he believed the real obstacles were, the offence which the new doctrines of Luther had given to the pope and his cardinals, and the public report of the encouragement and assistance which Luther himself had received from the prince.

Valentine Deitleben is the Elector's agent at Rome.

The answer of the elector is, in substance, as follows:

We never undertook to defend or to patronize the opinions or writings of Luther; nor have we at this moment any such intention. We do not consider it as our business to pronounce what is right, or wrong, on religious subjects: Nevertheless, we will not dissemble, that we hear the tenets of THIS MAN are approved by many learned and intelligent persons. Some time ago we so far interfered, as to obtain from him a voluntary promise that he would leave our university and jurisdiction; which he would certainly have done, had not C. Miltitz, the pope's own nuncio, entreated us in the most earnest manner not to permit him to go away; for he expressed his fears, lest, in a different

Luther is supported by the Elector of Saxony.

situation, where the man was not restrained by our authority, he might proceed to greater lengths.

As, therefore, there is not the smallest ground for suspecting us to be ill affected to the Roman See, we trust that our affairs will not meet with any obstruction from his holiness, on account of false charges and insinuations.

To you, however, we may speak without disguise. It is the common conversation here, that Martin Luther was drawn into this dispute about the pope's supremacy by Doctor Eckius, and that he has been so repeatedly provoked by abusive publications, at Rome and other places, that he found himself compelled to answer them. Moreover, as there are now in Germany abundance of ingenious and learned persons, and as the laity begin to grow skilful, and have a desire to understand the Scriptures, there is, in the opinion of many, great reason to fear, that if the pope should continue to reject the equitable proposals of Luther, and will not submit the cause to a fair and unbiassed examination, but depend merely on ecclesiastical censures, the dissensions and contests may be exceedingly exasperated, and a return to peace and harmony rendered very difficult. The doctrines of Luther have taken deep root everywhere, and the effect must be done away by perspicuous and incontestable testimonies of SCRIPTURE, not by ecclesiastical processes contrived to oppress him and to excite terror; otherwise, it is most probable that the bitterest animosities, and the most horrible and destructive convulsions will arise in Germany, which can be of no service either to his holiness the pope, or to any one else.*

This letter, though addressed only to the elector's own agent or commissioner, Deitleben, would doubtless find its way to the pontiff and his cardinals. Happily for the cause of Christian liberty, THESE continued to despise every kind of salutary advice, and it is well known how the subsequent events corresponded with the intimations of the sagacious Frederic.

In effect, Leo X. listened to the advice of his most pernicious counsellors, and at length, as we shall soon see, suffered himself to be overcome by their importunity. Among these we may

Imprudence
of Leo X.

reckon Sylvester, Prierias, and Cajetan, and especially Eckius, who, from the time of his defeat in the disputation at Leipsic, breathed nothing but fury and resentment against Luther, and, without losing a moment, had repaired to Rome, in the full purpose of executing vengeance on the man who had lowered his pride, and checked his ambitious expectations. Instead of profiting by the prudent suggestions of Frederic, which were conveyed to the court of Rome, through Deitleben, in language sufficiently respectful, though at the same time firm and significant, the pontiff affected to understand the elector's letter of instruction to his agent in a sense directly opposite to the real one. He extolled that prince in the highest terms of commendation, for having opposed the wicked attempts of Martin Luther with so much piety and zeal; he suppressed his knowledge of any protection that had been afforded the heretic by the court of Saxony; and, with incredible effrontery and dissimulation, he desired the elector to be assured, that his spirited conduct on the present emergency, in resisting innovation and supporting the orthodox faith, had very much increased that good opinion which the Roman See had always entertained of his distinguished merit. In the same letter Leo declares, that he had received from the very best characters so many testimonies in praise of Frederic, as made it hard for him to say, whether the wisdom or the religion of the prince had lately been more conspicuous? It was a proof of singular wisdom that he had given no countenance to that pestilential poisonous madman, who was reviving the seditious heresies of the Wickliffites and Hussites, which had already been condemned by the general Church; but it was the soundness of his religious principles, which only could account for his steady adherence to the orthodox faith.

The pope concludes with informing the elector, that he had sent him a copy of the determination* of the court of Rome respecting this notorious heretic and his detestable opinions; and that he now relied upon his highness, in the first place, to exhort Luther to recant with a

* This was the pope's bull in which Luther was condemned. An account of it and its consequences will be given in the next Chapter.

* Luth. Op. Vol. II. p. 49.

becoming humility; and secondly, if the man persisted in his wickedness beyond the term of sixty days, to seize his person and keep him safe for the disposal of his holiness.

This and the preceding letter are curious specimens of that species of epistolary correspondence which frequently takes place among persons in elevated situations, where the writers perfectly understand each other, though they by no means express in words the ideas they intend to communicate. The letter of Frederic, which, though addressed to his agent at Rome, we may consider as designed for the pope himself, displays throughout, both the extraordinary sagacity and the manly resolution which characterized that great prince; while the pope's answer, under the disguise of a disgusting flattery, betrays the most presumptuous and arbitrary designs. Frederic, though his expressions are modified with a courtly dexterity, and with that obsequiousness to the hierarchy in which he was educated, breathes nothing but sincerity, moderation, and peace: whereas Leo X. even in his condescension, is insolent; and by his ridiculous inconsistency in praising the elector, and at the same time adopting violent counsels, demonstrates both the ignorance and the temerity of his advisers. The intelligent reader, who is accustomed to exercise his own understanding on the facts before him, will, by attentively weighing these two letters, see more into the real state of the Reformation and the character of the elector of Saxony and of the Roman court, than by reading many pages of historical speculation and conjecture. But,

Let us now hear the sentiments of one, who neither loved courts, nor practised their arts.—When Luther was informed by Spalatinus, that the prince's agent at Rome could transact no business with the pope, because his holiness was offended on account of the protection afforded by the elector to so notorious a heretic, his answer was in substance as follows, and well deserves our notice.

“It is entirely agreeable to my wishes, that our illustrious prince should separate himself from my cause as he has hitherto done, and expose me to the public, either to be instructed or convicted of error. Let them punish Sylvester, Eckius, Cajetan and others, who have raised these dis-

turbances in the Church, merely to enhance their own consequence and reputation. Whatever I have done, or now do, I do by compulsion. I am always ready to be quiet, provided they do not insist upon evangelical truth lying dormant. If they will but permit Christians to walk in the path of salvation without persecution, I will give up everything else; and that spontaneously. This is all I ask. What can be more equitable? I ask not for a cardinal's hat, nor for gold, nor whatever at this day is deemed precious at Rome.—You will observe, that a mind thus disposed can neither fear threats nor be allured by promises.”*

However, amidst the various distresses which the attacks of persecutors on all sides occasioned, several circumstances took place about the beginning of the year 1520, which tended greatly to encourage the Saxon Reformer. 1. The appearance of Melancthon against the papal advocates has already been mentioned. 2. Several elaborate epistles of Erasmus, written about the same period, to persons of learning and eminence, represent Luther in the most respectful terms. Some of these are already, in substance, before the reader,† who cannot fail to observe, that they must have proved the more serviceable to the cause of the Reformation, because, as Luther himself says, Erasmus, with his usual dexterity, did not seem to take his part, and yet in fact defended him in the very ablest manner.‡ 3. Some German noblemen, who had imbibed Lutheran principles, and had heard of the dangers to which, from the violent machinations of bigoted Roman catholics, the Reformer's life was exposed, stepped forward at this crisis, and generously offered him their protection. Among these, in particular is recorded the name of Sylvester Schaumburg, a Franconian knight, who sent his son to Wittemberg, to be instructed by Melancthon; and, at the same time, by a letter, most earnestly requested Luther to accept an asylum in his neighbourhood, where he might be preserved from all harm, by Schaumburg himself and a hundred other noblemen, till the storm was over, and the doctrinal points had undergone a legal examination. Luther

* Lib. I. Epist.

† In pages 222, 223 of this Volume.

‡ Lib. I. Epist. 143.

had the prudence to transmit to his friend Spalatinus the knight's letter, for the inspection of the elector; and along with it a very significant note, which shows how much his hopes and confidence were improved upon receiving information that he had so many friends in Germany. "If it would not," says he, "give the prince too much trouble, I could wish he would be pleased to give a hint to his friend, cardinal St. George, at Rome, respecting the contents of the inclosed letter from Sir Sylvester Schaumburg, that my enemies may see, they will only make bad worse by driving me from Wittemberg; for there are those, not in Bohemia, but in the middle of Germany, who both can and will protect me against all their ecclesiastical thunders. THERE, most certainly, I should expose the Roman errors and abuses with greater severity than I have thought it prudent to do at Wittemberg, where the authority of the prince and the interests of the university are some restraint to my proceedings. As far as respects myself, the die is cast. Papal wrath and papal favour are equally despised by me. I no longer wish to communicate with the Romanists or to be reconciled to them. Let them condemn me and burn my books; and if, in return, I do not publicly condemn and burn the whole mass of pontifical law, it will be because I cannot find fire. They will not succeed in this contest. The Lord, who knows me to be a most grievous sinner, will, I doubt not, finish his own work, either through me as his instrument, or through another."

It is scarcely necessary to mention, that the Saxon Reformer, when he wrote

this note, had made up his mind respecting an accommodation with the court of

Rome. In various ways he received almost daily information of their violent proceedings against his doctrines, his writings, and his person;* he soon expected to hear of a cruel and unjust sentence; and it behoved him to make some provision for his safety. Under these circumstances, the generous proposal of protection by Schaumburg and his associates must have been grateful news; and though Divine Providence directed his valuable life to be preserved in a different manner, yet the certain knowledge of having so many powerful friends

in the heart of Germany, together with the pleasing option of taking shelter among them in case of emergency, produced a most visible and decisive effect on his mind. We may judge of this by comparing the spirit of the preceding short letter to Spalatinus, with that of the following, which was written to the same friend, just before the kind intentions and voluntary support of the German noblemen were made known to him. Alluding to the bitter accusations of the Romanists, he expresses himself to the following effect: "You know that I have much more right to complain than they. Proofs of this assertion may be found in my little publications; in which I so often own and complain, that I am dragged into this contest by force. How frequently have I proposed peace and silence. Nay, when do I cease to beg for better information? My disposition is still the same; still I am ready to be silent, if I may be permitted to be so; that is, if my enemies shall also be restrained from attacking me. All the world knows that Eckius drew me into the dispute about the pope's supremacy, for no other reason but to injure my person, and all my concerns, and to expose to ridicule both my reputation and our university at Wittemberg. And now, when they see that the man is providentially opposed, they accuse me of vain-glory. How is it, that a person so low and miserable as I am should be suspected of a passion for glory; I, who ask for nothing more but that I may be suffered to live in private, altogether unknown to the world? Let those, who please, succeed me in my functions; let those, who please, burn my books: What can I say more? However, I desire that one thing may be taken along with what I here say, namely, that if I may not be released from the office of teaching and explaining the word of God, most assuredly I will not be fettered in the discharge of my ministry, I am already sufficiently burdened with my sins; I mean not to add to them the unpardonable crime of remaining in the ministry and of being unfaithful in it, of being guilty of an impious silence, and of the neglect of divine truth and of so many thousand precious souls."

Such appears to have been the pious and truly benevolent determination of the man, whom an elegant historian, with most deplorable prejudice, in direct op-

Critical
situation of
Luther.

* Du Pin, Book II. Chap. ix.

position to the facts, accuses of indulging a spirit of selfish resentment, when he began to oppose the practice of indulgences.*

Whoever reflects on the state of ecclesiastical affairs in the latter part of the year 1520, and the former part of 1521, the important crisis which was fast approaching, the wise and resolute conduct of Martin Luther, and the glorious and happy consequences of his opposition to the reigning corruptions, will look on these authentic documents as extremely interesting, and well deserving the notice of every pious and grateful Protestant. It is indeed much to be lamented, that these, and many other instructive particulars contained in this chapter, have not, as yet, found their way into regular ecclesiastical histories, where they might prove, in some degree, an antidote to the pert and positive assertions of profane and infidel authors, who know no bounds to their misrepresentations of religious characters and religious transactions. †

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION, TILL THE CONCLUSION OF THE DIET OF WORMS.

LUTHER'S TREATISE ON THE BABYLONISH CAPTIVITY.

HE IS CONDEMNED BY THE BULL OF LEO X.
THE ELECTOR'S INTERVIEW AT COLOGNE WITH ALEXANDER.

THE ELECTOR'S INTERVIEW ALSO WITH ERASMUS.

DEFENCES OF LUTHER.

THE ASPERITY OF HIS STYLE.

HE BURNS THE POPE'S BULL.

ELECTION OF CHARLES V.

LUTHER'S COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

DIET OF WORMS.

THE active spirit of Luther was continually engaged in the investigation of Evangelical truth. Hearing of the design of the court of Rome to publish his condemnation, and discovering more and more of the abuses of popery, he found himself compelled to proceed in his op-

* Hume, Henry VIII.

† Thus Mr. Hume, besides his odious misrepresentation respecting INDULGENCES, which has long ago received a most complete an-

swer from Dr. Maclaine, in his notes on Mosheim, makes not the least scruple to speak of the Reformation in the following manner:

position to the established system. He saw no possibility of retreating with a safe conscience; all his offers of peace and reconciliation were rejected with contempt and disdain; and his bitterest enemies were countenanced and applauded by the Pontiff. He determined therefore to do his utmost to open the eyes of all ranks and orders of men respecting the abominable practices of the Roman hierarchy.

Accordingly, about the middle of the year 1520, he published, in his native language, a little treatise, in which he addressed the Emperor and German nobility. His own description of it is concise and significant: "My little Tract," says he, "against the Popedom, is now before the public. The subject is, the necessity of a reformation in the Church. It will give great offence at Rome, because it exposes the impious arts and violent abuses of the pontifical power."

In this work Luther collects a history of the numerous corruptions which for many ages had crept into the Church; and in particular he describes the miseries which Germany had suffered from the various wars that had been raised against the emperors by intriguing and ambitious pontiffs, for the purpose of increasing their wealth and power. He denies the authority of the pope in interpreting Scripture, since he was fallible as well as other men; and asserts that the CIVIL and not the ecclesiastical go-

Not that reason bore any considerable share, in opening men's eyes with regard to the impostures of the Romish church."

Again, "Many of the reformers adopted an enthusiastic strain of devotion, which admitted of no observances, rites, or ceremonies, but placed all merit in a mysterious species of faith, in inward vision, rapture, and ecstacy."

Soon after, he speaks of Leo X. as follows: His "SOUND JUDGMENT, MODERATION, and TEMPER, were well qualified to retard its progress;" that is, the progress of the sect of reformers.

I will venture to affirm, that it will not be easy to produce, from any writer of tolerable reputation, assertions that have so little foundation in fact as these.

Luther's tract against the Popedom, A. D. 1520.

vernors possessed the right of convening general councils. He exhorts the whole nation to make a **STAND** against the pope's encroachments; he lays open the scandalous manners and practices of the court of Rome; and describes the cardinals as a company of useless men, who disgraced the clerical profession by their vices, and drained the riches of Italy and Germany.

The treatise comprehends likewise a selection of distinct articles concerning the reformation of ecclesiastical affairs, the encouragement of useful seminaries of learning, and the study of theology. The primary object of theology, he said, ought to be the interpretation and understanding of the sacred Scriptures; and the public schools should attend to the pious education of young persons of both sexes; and the extirpation, or at least the correction, of various pernicious customs, which antiquity itself had now rendered venerable in the Christian world. Still he declared, that he did not reject the authority of the pontiff, provided it was regulated by wholesome laws. He recommends most particular care to be taken in the choice of the college of cardinals, that that body may consist of pious and skilful persons; and he thinks their number should be confined to twelve.

Thus by a persevering opposition, equally firm and prudent, the Saxon Reformer gradually subverted the foundations of popery; and Germany saw with admiration the display of a profound, practical knowledge in ecclesiastical subjects, from a person whose hours had chiefly been spent in the schools and in the monastery. Some, however, there were, and those the friends of Luther, who were startled at the boldness of the publication, and considered it as the signal for war; but the more thinking and judicious part of mankind looked on this measure as the wisest step, which, even in a mere worldly and prudential light, could possibly have been taken, to render contemptible and abortive the expected fulminations of the Roman court.

In the autumn of the same year our industrious Reformer printed a small treatise concerning the Babylonish Captivity of the Church. He begins this book with an ingenuous acknowledgment, that he now most sincerely repented of the concessions he had made two years ago respecting the nature of

INDULGENCES. He was so constantly exercised, he said, in disputes and contentions, that whether he would or would not, he was compelled to become daily more and more learned. He could not at that time think of rejecting indulgences entirely, so general was the consent of mankind in their favour, and so addicted was he himself to the superstitions of Romish tyranny. But he now understood them to be mere impostures, originating in iniquitous flattery. Their object was to rob men of their money, and to pervert the faith of the Gospel. He heartily wished he could persuade the booksellers, and all others, to commit to the flames every line that he had written on that subject, and to substitute in their place this proposition,—Indulgences are the wicked contrivances of Romish flatterers.*

It is in this animated composition, that Luther for the first time, I think, calls the papacy, **THE KINGDOM OF BABYLON**. The progress of his sentiments was in perfect unison with the natural motions of the human mind, attending to the dictates of conscience, and directed by serious reflection. It was altogether agreeable to right reason, that he, who had for some time suspected the papacy to be antichristian on account of its multiplied enormities, should at length firmly believe it to be so, when it reformed no abuses, acknowledged no mistakes, and exhibited no ecclesiastical authority, but in persecuting those who endeavoured to promote the good of the church.

Notwithstanding the generous and reasonable protection which had lately been offered to Luther by the German nobility, his real situation at this time was sufficiently perilous to have filled any other person with the most uneasy apprehensions. His artful, bitter, and chagrined adversary, Eckius, had gone to Rome, for the express purpose of soliciting the papal censures against him. He knew the man's pride and boundless ambition, his persevering industry, his unexhausted resentment. The bull of Leo X. which was to put an end to the dissensions in the Church, and perhaps to the existence of the Reformer, was daily expected in Germany; and Luther might well doubt whether the cautious Elector would not shrink from the danger of hazarding an open rupture with the Roman

* Luth. Op. Vol. II.

See, whose enormous power had already crushed some of the most potent German emperors. He had indeed good reason to believe that Frederick was his disciple from conviction, as well as his protector from policy; but that excellent prince might not be able to support him in an avowed contest of force, though by prudential and dexterous management, he had hitherto shielded him from mischief. In this state of suspense and peril, it was impossible for Luther to remain unconcerned; yet he discovered no symptoms either of timidity or remissness. He continued to vindicate his own conduct and opinions with spirit, and to inveigh against those of his adversaries with vehemence.

From the epistolary correspondence of Spalatinus towards the end of the year 1520, we have an opportunity of learning the exact state of Luther's mind, after he had received certain intelligence of the arrival of his condemnation

The courage
of Luther.
A. D. 1520.

from Rome. Spalatinus had been sent by the elector, to examine the condition of the university of Wittenberg, and also to ask Luther what steps he intended to take respecting the pope's bull. "I found him," says he, "altogether cheerful, and even in high spirits. He is determined to write against the bull, but with moderation, for the Elector's sake. He has resolved, as soon as he hears of the burning of his own books, to treat the pontifical decrees in the same way. I have seen more than thirty letters addressed to Luther from Suevia, Helvetia, and Pomerania. They are written by princes and persons distinguished by rank and learning, and are, all of them, full of pious and consolatory reflections. Though two hundred students are said to have left the university, the danger of the plague was the chief reason of their departure. Moreover, the principal part of them remain, and new ones are daily coming in crowds; insomuch that I myself have seen six hundred scholars attend the lectures of Melancthon, and four hundred those of Luther. Lastly, neither the parish church, nor that of the monastery, is large enough to contain the multitudes who flock to hear the sermons of Luther."

After the court of Rome had hesitated almost three years, during all which time the WORD OF GOD HAD GROWN AND MULTIPLIED, it was on the fifteenth of June,

one thousand five hundred and twenty, that Leo X. published that famous damnatory bull* against Luther, which in the event proved so fatal to the established hierarchy. Forty-one propositions extracted out of Luther's works are therein condemned as heretical, scandalous, and offensive to pious ears; all persons are forbidden to read his writings, upon pain of excommunication; such as had any of them in their custody, are commanded to burn them; and he himself, if he did not, within sixty days, send or bring his retraction in form to Rome, is pronounced an obstinate heretic, is excommunicated, and delivered unto Satan for the destruction of his flesh; and all secular princes are required, under pain of incurring the same censures, and of forfeiting all their dignities, to seize his person, that he might be punished as his crimes deserved.†

Damnatory
bull against
Luther,
June 15,
A. D. 1520.

There was a time when the most powerful monarchs would have trembled at such a sentence. That time was now elapsed; and though Eckius and his party triumphed, as if by one decisive blow they had at length annihilated Lutheranism, the more judicious and dispassionate part of mankind beheld this rash step of the Roman court as the certain prognostic of increased tumults and distractions.

The bull met with different kinds of reception in different parts of Germany. In some places the publication of it was delayed, in others eluded in part; and so odious were the proceedings of the court of Rome in this business, that fear alone dictated to many a reluctant and partial obedience to its mandates. For some time past the followers of Luther had been gradually learning to treat ecclesiastical anathemas with little respect;‡ and, on this occasion, they read them with the most lively indignation. Even at Leipsic, Eckius experienced a very violent opposition to the promulgation of the bull; and at Erfurt it was forcibly wrested from him, torn to pieces, and thrown into the river by armed academicians, who assembled together and besieged his house for that purpose.

Spalatinus has informed us how little intimidated or disconcerted he found his

* See Chap. V. of this Cent.

† Luth. Op. II. Wit. Palavic. 27.

‡ Luth. Op. I.

friend Luther to be on the arrival of the bull;* but, it should seem, that some weeks before their interview, Luther knew the long expected event had actually taken place. We collect this from

one of his letters to Spalatinus, dated October the thirteenth, 1520; an extract of

which we shall lay before the reader, who will, doubtless, be gratified to see his very first thoughts and resolutions on this memorable occasion. "At last the Roman bull is come; and Eckius is the bearer of it. I treat it with contempt. I consider it in all respects as a machination of Eckius, and I attack it as impious and false. You see, that the express doctrines of Christ himself are here condemned; no cause assigned why I should be deemed a heretic; and, lastly, I am called, not to a hearing, but to a retraction. I shall however, as yet, not seem to know that it is a papal bull, but treat it as a fiction and forgery. Oh! how I wish that the emperor Charles V. would act like a man; and in behalf of Christ oppose the emissaries of Satan. On my own account I have no fear. Let the will of the Lord be done. Neither do I see what steps the prince should take; perhaps, a silent connivance is his truest wisdom. Everywhere, even at Leipsic, I understand that both the bull and Eckius are extremely despised; so that I almost suspect it will, of itself, come to nothing, if we ourselves do not procure it importance, by discovering too great an anxiety. I send you a true copy of the bull, that you may see what these Romans are. If they prevail, there is an end of the Church, and of the faith of the Gospel. From the bottom of my heart I rejoice that I suffer this persecution in the best of causes; though I am not worthy to undergo tribulation in so holy a conflict. I feel myself now more at liberty, being assured that the popedom is antichristian, and the seat of Satan. My only prayer is, that God may preserve his own people from the impious seductions of Romish adherents. Erasmus writes, that the emperor's court overflows with beggars and dependants, all disposed to promote tyrannical principles, so that there is no hope in Charles. No wonder! Trust not in princes, or in any child of man, for there is no help in them."†

Historians, on both sides the question, censure without mercy the imprudent conduct of the Roman court in almost all their transactions with Luther. Moreover, they also suggest ingenious plans of different kinds,* by which, if the papal counsels had been steadily directed, they suppose all opposition to the reigning ecclesiastical powers might have been crushed in the bud. The pious reader, however, while he reflects with astonishment on the presumptuous folly and blind infatuation of the Roman hierarchy, will take care always to keep a reverential eye on the overruling hand of Providence, which, for the wickedness of men, often shuts their eyes, that they cannot see, and makes their ears heavy that they cannot hear.† If this important caution, so constantly enjoined in Scripture, be totally neglected, or but carelessly regarded, the study of history, otherwise so beneficial an employment, may easily obtain a malignant influence over both the understanding and the affections. An habitual attention to SECONDARY CAUSES, where the mind has not obtained, from Divine revelation, any true knowledge of the FIRST GRAND CAUSE, nor been duly humbled on account of internal depravity, had been observed, in many instances, sadly to increase a sceptical, profane, and atheistical way of thinking. On the contrary, when the God of the Scriptures is the God in whom we firmly believe and humbly trust, and whose attributes we expect to see displayed in his government of the world, we then derive useful lessons of instruction from the contemplation of almost every event, which either we ourselves diligently observe, or which is faithfully recorded by human industry. In effect, the RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE is the KEY to true wisdom, and to true happiness; the door of BOTH is shut to the profane unbeliever.

Those, then, who believe, that when the heart of a wicked man, as of Pharaoh, is declared in Scripture to be hardened by the Lord, a previous state of great sin and impenitence is the true cause of so awful a judgment, will have no difficulty in comprehending why the Roman pontiff and his advisers should appear to have had their hearts hardened in all their contests with Luther. The Reformer's cause from the beginning was

* Page 277.

† Seck. 114.

* Robertson, Charles V. † Isaiah, vi. 10.

the cause of God and his Christ; and the Roman See had well nigh filled up the measure of its iniquity. On the supposition of any other principle, but a judicial hardening of the heart through Divine vengeance, the strange infatuation of Leo X. seems altogether unaccountable. Most certainly he was extremely anxious to have the bull of Luther's condemnation well received among the nations: but MARK the means, which that pontiff, so celebrated for penetration and dexterity, employed to bring about so important a purpose.

1. The bull itself was ill calculated either to convince or to silence. The holy Scriptures had begun to be read in Germauy. To these Luther constantly appealed, and to nothing else. By these he repeatedly requested that his doctrines might be tried. The elector Frederic had intimated to the pope, with sufficient clearness,* how dangerous it would be, in the business of Luther, to neglect the testimony of Scripture, and to rely merely on ecclesiastical censures. Leo, however, stimulated by Eckius, and other interested ecclesiastics, would listen to nothing that was healing or pacific. Instead of confuting the doctrines of Luther and exposing his heresies by scriptural arguments, he invokes Jesus Christ, St. Peter, St. Paul, and all the Saints of Heaven, and in the most pompous and unmeaning language entreats them to preserve the purity of the sacred Church. He then declares that his cardinals, and his generals of the regular orders, with other divines and doctors of law, had agreed with him in condemning and rejecting forty-one propositions of Luther, and in pronouncing them false, heretical, and scandalous. But, as Father Paul observes, † not a word was said by which men could infer, which were heretical, which false, and which scandalous; and thus matters were left in greater doubt than before the publication of the bull. This was not to appease, but to exasperate the discontents of the Germans; who thought it an extraordinary proceeding, that nice questions relative to faith and discipline should be decided at Rome by courtiers only, without the concurrence and advice of other bishops and learned persons, and especially the

universities of Europe.—Considerations of this kind showed the necessity of that general council to which Luther had appealed soon after the conferences at Augsburg.*

2. The wisest and best part of the Roman catholics themselves acknowledge the culpable imprudence of Leo in this violent proceeding against Luther. But besides the offensive contents of the bull, it was brought into Germany by Eckius himself, the avowed enemy of the Reformer and his friends. A step more indiscreet than this, or more inflammatory in its tendency, could scarcely have been devised. Even the popish advocate Pallavicini owns, that the court of Rome did not herein act wisely, and, "that it would have been more convenient to have made use of some other person, because it provoked Luther, and made him not regard the execution of the pope's bull as a just punishment received from the hands of the executioner, but as a smart blow given him by his mortal enemy." Eckius all the while pretended to be an involuntary agent in the business, alleging, that only the cause of religion could have induced him to submit to so much labour and expense. One of his private letters, however, sent from Rome, happened to fall into Luther's hand, who instantly published its contents, and at the same time made pertinent remarks on the hypocritical and interested motives of the writer, which were completely laid open by this accident. In fact, the credit of Eckius in Saxony was now at the lowest ebb. He sent a copy of the bull to the university of Wittemberg, and entreated them to be obedient to the papal injunctions; but that learned body paid no other regard to his solicitations, than to inform the Elector of the circumstances, and to intimate to that wise prince, that as Eckius had not ventured to bring the bull himself, they suspected he had been guilty of some unfair practices in the business.

These sentiments of the academicians of Wittemberg were communicated in writing to the Elector, by Peter Bucard, at that time rector of the university; and as no answer is known to have been returned, it is most probable that Frederic, satisfied with the favourable disposition of his university towards Luther, left

* See Chap. V. of this Cent.
† Council of Trent.

* See Chap. IV. of this Cent.

them to the direction of their own judgment in this delicate affair.

3. Among the unwise measures at this time adopted by the Roman court, for the purpose of securing a good reception throughout Germany to the sentence of Luther's condemnation, may justly be reckoned the vain attempts which they made to influence the elector of Saxony and obtain his concurrence in publishing the pope's bull. Nothing could be worse calculated to effect this design, than the letter which Leo himself sent to Frederic on that occasion. A weak unprincipled character might easily have been seduced from the path of duty by the insincere, adulatory expressions of the pontiff. But the firm, penetrating, conscientious mind of the elector of Saxony was more than a match for Leo and all his profligate advisers. This excellent prince despised their flattery as he detested their hypocrisy; and, though by nature and habit uncommonly cautious and temperate, he appears to have been so much provoked by their unjust and barbarous treatment of his favourite Luther, as to discover unequivocal marks of dissatisfaction and resentment. Matters were now come to a crisis. Either the hero of the Reformation was to be abandoned to the rage and malice of his enemies, or the decisions of an iniquitous and despotical hierarchy must be withstood with vigour and resolution. The honest side of this alternative might be attended with danger; but happily for the cause of Christian liberty, Frederic feared God, increased in the knowledge of true religion, and grew bolder in its support.

Thus, neither in the subject-matter of the bull, nor in the choice of Eckius as nuncio for the publication of it in Germany, nor lastly, in the pope's epistolary solicitation of the Elector's concurrence, did the Roman court display the smallest portion of wisdom or foresight. And it is to the same sort of infatuation continuing to pervade their counsels, that we are to ascribe the rash and insolent demands which they directed Aleander

Interview
between the
Elector of
Saxony and
Aleander.

to make from the elector.* This prince was at Cologne, on his return from the coronation of the new emperor Charles V. where Aleander—a man of ability, learning,

and eloquence, but of unsound principles and profligate morals,—having obtained an audience, opened his commission in the following manner. He said, the pope had entrusted himself and Eckius with the affair of Luther, which was of great consequence to the empire and to the whole Christian world. He did not doubt but the elector would imitate the emperor and the other princes, who had received the pope's determination with respect. In the pope's name he insisted on two things:—1. That he would cause all Luther's books to be burnt; and, 2. That he would either put the author of them to death, or imprison him till he should be sent to Rome.

Frederic, after due consideration, and by the advice of his privy counsellors, replied with great prudence, firmness, and spirit. He expressed much surprise, that after the many proofs he had given of piety and obedience, the pope should make such extraordinary demands. He had been informed, he said, that during his absence from his own dominions, on account of the emperor's coronation, Eckius had brought several of his subjects into trouble and danger; and, that as this was entirely CONTRARY to the intention even of the bull itself, which specified no person whatever but Luther, he left it to the pope's nuncios to judge, how very disgusting such things must be to a prince who had merited a very different treatment. He could not pretend to say, what steps had been taken in his absence by his subjects in general, or by Luther in particular, against these severe proceedings. He believed it possible that vast multitudes of all ranks and orders might adhere to Luther, and favour his appeal. The elector, himself, however, and his brother John, he said, always revered the Holy See; and if Luther had done, or said, or written, anything unworthy of a Christian or a Divine, he should meet with no support from his prince. Frederic then put Aleander in mind, That in consequence of a promise from Cajetan, that the differences should be settled in the kindest manner, he had directed Luther to make his appearance before that Cardinal at Augsburg: That at the express desire of Miltitz, he had retained Luther, who was otherwise on the very point of being dismissed from the university. Moreover, that the archbishop of Treves had been appointed Apostolical Commissary to try this cause;

* Aleander was appointed joint-nuncio with Eckius.—See Appendix, Aleander.

and that Luther would unquestionably have appeared before him, if he had been properly summoned and had had a safe-conduct. "Luther," continued Frederic, "has made many promises, and some credit ought to be given him for the performance. His account of the matter is, that the scurrilous writings of his adversaries have compelled him to take up his pen in his own defence; and that is said to be the judgment also of many learned, many honest, and many pious characters: nevertheless, as far as I am concerned, he must stand on his own merits and his own reputation. Neither the pope nor the emperor have yet made it appear that his books deserve to be burnt: when I am once convinced of that, I will not fail to do everything that becomes a Christian prince.

"I beg therefore you would no longer persist in these measures; but commit this business to learned, pious, impartial and disinterested judges, who may meet in a convenient place, and have the parties before them, with the public faith pledged for their safety. Whenever this supposed heretic shall have been convicted by solid scriptural arguments, the Elector of Saxony will be the last person to protect him; and I must believe that even then His Holiness will not require me to do anything dishonourable."

After this conversation,* Aleander and Carracciolus† had an interview with the elector's council, in which they pressed with great earnestness for a compliance with the demands of the pontiff. Carracciolus exclaimed, that Luther had kept none of his promises. Aleander alleged the many and various endeavours of the pope to recall this man from his errors. He said the commission of the

* It is in reference to this conversation that Luther says, the Elector handled the Pope's nuncio so roughly at Cologne, that they were obliged to leave him with shame and disgrace. And he adds, this prince was a man of exquisite discernment, and knew how to treat the artifices of the Roman court as they deserved. Luth. Tom. I.

† Carracciolus was also a nuncio of the pope, who had been sent to the Emperor on other business. He was present during Aleander's conversation with the Elector, but does not appear to have interfered. Indeed Aleander was pitched upon for the particular affair of Luther, and was supposed to be eminently qualified for the management of it.

archbishop of Treves was at an end. It was a cause in which THE FAITH was concerned, and therefore the pope had very properly taken it into his own hands.

Frederic still persisted in his sentiments: upon which Aleander, anxious to retire with as good a grace as he could, declared, "that the pope, having no wish to embrace his hands in the blood of Luther, had never designed to proceed against his person; but that in regard to Carracciolus and himself, he contended they had no choice left to them: they were bound to obey the injunctions of the bull, and, in so doing, to burn the books of Martin Luther."

It required, however, no little effrontery to make that part of this declaration, which regarded the person of Luther; for it was in direct contradiction to the demands which the nuncio himself, in the pope's name, had so recently made, as well as both to the spirit and letter of the bull itself. But it was no part of Aleander's disposition to be very solicitous respecting honour, veracity, or consistency of conduct. In his eloquent speech to the elector, he urged the necessity, which the two nuncios were under, of burning Luther's writings; yet it is certain that, in the conclusion of these conferences at Cologne, he promised that he would suspend the execution of the pontifical sentence in that respect.* In the same harangue, he also represented the new emperor, Charles V. as altogether obedient to the mandates of the pope: whereas the truth is, he repeatedly pressed that monarch to take part against Luther, and to give full effect to the pope's bull; but Charles, whatever might be his real sentiments or wishes, at present thought proper to refuse compliance with the insolent pontifical demands respecting the seizure of Luther's person. In fact, he was then under the greatest obligations to Frederic, being actually indebted to this prince for his recent election to the imperial dignity. Accordingly, he replied to Aleander without hesitation, that he must first hear what the elector of Saxony had to say on the subject, and then he would give his answer to the pope.† In regard to the burning of the heresiarch's writings, he appears at last to have given way to the zeal and solicitations of Aleander,

Luther's
writings
burnt by
Aleander.

* Comment. de Luth. p. 142.

† Luth. Vol. II. p. 117.

who having so far carried his point with the new emperor, attended him after his coronation from city to city, filling the Netherlands with the smoke and flames of innumerable books and papers, and threatening all ranks and orders with the papal vengeance.* A like partial submission to the pope's bull was obtained by Alexander in the ecclesiastical electorates of Cologne and Mentz. The hatred of this furious popish executioner towards Luther was cordial and extreme; and is by no means to be ascribed to bigotry or superstition exclusively. He evidently disliked the man, for the soundness and purity of his morals. He is known to have said, "It is impossible to soften Luther by money. He is a brute, who will not look either at bribes or honours; otherwise, he might long ago have had many thousands paid to him at the bankers by the pope's orders."†

How very different from those of Alexander were the principles which influenced the conduct of the elector of Saxony! The more we know of this good prince, the more are we compelled to admire the integrity and the tenderness of his conscience.—The following curious anecdote throws further light on his character, and is at the same time in close connexion with our main subject.

A short time after the preceding conferences with Alexander, Frederic sent a pressing message to the celebrated Erasmus,—who happened to be then at Cologne, —in which he solicited an interview at his own apartments. Erasmus complied with the summons, and was accordingly introduced to his Highness. It was in the month of December; Spalatinus also was present; and as the THREE were standing before the fire, a conversation took place, in the course of which the elector earnestly entreated Erasmus to give him his unfeigned opinion of Luther. Erasmus pressed together his lips, and endeavoured to evade the question; but the prince looked at him full in the face, and gravely said, "I would rather the earth should open and swallow me up, than that I should be found favouring any false doctrines. But if Luther has the truth on his side, whatever danger I may run, he shall not reckon me among his

adversaries. Neither do I think myself qualified to decide in so important a matter; and for that reason, I wish to know the real judgment of wise and learned men concerning the whole controversy. It was on this occasion that Erasmus said ironically, "Luther has committed two great faults; he has touched the pope on the crown, and the monks on the belly." The elector smiled; and was so much impressed with the sarcastic observation, that he mentioned it a little before his death. Erasmus then subjoined, with great seriousness, "That Luther was just in his animadversions on the ecclesiastical abuses; that a reformation of the Church was become absolutely necessary; that the Reformer's doctrine was true in the main; but that there was a want of mildness in his manner."*

* This account is taken partly from a MS. of Spalatinus, and partly from the Annals of Melancthon. The latter author makes the following very important reflections on the conduct of Frederic in these transactions:—

"This most excellent prince was much concerned at the foresight of the contests and disorders which would ensue, though the first attacks made by Luther were upon very plausible grounds. By his own judgment and sagacity, and by long experience in the art of government, he well knew the danger of revolutions. But being a truly religious man, and one who feared God, he consulted not the dictates of mere worldly and political wisdom, which might have inclined him to stifle at once all symptoms of innovation. He determined to prefer the glory of God to all other considerations, and to listen to the divine command which enjoins obedience to the Gospel. He knew that it was a horrible profaneness to resist the truth when plainly seen and known. He had studiously examined Luther's works, and accurately weighed his proofs and testimonies; and he would not suffer doctrines to be oppressed and smothered, which he judged to be the word of God. The Holy Spirit confirmed and supported him in these excellent resolutions; inasmuch, that, though the emperors Maximilian and Charles, and the Roman pontiff, urged this prince,—and not without menaces,—to hinder Luther from preaching and writing in his dominions, he was not in the least degree shaken or intimidated. Yet he presumed not to rely entirely on his own judgment in a matter of so great importance, but took the advice of other persons, who were venerable for their rank, learning, and experience."

* Erasm. Letter to Card. Sadoletus.

† Selneccer, in Seck.

When Erasmus had withdrawn from the elector, he sat down with Spalatinus, and instantly wrote a few concise AXIOMS, as they have been called, respecting Luther and his cause. The substance of several of them is as follows:

- Axioms of Erasmus.
1. A love of tyranny, and a hatred of learning, is the vile source of all these commotions.
 2. Hence clamours, and plots, bitter enmities, and acrimonious publications.
 3. Persons of the best morals, and of the purest faith, are the least offended with Luther.
 4. There are some who take advantage of the pope's good-nature.
 5. The pope prefers the glory of Christ to his own; and the salvation of souls to any other gain.
 6. It would be both for the dignity and the interest of the pope, that this contest should be settled by wise, grave, and unsuspected characters.
 7. The barbarity of this bull against Luther offends all good men, as it is indeed unworthy of a mild vicar of Christ.
 8. Only two of the universities, out of so many, have condemned Luther; and these have not convicted him, nor do they themselves agree as to their reasons.
 9. Luther's proposals,—to defend himself publicly, or to submit his cause to unsuspected judges,—seem perfectly fair to all reasonable men.
 10. The man aims at neither rank nor profit,—and therefore he is the less suspected.
 11. What has hitherto been written against Luther, is disapproved even by those divines who dissent from the Reformer's tenets.*

The paper containing these axioms was put into the hands of Spalatinus by Erasmus himself; but the cautious author of them, soon after, wrote a most pressing note to Spalatinus, in which he entreated him to return it; alleging as a reason, "lest Aleander should make a bad use of its contents."†

There is, however, no doubt that Erasmus heartily disapproved the severe and despotical proceedings of the Roman

court in the condemnation of Luther. The popish historians inform us, that he held the pope's bull to be a forgery, and would not be convinced of the contrary, till Aleander had permitted him to examine it. That after this, he went about by night to the princes and their friends, for the purpose of alienating their affections from the pope and from Aleander, telling them the bull had been extorted, contrary to the pontiff's real inclinations, by the artifices of malevolent persons; and that in a conversation with Aleander, he was very pressing that the resolution to burn Luther's books might be dropped, or at least retarded.*

The legates of the pope, in their turn, are said to have plied Erasmus closely with the offer of a rich bishopric, if he would undertake to write against Luther: But he answered them: "Luther is too great a man for me to encounter. I do not even always understand him. However, to speak plainly, he is so extraordinary a man, that I learn more from a single page in his books than from all the writings of Thomas Aquinas."—Such was the reputation of Luther for profound knowledge in divinity.

From little anecdotes of this kind we often learn more of the real judgment of mankind concerning extraordinary characters, than from long historical details.

For example: Count Nassau, governor of Flanders, Brabant, and Holland, exhorted the divines at the Hague in the following manner: "Go and preach the Gospel in simplicity and truth, as LUTHER DOES; and you will offend nobody, nor suffer any molestation."

Again: The academicians of Louvain complained to Margaret, the emperor's sister, governess of the Netherlands, that Luther by his writings was subverting Christianity. Who is this Luther? said she. They replied, He is an illiterate monk. Is he so? said she: Then do you, who are very learned and numerous, write against this illiterate monk; and surely the world will pay more regard to many scholars, than to one ignorant.

Another instance: At the emperor's table, mention being made of Luther, Raveustein said, "Here is one Christian arisen among us, at last, after four hundred years; and the pope wishes to kill him. Our teachers at Louvain, by dint

* Luth. Op. II.

† See Appendix, Aleander.

* Pallavic. and Comment. de Luth.

of bribes, obtained the burning of Luther's books. The pile was kindled, and great was the concourse of the students and others around it. But what books, think ye, did they bring? Not those of Martin; but a great deal of monkish trash, was committed to the flames.*

While the minds of men of all ranks and orders were thus agitated with the ecclesiastical contention, it was not to be supposed, that the active, ardent disposition of Luther himself would permit him to be an indolent spectator. The interests of the pure Gospel of Christ, the reputation of the Reformer as a profound divine, and even his personal safety, were all at stake. Add to this, that Luther's views of the nature and importance of religious truth, as well as the tenderness of his conscience, did not at all dispose him to adopt that conciliatory, middle sort of plan, which was constantly the object of Erasmus's wishes.—Accordingly,

The first defensive step of our Reformer was to appeal from the sentence of the Roman pontiff, to the superior authority of a general council. The contents of this appeal are much the same as of the former at Wittemberg, in 1518.†

There is however this difference, that he now absolutely ceases to preserve any measures with the pope.—He appeals from him,—1. As a rash, iniquitous, tyrannical judge;—2. As a hardened heretic, and apostate;—3. As an enemy, Antichrist, and opposer of the Sacred Scriptures;—4. As a proud and blasphemous despiser of the sacred Church of God, and of all legal councils.

Soon after, he published, in answer to the bull, two small tracts in which he exposes, with great spirit, the injustice, arrogance, and despotism of the Roman Court. The first is entitled

His first Tract against the bull.

Martin Luther against the execrable Bull of Antichrist. In this he affects to entertain some suspicion that the bull

itself is a wicked forgery of Eekius and his party. How, said he, is it possible that so wild and unchristian a composition should be the production of the pontiff and his learned cardinals? If indeed the fact should turn out to be so, if in-

deed the bishop of Rome should be actually found to rage against him in the manner which the terms of the bull implied, he congratulated himself for being called to suffer in so righteous a cause. He could have but one wish, namely, never more to be reconciled to so impious an Antichrist; never more to desire communication with him; but to surrender his life, if it so pleased God, with grateful joy and thanksgiving. On account of his sins, he said, he merited other treatment than so distinguished and honourable a martyrdom. The author of this damnatory bull, continued he, does not understand Luther. Luther has been long used to controversies; and is not to be frightened by vain threatenings. He knows the difference between an unsatisfactory, unmeaning paper, and the powerful written word of God.

Luther then calls on all Christian kings and princes, and particularly on the emperor Charles V. and puts them in mind of their engagements at their baptism. He addresses bishops, learned doctors, and all who confess the name of Christ, and treats them to come forward and defend the distressed Church of God from the machinations of the papists. Lastly, with the greatest seriousness, he admonishes the pope himself, and his cardinals, no longer to persevere in their madness, no longer to act the undoubted part of the Antichrist of the Scriptures.

Our Reformer calls his second tract, A defence of the articles of Martin Luther, which are condemned by the Bull of Leo. X. It is second Tract.

It is much longer than the former; for in this the author defends, in their order, all the forty-one articles of his writings which had been censured by the bull. We need not be particular here, as the work chiefly relates to papal dogmas, concerning which no protestant of our times gives himself the smallest concern.

Perhaps the most edifying part of this performance is his reasoning in support of the authority of Scripture: "The Sacred Writings," says he, "are not to be understood, but by that Spirit with which they were written; which Spirit is never felt to be more powerful and energetic than when he attends the serious perusal of the writings, which he himself dictated. Setting aside an implicit dependence on all human writings, let us stre-

* Ex. Libell. in Biblioth. Paul. Lips. per Seck.

† See Chap. IV. of this Cent.

nously adhere to the Scriptures alone. The primitive Church acted thus; she must have acted so; for she had seen no writings of the fathers. The Scripture is its own interpreter, trying, judging, and illustrating all things. If it be not so, why do Augustine and other holy fathers appeal to the Scriptures as the first principles of truth, and confirm their own assertions by its authority? Why do we perversely interpret the Scriptures, not by themselves, but by human glosses, contrary to the example of all fathers? If these fashionable modes of exposition be right, we had better at once admit, that the writings of the fathers are more perspicuous than the Scriptures. Again: If this be the case, the fathers themselves acted very absurdly, when they undertook to prove their own writings by the authority of Scripture; and it will follow that we ought to pay more regard to expositors than to the word of God. The Apostles themselves proved their assertions by the Scriptures; yet they surely had more right to plead their own authority than any of the fathers had. Let the fathers be allowed to have been holy men; still, they were only men, and men inferior to apostles and prophets: let them however be an example to us; and as they in their time laboured in the word of God, so let us in our days do the same. There is one vineyard, and there are labourers employed at different hours. It is enough that we have learned from the fathers the duty of studying, and diligently labouring in the Scriptures; it is not necessary that we should approve of all their works. There are seasons, when the diligence of many does not afford what a critical opportunity alone gives to one,—provided that that opportunity be connected with the incomprehensible energy of the Holy Spirit."

Sentiments like these had scarcely, for many ages, been whispered in the Christian world. Even the best and wisest of men had long been accustomed to lay an undue stress on human authority; and, in many instances, the most unwarrantable tenets had rested on the credit of real or pretended fathers. The various mischiefs which had arisen from this practice, have been repeatedly deplored in the course of this History; but the time was now approaching, when the majesty of the Divine Word began to be revered as decisive in all cases of doubt. It was reserved to an excommu-

nicated monk to explain to mankind the right use of Scripture, and to impress on their minds its immense importance: indeed the light of the apostolic age began to beam on the nations of Europe; and we may justly consider the years we are reviewing, as marked by a revolution in religion, which is highly memorable in the annals of the Church, and productive of the most salutary consequences to millions of such individuals as have thought, or may think, the care of an immortal soul to be a weighty and a rational employment.

But the asperity of Luther's style of writing threw a shade over all his virtues: and, though the rudeness and indelicacy of the age in which he lived, apologized in part for this defect, and though the same expressions which he used, would, at this day, indicate a far greater acrimony of temper, it was impossible, even for his friends, to justify his want of mildness and moderation. The court of the elector more than once reproved his excessive fervor; and those who admired the shrewdness, the solidity, the sincerity, and the magnanimity of his conceptions, could not commend the manner in which he conveyed them. As this is the least defensible part of his character, let us hear him, for once apologize for himself.

"I own," said he to Spalatinus, "that I am more vehement than I ought to be: I have to do with men who blaspheme evangelical truth; with wolves; with those, who condemn me unheard, without admonishing, without instructing me; and who utter the most atrocious slanders against myself and the word of God: even the most senseless spirit might be moved to resistance by their unreasonable conduct, much more I, who am choleric by nature, and possessed of very irritable feelings, and of a temper easily apt to exceed the bounds of moderation. I cannot however but be surprised, whence this novel taste arose, to call everything spoken against an adversary, abusive language. What think ye of Christ? Was he a reviler, when he calls the Jews an adulterous and perverse generation, a progeny of vipers, hypocrites, the children of the devil? What think ye of Paul, who calls the enemies of the Gospel, dogs, and seducers; who, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, inveighs against a

The asperity of Luther's style.

His apologies. I.

false prophet in this manner: ‘O full of all subtilty and all malice, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness.’ Why does not Paul gently soothe the impostor, rather than thunder at this rate? A mind conscious of truth cannot with easy indifference endure the obstinate enemies of truth.—I see that all persons demand of me moderation, and especially those of my adversaries who least of all exhibit it. If I am too warm, I am yet frank and open; in which point I think that I excel those, who always act with artifice and guile.”*

In another letter to the same friend, he expresses himself thus: “I see clearly that Erasmus is very far from a right knowledge of the nature of saving grace. In all his writings, his grand object is to avoid the cross, give no offence, and live at peace. Hence he thinks it proper, on all subjects, to display a sort of civility, good-nature, and good breeding; but I say, Behemoth will pay no regard to such treatment, nor ever be amended by it. Popery will never be reformed one tittle by writings, that give no offence, that make no attack; in a word, that do not bite. For the pontiffs consider these very gentle and civil admonitions as a species of servile cringing; they are content to be feared; and they persevere in their wicked courses, as though they had an absolute right to remain incorrigible.†

Again, in a dedication to the elector, of one of his Commentaries on a portion of the Gospels, he freely acknowledges, that he had not obeyed that prince’s admonitions to avoid all acrimony in his controversies;‡ still

* Lib. I. Ep.

† Job, xl. 10. He means popery.

‡ Lib. I. Ep.

§ Melancthon informs us, that after the conversation at Cologne,—mentioned above, p. 282 of this Volume—between the Elector and Erasmus, in which the latter blamed Luther for want of greater mildness in his controversies, the Elector wrote to our Reformer on the subject, and admonished him, in the most serious manner, to desist from the use of acrimonious language.

Erasmus, in one of his controversial tracts, alludes to the conversation at Cologne:—“I frankly,” says he, “told the duke of Saxony, in the presence of George Spalatinus, how offensive Luther’s acrimonious language was to me, and to others. They answered, that

he said, “though he might have transgressed the bounds of religion and moderation in his answers to the impertinences of his abandoned adversaries, he trusted some allowance would be made, when it was considered how numerous were the virulent invectives which he alone had to sustain.”

The reader will judge for himself how far these arguments and suggestions of Luther afford a satisfactory apology for the acerbity of his style. To me he by no means seems sufficiently sensible of his fault. We shall have a future opportunity to observe him more humbled under it. But the excellency of Divine Wisdom appears the greater and the more admirable, in executing, by an irascible instrument, who in many instances was almost a stranger to the maxims of human prudence, such marvellous things, as have rarely been effected by tempers the most calm and sedate, or by contrivances the most artful and well digested. In justice, however, to the Saxon Reformer, it ought to be added, that the passionate heats and commotions of his mind appear to have been always of a transient nature, to have evaporated in words, never to have left any stain on his general conduct or measures: and,—if we except the mere use of hard terms and expressions,—to have seldom either injured his argumentation, or led him, even in the most trying scenes, to transgress the rules of charity, moderation, and decorum.—His great historical adversary, the Jesuit Maimbourg, says, “Luther wrote against the pope’s bull, and defended all his errors. He treated the author of the bull as Antichrist; and, like a madman, filled his book with the most atrocious and injurious expressions. Yet it cannot be denied, that, notwithstanding this heat and impetuosity, which were natural to him, he always considered well what he wrote, and always in his writings displayed the man of genius and erudition.”

The Church of God, we may conclude, would lose but little by this unhappy defect in Luther’s temper; as it neither affected the acuteness of his talents, nor betrayed him into unchristian principles. Notwithstanding, as a private Christian,

in his sermons and lectures, he was as mild as possible.” *Erasm. Purg. ad Expos. Hutteni.*

he must have suffered much loss in his own soul by the indulgence of anger. For though we cannot admit the shadow of a doubt concerning his perfect sincerity in the cause of the Gospel, yet his comforts in the divine life could not fail to meet with considerable interruption from so lamentable a want of self-government. In regard to his adversaries, the supporters of the existing ecclesiastical domination, they had attained a height of wickedness in theory, and an effrontery in practice, which could scarcely be described in too strong terms, by the most keen and severe satirist.

When Luther, by his publications, had opened men's eyes to the impiety and injustice of the sentence of the Roman court, he proceeded to perform one of the boldest actions recorded in history. He was convinced that his appeal to a general council would be disregarded by the pope and his cardinals; and he foresaw, that if he did not soon recant his heresies, the thunder of actual excommunication would be levelled against the man who had so long been the object of ecclesiastical indignation. He determined therefore to separate himself from the communion of the church of Rome: and as Leo, in the execution of the bull, had appointed Luther's books to be burnt, he, by way of retaliation, erected an immense pile of wood without the walls of Wittenberg, and there, in the presence of the professors and students of the university, and of a vast multitude of spectators, committed to the flames the papal bull of his excommunication, together with the volumes of the decretals and canon law which relate to the pontifical jurisdiction. It has been thought probable that Luther was directed in this spirited measure by persons well skilled in the law. For by thus voluntarily withdrawing himself in a public manner from the Romish church, it was supposed he had eluded and rendered insignificant any further exercises of papal authority against his person. The man was now no longer a subject of the pontiff, and therefore it must be deemed superfluous and absurd to eject him by force from an ecclesiastical community of which he had ceased to be a member.* To me I confess this reasoning appears to be neither sound nor necessary. Not sound,—

because, on the supposition that the papal hierarchy was in the right, and Luther in the wrong, his separation from the church must have been considered as a vain and futile evasion. For if an offender, however grievous, should be allowed, in the moment before he is going to suffer punishment, to plead his just right to withdraw himself from the society whose laws he has broken, there is at once an end of all penal sanctions, and, by consequence, a dissolution of government. Not necessary,—because the explanation of Luther's conduct in no case requires nice and subtle distinctions. In this instance, he left the Romish communion, because he considered that church as corrupt and impious. Already he had declared war against the pope; he had boldly denominated him the MAN OF SIN, and exhorted all Christian princes to shake off his usurpations. Under such circumstances, it was not like Luther to have recourse to the dubious argumentations of lawyers: it was more like a true servant of God, more like a student of his Bible, well versed in the stories of the worthies of the Old Testament, and inflamed with a holy zeal to imitate Phineas, Samuel, Daniel, and the rest; and abundantly more in harmony with the natural temper of the man, to act the part of a determined adversary, to rest his personal defence on the vigour and perseverance of his attacks, and to aim at nothing short of victory in his contest with the pontiff. Moreover, to defy the court of Rome, and publicly burn the sentence of Leo X. was the wisest resolution which could possibly have been adopted, even if Luther had regarded only his own individual safety. At once it encouraged his friends, and astonished his enemies. The die was cast: and his life was to be saved, not by a vain assertion that he was no longer a subject of the pope, but by putting it out of the power of Antichrist to do him harm. Every step which the Reformer took relative to this important and interesting transaction, accords with these ideas. That the bold thought had been conceived in his mind for some time past, appears clearly from his letter to Spalatinus in Chap. V. Cent. XVI. That letter was dated the tenth of July, 1520. Let the curious reader attend also to the dates of some other things which are already before him, and he will be enabled to form a judgment of

* Mosheim.

Luther's vigour and activity in this critical business. He is to be informed, then,

1. That Luther published the tract mentioned page 275, of this volume, in JUNE, 1520, the very month in which the pope's bull was actually issued at Rome; and the tract mentioned p. 276, in the succeeding AUGUST.
2. That in OCTOBER he was first informed that Eckius had brought the bull into Germany, and was doing his utmost to promote the reception of it.*
3. That on the seventeenth of NOVEMBER, Luther appeared in form to a general council.
4. That on the first of DECEMBER, in two distinct treatises,† he attacked the author of the bull as Antichrist, and defended such of his own doctrines as had been pronounced heretical.
5. And lastly, That it was on the tenth of DECEMBER 1520, when he burnt publicly the pontifical law and the pope's sentence.

This extraordinary action of Martin Luther, taken with all the circumstances that accompanied it, may be considered as carrying his rebellion against the sovereign pontiff to the highest pitch. For besides the instances of contempt and defiance, which took place on the day itself of the combustion of the papal law and papal decrees, there were others which soon followed that memorable spectacle, and which must have been deemed still more affronting to the majesty of the pope. To convince mankind that the measure which he had just executed with so much firmness and intrepidity, was not a hasty thought, or the ebullition of a sudden gust of passion, he immediately selected THIRTY ARTICLES from the code of papal laws, as a specimen of the iniquitous contents of the books which he had just consumed. Upon these he wrote concise and pointed remarks; he then printed the whole, and circulated the little tract among the people, calling upon them in the most animated strains to exercise their own judgments in matters of such vast importance. "Let no man's good sense," said he, "be so far seduced as to reverence the

volumes which I have burnt, on account of their great antiquity or their high titles. Let every one first hear and see what the pope teaches in his own books, and what abominable, poisonous doctrines, are to be found among the SACRED, SPIRITUAL laws; and then let him freely judge, whether I have done right or not in burning such writings."

The two last of the articles selected by Luther were as follows:

Art. 29. The pope has the power to interpret Scripture, and to teach as he pleases; and no person is allowed to interpret in a different way.

Art. 30. The pope does not derive from the Scripture, but the Scripture derives from the pope, authority, power, and dignity.

Luther then affirms, that, comparing together the different parts of the canon law, its language amounts to no less than this: "That the pope is God on earth; above all that is earthly or heavenly, temporal or spiritual; That all things belong to the pope; and, That no one must venture to say, "What doest thou?"

"Let these ARTICLES," continues he, "suffice for the present. If any papal advocate shall be so wanton as to defend them, I will then not fail to place the picture I have given in a much clearer light. Nothing can be easier to me, than to produce many more passages of the same stamp. Were I to proceed with the sad tale I have to tell, it would appear that all which hitherto I have advanced against the popedom, was but jest and diversion.

"I undertook this cause at first in the NAME OF GOD; and in the confident hope, that the favourable moment was arrived, when of itself, and without further help from me, it would proceed, as the cause of God, to certain victory."*

Thus does it appear, that the plain good sense and unshaken integrity of Luther directed him in this instance, as in many others, to pursue such measures as were best calculated to defeat the crooked politics of his unprincipled adversaries. To expose to every eye those secrets of the canonical volumes, which sanctioned the proceedings of the Roman court, was to shake the whole papal edifice to its foundations; nor was it possible that so corrupt and despotic a hier-

* Letter to Spalatinus, page 278 of this volume.

† A brief account of them is given in pp. 284, 285.

* Luth. Op. II.

archy could long survive the free publication and dispersion of its principles among the people. Daily, men were accustomed to submit without remedy, and often without murmuring, to the most shameful abuses of ecclesiastical authority; but when they were shown that their sufferings were the result of an iniquitous system, when they read the extravagant propositions which proclaimed the absolute power of the pope, and their own ignominious bondage, their patience started and began to mutiny against a jurisdiction, which their understandings, as well as Luther's observations, convinced them was founded altogether in injustice and impiety.—Hence it was, that many, even of the Roman catholics in Germany, who were zealous for the liberty and independence of their country, were disposed to countenance the Reformer in his resistance to the pope's tyrannical bull; and hence also, though Alexander procured a second bull against him, couched in the most peremptory and definitive terms, it proved almost entirely inefficient. Seckendorf informs us, that in Saxony there is not the smallest vestige of it to be found.

This second bull was issued in a little more than three weeks from the burning of the pontifical books, namely, on January the third, 1521. In it the pope, most arrogantly and impiously, styles himself, **THE DIVINELY APPOINTED DISPENSER OF SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL PUNISHMENTS.** He then repeats the former bull; and tells us, that some persons, upon the publication of it, had repented of their sins, and obtained absolution. But on Luther and his followers, whatever might be their rank or dignity, he pronounces his eternal anathemas.

Mankind, however, could not but take notice how low the pontifical majesty was fallen. The pope had publicly burnt the doctrinal articles of a monk; the monk in return had burnt as publicly the bull and decretals of the pope; and they appear to be on a footing of equality. Alexander also had obtained leave to burn the Reformer's books in several cities of Belgium; and the friends of Lutheranism retaliated on the pope in Saxony, and even at Leipsic, in defiance of the duke George, who always showed himself much attached to the papacy.

I studiously avoid secular history; but

a brief attention to the political state of Europe seems necessary on this occasion, in order to illustrate that wonderful concurrence of providential events, which enabled Luther thus to brave the pope with impunity. The pontifical character had been debased extremely by the vices and enormities of Alexander VI. and Julius II. Leo X. who now filled the papal chair, brought not so much honour to the See by his elegant and literary taste, as he disgraced it by his prodigality and profaneness, and enfeebled it by his indolence. Frederic the wise had an established character in Europe for wisdom and probity, which rendered him far more respectable than any pope of Rome had been for a long time. Hence the silent protection afforded by this prince to Luther, proved his sufficient defence, not only against the tyranny and indignation, but even against the dexterity and management of the Roman court. The pope, his cardinals, his doctors of divinity and of law, had met together, deliberated, and passed sentence with the greatest formality; but nobody appeared to execute the pontifical mandates. We have observed that the emperor Charles V. had recently been obliged to the generosity of Frederic for his elevation to the imperial throne, this disinterested prince having resolutely refused that dignity when offered to him, and having at the same time declared that the German empire, on account of the formidable strength and hostile designs of the Turkish monarch, required a head of far greater power to defend it, than he could pretend to possess. It was this reason chiefly that seems to have influenced the electors in giving their suffrages to Charles. For, by inheritance from his father Philip, son of the last emperor Maximilian, he had the possession of Austria and the Netherlands; and by his mother he had the kingdom of Spain. Add to this, his dominions stretched along that frontier, which lay most exposed to the enemy; and he was also a prince remarkable for his great personal qualities and endowments; and still more so for the uncommon lustre which was shed on the age in which he lived by a number of marvellous events,—events too in which his genius and capacity had no share. It was natural therefore that this illustrious prince, singularly and greatly indebted as he was

to the elector of Saxony, should by no means be inclined hastily to compel him to persecute his highly esteemed professor of the university of Wittemberg. Moreover, as if all the world had conspired to favour the Reformation—that rivalry, which soon commenced between Francis I. of France and Charles V.—the former having been also a candidate for the empire—produced such a hostility between these two powerful monarchs, as effectually prevented them from uniting to crush Protestantism in the bud. Even the growing power of Mahometanism intimidated the papal sovereignties, and checked their rage for persecution. In fine, the capricious and imperious temper of Henry VIII. of England, was soon led by HIM, in whose HAND are the hearts of princes, to favour the progress of divine truth in Europe.

It is perhaps in the artful and extensive politics of Charles V. that we are to look for a complete explanation of that

The politics of Charles V.

middle course which he held, respecting the ecclesiastical dissensions, immediately after the imperial sceptre was placed in his hands. If he had possessed no other dominions but those which belonged to him in Germany, he might probably have favoured the man who boldly asserted many privileges and immunities for which the empire had long struggled with the popes.* But the dangerous schemes which his rival Francis I. was forming against him, made it necessary that he should secure the friendship of Leo X. Accordingly, he acceded to the first demand of Alexander, which regarded the burning of the heretic's writings; but the second demand, which would have endangered the life of Luther, his grateful sense of the important services of Frederic induced him to refuse, or at least to evade, by deferring the consideration of the whole question till the next imperial diet, which he had ordered to be held at Worms on the sixth of January, 1521. This suspension of severities against Luther, was by no means pleasing to the haughty pontiff, who was accustomed to hear of nothing but a prompt obedience to his commands from all quarters: the emperor however adhered steadily to this resolution; for besides the motives, just mentioned, of gratitude towards Frederic, his own good under-

standing pointed out to him, first, the justice and reasonableness of the thing itself, and in the next place, if Luther was indeed to be condemned, the expediency of having the public opinion on the side of so harsh a measure. Charles clearly saw, that, as matters then stood, there were in the minds of many impartial persons, strong prejudices in favour of Lutheranism, and still stronger suspicions, that in the cause of Luther himself, partiality, private interest, and private resentment, had influenced the determinations of the Roman court. Moreover, it was a plausible, a persuasive, and a sound part of the Reformer's defence, that he had constantly requested to have his cause tried, before unsuspected judges in Germany, by the ecclesiastical laws and customs of the empire; and that, though he had been compelled, for conscience' sake, to separate himself from the Roman church, he remained notwithstanding a member of the Catholic church, whose representative was that general council to which he had actually appealed, and to whose impartial decisions he was ready to submit.*

On these various accounts, the emperor considered the obstacles to a hasty procedure against Luther as insuperable.

Still, it is not easy to determine, how far either the judgment or the passions of Charles V. were really concerned in

* This judicious distinction appeared to Luther to be solid, and of the utmost importance.—The church of Rome considered the popes as infallible; whereas Luther maintained that they were fallible, like other men; and that St. Peter, the first and most holy of them, had actually erred. A general council, legally convened, he held to be the highest human ecclesiastical authority; and of course superior to that of the pope. To such a council, and not to a partial and prejudiced assembly of the pontiff and his friends, our Reformer appealed from the cruel and iniquitous sentence of Leo X.

The sentiments of Luther on this point entirely accorded with the determinations of the councils of Basil and Constance; and it may be added, with the judgments of the most moderate and most learned persons of the German, Flemish, French, and British nations. We need not therefore wonder, that his appeal from the inferior power of the pope, to the supreme jurisdiction of a council, found many advocates. Apell. Mart. Luth. Vol. I.

* Robertson, Charles V.

Doubts respecting the principles of Charles V.

the part which he acted in regard to the German Reformer and his friends. When we view the young monarch surrounded with a multiplicity

of vast and complicated affairs, possessing already immense dominion and territory, and urged by a restless ambition to acquire more, it may seem the most probable supposition, that he beheld the increase of Lutheranism with neither much dislike nor much satisfaction, but rather with the curious and watchful eye of a politician, who would be disposed, whenever it was in his power, to make the interests of the church subservient to his worldly purposes. However, if any one feels inclined to give Charles credit for a greater and more sincere and religious zeal in favour of the established system, he will not be in want of plausible arguments on that side of the question. These, it must be owned, will readily occur,—whether we consider the youth and inexperience of the newly elected emperor; for he was but about twenty years old, and probably little informed respecting the reigning corruptions of the church:—or whether we reflect on his early habits, his education and prejudices, and the influence of his Italian and Spanish ministers;—or lastly, whether we advert to the decisive measures which he soon adopted in support of the papal domination.

Be this point as it may, it was of immense consequence to the infant-reformation, that the HEAD of the empire constantly refused to publish any conclusive edict against Luther before the discussion of his case at the approaching Diet of Worms. By this mean a little time was gained; and so critical were the circumstances, that that little was found sufficient for the production of the most important effects. The reader will understand me to allude to the progress of that amazing REVOLUTION of sentiment, which was taking place in the minds of the people. Their attention had been awakened; and a considerable impression made on their judgments. Their reverence for the ancient doctrines and systems was exceedingly weakened; and the controversies were carried on with warmth and freedom. The knowledge of true theology and the divine truths of the Gospel were rapidly advancing at Wittenberg. The fame of Luther's wisdom and of Melancthon's learning filled that

university with students, who imbibed their masters' opinions, and on their return propagated them among their countrymen with the most astonishing zeal and success. To be brief; by the judicious and diligent explication of the written word of God, during the short space of the years 1518, 1519, and 1520, the systematic prejudices of many centuries were almost overturned in the minds of multitudes of the inhabitants of various parts of Europe.

To carry forward, and, if possible, to accelerate this glorious REVOLUTION in favour of Christian truth, was the great object of Luther. While the several illustrious monarchs of the sixteenth century* were struggling for pre-eminence in power and grandeur, his contest

The grand object of Luther.

was entirely with the rulers of the darkness of this world and with spiritual wickedness in high places.† Few men, of those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, have surrendered themselves and their cause into the hands of God with more perfect resignation than Luther did. His affairs were coming fast to a crisis; his life was in the most imminent danger; and he had but one patron of any considerable rank or distinction; yet can we no where trace in him the smallest anxiety on account of his mere personal safety. Those moments of suspense in which most persons are usually found incapable of continued study or cool deliberation, our industrious theologian considered as a precious little interval of time granted to him by Providence for the most important purpose of further enlightening mankind; and while his friends trembled for the issue of the next German Diet, he himself seems to have rejoiced that even so short a season was thus afforded him for pursuing his studies in divinity. In his judgment, the WRITTEN WORD of God, laid open, and rightly explained to the people, was always the most lawful and the most powerful engine for the destruction of the kingdom of Satan. All his success on the minds of the public, both before and after the conferences with Cajetan, he ascribed to the use and application of this engine. It behoved him therefore to make fresh efforts, without losing a sin-

* Leo X. Charles V. Francis I. Henry VIII. Solyman, &c.

† Ephes. vi. 12.

gle moment of time. Both the heads and the hearts of the nations were in a state of remarkable preparation for the reception of pure doctrine. The divine blessing attended his labours; and it seemed not unreasonable to hope, that from the circulation of judicious expositions of various parts of the Scriptures in the present critical conjuncture, the cause of Christian truth and knowledge might very soon have to triumph, on account of more rapid and complete victories than had yet been obtained over papal ignorance and papal superstition. Deeply impressed with these views, the Saxon theologian applied himself to the study of the sacred pages with redoubled ardour and assiduity. Aleander had burnt his books; but that very circumstance served to increase men's curiosity for reading them, as it did their author's zeal and industry in reconsidering and republishing the doctrines he had taught, in confirming them by new arguments, and rendering his compositions more correct and worthy of the approbation of the public.

Charles V. was elected emperor in the summer of 1519, and his first Diet was expected to be held in the course of the same year; but the meeting of that

Election of Charles V. A. D. 1519.

assembly was postponed by various causes for more than a twelvemonth. Luther, during this short period, published an incredible number of sermons, paraphrases, and polemical tracts. To furnish the reader with even a very brief account of them all, would require no

little time and labour. His adversary, the papal historian, Maimbourg, testifies abundantly to the general effects

of his sermons and other writings. "Luther," says he, "in his sermons, attacked the vices of men with great acrimony: he likewise published, in the German and Latin languages, a number of pious books; for example, Expositions of the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments; of certain portions of the Epistles and Gospels; of the Song of the Blessed Virgin; of the Psalms; and particularly of the Epistle to the Galatians. Moreover, as he lived a moral life, and was not given in the smallest degree to covetousness or any other vice, he was universally held to be a good and great and even a holy man; inasmuch, that it was the custom to

paint his portrait with the rays of glory around his head, as if he had been a canonized saint."*

Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians is in itself so excellent a performance, was read with so great avidity immediately after its publication, and was so instrumental in promoting the glorious cause of protestantism, that it seems to have a superior claim to the attention of the historian.

Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians.

I have repeatedly read and meditated on this treatise; and, after the most mature reflection, am fully convinced, that as it was one of the most powerful means of reviving the light of Scripture in the sixteenth century, so it will, in all ages, be capable of doing the same, under the blessing of God, whenever a disposition shall appear among men to regard the oracles of Divine Truth, and whenever souls shall be distressed with a sense of in-dwelling sin. For I perfectly despair of its being relished at all by any but serious, humble, and contrite spirits, such being indeed the only persons in the world, to whom the all-important articles of justification will appear worthy of all acceptance. The author himself had ploughed deep into the human heart, and knew its native depravity; he had long laboured, to no purpose, to gain peace of conscience by legal observances and moral works; and had been relieved, from the most pungent anxiety, by a spiritual discovery of the doctrine just mentioned. He was appointed in the counsels of Providence, by no means exclusively of the other reformers, but in a manner more extraordinary and much superior,—to teach mankind, after upwards of a thousand years' obscurity, this great evangelical tenet,—compared with which how little appear all other objects of controversy! namely, That man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ.† How this is taught in the epistle before us, has been briefly shown in a former Volume,‡ and Luther's Commentary is perfectly consonant to that short abstract. In this admirable piece of divinity, the author, by numberless arguments, and particularly by the marked opposition between law and faith,§ law and grace.¶

* Sect. 35.

† Gal. chap. ii. 16.

‡ See Vol. I. p. 48.

§ Gal. iii. 12.

¶ Gal. v. 4.

proves that, in justification before God, all sorts of human works are excluded, moral as well as ceremonial. He restores likewise to the Christian world the true forensic sense of the term Justification, and rescues it from the erroneous sense, in which, for many ages, it had been misunderstood, as though it meant INFUSED habits of virtue, whence it had been usual to confound justification with sanctification. The incomparable theologian before us settled the true bounds and limits of the LAW and the GOSPEL, and distinguished between acceptance with God and personal holiness. The former, he shows, is received as a free-gift on Christ's account alone, by faith in the heart of a humbled sinner, and implies complete pardon and reconciliation with God; the latter, which he insists on as equally necessary for eternal happiness, he describes as conjoined, but not compounded, with the former, imperfect always in this life, but sincerely pressed after and delighted in. By this doctrine, rightly stated with all its adjuncts and dependencies, a new light breaks in on the mind; and Christianity appears singularly distinct not only from popery, but also from all other religions. Neither the superstitious of the Papist, nor the sensibility of the humane, nor the splendid alms of the ostentatious, nor the most powerful efforts of unassisted nature, avail in the smallest degree to the purchase of pardon and peace. The glory of this purchase demonstrably belongs to Christ alone: and he, who in real humility approves of, acquiesces in, and rests on Christ alone, is the true Christian. Thus self-righteous persons are rebuked; thus distressed consciences are relieved; and thus men are enabled to bring forth all the fruits of righteousness. An ill use, no doubt, has frequently been made of the precious doctrine here stated; and St. Paul's writings abound with admirable cautions on this subject. The sixth chapter to the Romans is full to the point. But this very circumstance, namely, that the true Christian notion of Justification is apparently liable to a charge of Antinomianism, unquestionably demonstrates that Luther, and the other reformers, did not mistake that apostle's meaning; because,—on the supposition that St. Paul really meant to ascribe the justification of a sinner before God to human works, in ANY SENSE of those TERMS,—the very plausi-

bility of the objection loses all foundation. However, not to insist further on this argument, let him that would be wise in the things of God, study this great Christian article of the revealed method of fallen man's ACCEPTANCE WITH HIS MAKER; and let him do this with prayer for divine illumination. Let not any man suppose, as ignorance is ever apt to do,—that evangelical truth is so plain and obvious, that every one may attain it without attention, industry, or effort. Let him rather be told, that the way of life is deeply mysterious, and has great difficulties belonging to it, though nevertheless of infallible attainment to every humble, seeking, persevering soul.

The first edition of this Commentary, dedicated to the president Peter Lupin and to Carolstadt, was printed at Wittenberg in the autumn of the year 1519; and contains some things which I do not find in the later and more improved edition of 1536. I select the following passage, because in it the order and method of practical Christianity are beautifully and concisely delineated. "You now see therefore how it is that FAITH alone is not sufficient; and yet that faith alone JUSTIFIES; because if the faith be of the right sort, it is infallibly connected with a spirit of true benevolence. But this spirit of benevolence or LOVE cannot endure the works of the flesh; and thus it obeys the law, and attains the kingdom of God. Hence everything is to be ascribed to faith, as faith is to the word, and the word to the divine compassion in the sending of apostles and preachers; so that all our sufficiency is of God, from whom cometh every best gift.

"THESE ARE THE POINTS OF DOCTRINE which ought to be explained to the people; and in the very order in which the apostle lays them down in this epistle. For example; let a man first learn to despair of his own strength; let him hear the word of evangelical faith; hearing, let him believe it; believing, let him call upon God; calling upon him, let him find, as he will find, that he is heard; being heard of God, let him receive the Spirit of love; receiving this Spirit, let him walk in the same, and not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; but let him crucify them; lastly, being crucified with Christ, let him rise from the dead, and possess the kingdom of heaven."

How is it that the most learned, the most profound, and the most elegant of

our ecclesiastical historians, either entirely omit, or but slightly mention, the extraordinary labour, which the Saxon theologian bestowed on the Epistle to the Galatians? Must not the answer be, that they do not behold the corruptions of the Romish church, and the necessity of a reformation in doctrine, with the same eyes that Luther did. They are abundant in praising him, for his exertions against papal tyranny and superstition, but scarcely a sentence escapes them in commendation of his peculiar Christian tenets. Hence many have been taught to admire the Reformation, while they remain ignorant of its fundamental principles. I am well aware that in revealing this secret explicitly, there is no little danger, lest the religious faith of our first reformers should by many be pronounced irrational and enthusiastic; or if a greater degree of candour and tenderness be observed for the memory of those great men, this, it is to be feared, will chiefly arise, not from the consideration of their inestimable SPIRITUAL SERVICES, in teaching the way of eternal salvation, but rather from a sense of their having been eminent benefactors to society, in delivering it from the ignominious yoke of ecclesiastical domination.—On this last account, it is true, that we, their posterity, are under immense obligations to them; nevertheless, this is but a very imperfect, and partial view of their merits.

It is the design of this History to supply, in some measure, the defects and omissions here alluded to; and I know of no one thing so likely to be useful for this purpose, as to invite the reader's particular attention to Luther's Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. Certainly the author of it considered the argument of that epistle to be admirably adapted to the circumstances of the times; and he appears to have been indefatigable in studying and explaining it.

This Commentary was printed both in Latin and in German, and thus became extensively diffused. It was also one material subject of Luther's lectures, *viva voce*, to the students at Wittemberg, for many years after its first publication. We are indebted, I find, to the zeal and industry of George Rorar, a deacon of the university there, for the best of the old editions of this excellent work. Rorar, it seems, was a diligent ecclesiastic, who, with the help of some of the Aca-

demics, wrote down what Luther said during his public lectures, and then submitted what he had written to the inspection and judgment of the lecturer. Luther expressed his astonishment at the bulk to which his exposition of this short epistle had grown. He wrote a preface to it, carefully revised the whole performance, and printed it in 1535 or 1536.

Those, who feel interested for the successful progress of real evangelical truth, will not deem this account superfluous. It proves that this Commentary was not the hasty effusion of a turbulent or enthusiastic sectary; but the well-digested result of at least fifteen years' meditation on the epistle, and of fifteen years' experience in interpreting Scripture. The treatise itself will abundantly satisfy every inquirer, that the grand fundamental point,—the point which the Reformer had most at heart in all his labours, contests, and dangers,—was the doctrine of Justification by faith alone.

“Once more,” says Luther, “I have undertaken in the name of the Lord, to expound the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians; not that I have any wish to teach novel doctrines,—especially as Paul is now thoroughly known and familiar to us;—but because, as I have often forewarned you, our greatest and most pressing danger is, lest the devil should contrive to take away from us the pure doctrine of FAITH, and bring back into the church the exploded notions of WORKS and HUMAN TRADITIONS. It is of great moment, therefore, that this doctrine of FAITH should be kept in the constant and public exercise both of reading and hearing. For although it be ever so well known and digested, yet the devil is not dead, but walketh about constantly, and seeketh to devour us. Moreover, the FLESH is yet alive; and all sorts of temptations vex and oppress us on every side. Wherefore this CHRISTIAN ARTICLE can never be handled and inculcated enough. If this doctrine fall and perish, the knowledge of every truth in religion will fall and perish with it. On the contrary, if this do but flourish, all good things will also flourish, namely, true religion, the true worship of God, the glory of God, and a right knowledge of everything which it becomes a Christian to know.”*

* Luth. Op. V. p. 272.

In his preface to the Commentary, he calls the article of Justification, "THE ONLY SOLID ROCK; as being the doctrine which shows, how we are redeemed from sin, death, and the devil, and how we become partakers of eternal life.—not by our own works, but by the help of another, the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ.

"This rock," continues he, "did Satan shake in paradise, when he persuaded our first parents, that by their own wisdom and power they might become like unto God; and thereby induced them to forsake true faith in God, who had given them life and a promise of its continuance.

"In opposition to the same principle of faith, this liar and murderer, the devil, who will be always like himself, stirred up Cain to murder Abel; and for no other reason, but because his pious brother had, by FAITH, offered up a more excellent sacrifice; whereas Cain, by offering up his own works, WITHOUT FAITH, had not pleased God.

"By the very same abominable Satanic spirit, which induced Cain to kill Abel, is Christ opposed and derided at this day, among those who would still be called by his name. So that there is abundant cause for diligently resisting the devil by means of this fundamental article. Whether we be rude or eloquent, learned or unlearned, THIS ROCK must be published abroad in animated strains. If men should be silent, the very stones would cry out."

"It is written of Satan, 'Thou shalt bruise his heel.' And it should seem, that Satan, at this very day, has no other business in hand, but this only, which is always peculiar to himself,—to persecute and vex our Saviour Christ, who is our perfect righteousness, WITHOUT ANY OF OUR WORKS.

"He does not rage in this manner against the lives and opinions of others; for example, against whoremongers, thieves, murderers, rebels against God, and unbelievers. To these he rather gives peace and quiet; and he even indulges such characters with all manner of delights according to their taste. And so it was in the primitive times. He not only suffered the idolatries and false religions of the whole world to be quiet, but he also mightily maintained and supported them. It was the church and re-

ligion of Christ alone, which he tormented in every way."

"To this moment the Papists continued to insist on the efficacy of works, and the worthiness of man, in direct opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace; and thus do they, in words at least, support their brethren the Anabaptists.* For these foxes are tied together by the tails, though, judging by their heads, one might suppose them opposite to each other. Outwardly, the Papists pretend to be great enemies of the Anabaptists, when inwardly, and at bottom, they teach, think, and defend all one thing, against our Saviour Christ, who is our only righteousness. Let him, therefore, who can, hold fast to this one article of JUSTIFICATION. And as to those who have made shipwreck of their faith, we must let them be carried whither the sea and wind shall drive them, until they either return to the ship, or swim to the shore.

"The conclusion is, there can be no peace as long as Christ and Belial disagree. If one heresy dies, another springs up. The reason is, the devil neither slumbers nor sleeps. It is now about twenty years that I have been a minister of Christ, and I can truly say, that I have been assailed by more than twenty sects, some of which are completely extinct, and others pant for life. Satan, the God of all dissensions, daily raises up new heresies; the last of which is one that I should never have foreseen, or even once suspected; namely, the sect of the Antinomians, who maintain that the TEN COMMANDMENTS ought to be taken out of the church; and that men are not to be terrified by the law, but gently exhorted by the grace of Christ. The truth is,—what we have constantly taught, namely,—That broken and contrite spirits are to be comforted by Christ; but that hardened Pharaohs, to whom the Gospel has been long preached in vain, must be alarmed by the terrors of the law."†

A few short extracts from the Commentary itself shall close this account.

* The reader must not confound the seditious sect of Anabaptists in Luther's time, with the dissenters called Baptists, of the present day.

† Prefat. Mart. Luth. in Epist. ad. Galat. Vol. V.

“I remember, when I first began the contest with the Papists, Dr. Staupitius, at that time an eminent person, and Vicar of the Augustine order, said to me: ‘On one account, I like the doctrine you preach exceedingly. It gives the glory and everything else to God alone, and nothing to man. Now it is clearer than the day, that it is impossible to ascribe too much glory, goodness, and mercy to God.’ This saying very much comforted and strengthened me.”

The following was a favourite passage with the excellent Seckendorf, who seems to have thought it more to the purpose than anything that had been said, on the subject of the union of believers with Christ, by the most celebrated mystics:—“This doctrine, therefore, of faith, must be taught in its purity; namely, That as a believer, thou art by faith so entirely united to Christ, that he and thou are made, as it were, one person. That thou canst not be separated from Christ; but always adhere so closely to him, as to be able to say with confidence, I am one with Christ; that is, Christ’s righteousness, his victory, his life, death, and resurrection, are all mine. On the other hand, Christ may say, I am that sinner; the meaning of which is, in other words, his sins, his death, and punishment, are mine, because he is united and joined to me, and I to him. For by faith we are so joined together as to become one flesh and one bone. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones;* so that, in strictness, there is more of a union between Christ and me, than exists even in the relation of husband and wife, where the two are considered as one flesh.† This faith, therefore, is by no means an ineffective quality; but possesses so great excellency, that it utterly confounds and destroys the foolish dreams and imaginations of the sophisters, who have contrived a number of metaphysical fictions concerning faith and charity, merits and qualifications.—These things are of such moment, that I would gladly explain them more at large, if I could.”

“A true and lively faith is opposite to the feigned faith of the hypocrite; and a true faith incites a man to good works

through love. He, who would be a Christian, must be a believer; but no man is a sound believer, if works of charity do not follow his faith. Thus, on both hands, the apostle shuts hypocrites out of the kingdom of God. On the left hand, he shuts out all such as depend on their works for salvation, when he says, ‘Neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision;’ that is, no kind of work, but faith alone, without any dependance on what we do, avails before God. On the right, he excludes all slothful, idle persons, who are disposed to say, If faith justifies us without works, then let us have no anxiety respecting good actions; let us only take care and believe, that we may do whatever we please.—Not so, ye enemies of all godliness. It is true, Paul tells you, that faith alone, without works, justifies; however, he also tells you, that a true faith, after it has justified, does not permit a man to slumber in indolence, but that it worketh by love.”

The liberty of the Gospel is an inestimable thing; but take care that ye use it not as an occasion to the flesh.

“Satan has not stirred up an evil either more extensive or more destructive than this; namely, when men abuse their Christian liberty to licentiousness. So the apostle Jude laments: ‘There are crept in unawares certain unholy men, which turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness.’* For the flesh does not understand the doctrine of grace. Therefore when it hears that we are justified by faith only, it abuses and perverts the doctrine by reasoning thus: ‘If we are without law, we may live just as we please.’

“Wherefore there is danger on both sides. However, the one is more tolerable than the other. If the doctrine of grace or faith be not preached, no man can be saved; for it is faith alone that justifies and saves. On the contrary, if faith be preached, as of necessity it must be, the greater part of mankind will interpret the doctrine in a carnal way, and so understand spiritual liberty as to allow indulgences of the flesh. This we may see in all ranks of life. All profess themselves to be evangelical; all boast of their Christian liberty; and yet give way to their lusts and passions, for example, to covetousness, pride, envy, pleasures, and such like. Who discharges

* Ephes. v. 30.

† Ephes. v. 31.

* Jude, ver. 4.

his duty faithfully? Who serves his brother in a true spirit of charity? The disgrace, which such conduct brings on the profession of the Gospel, puts me sometimes so out of temper, that I could wish these swine, that tread precious pearls under their feet, were still under the tyranny of the pope; for it is impossible that a people, so much resembling those of Gomorrah, should be kept in due subjection by the mild maxims of the Gospel of peace."

"Moreover, we ourselves, the ministers of the Gospel, are not so active and zealous in doing our duty, now that we have the LIGHT of the TRUTH, as we were before, during the DARKNESS of our IGNORANCE. We are grown cold and negligent in handling the word, and in prayer also, and lastly, both in well-doing and in suffering; insomuch, that if Satan did not torment us internally with spiritual temptations, and externally with hostile persecutions, and above all, with the contempt and ingratitude of our own congregations, we should become, I fear, quite careless, and lazy, and lost to every good work."

"It is very useful for sincere and pious persons to know and meditate on Paul's doctrine concerning the contests of the Flesh and the Spirit. It is an admirable comfort to be tempted. When I was a monk, if at any time I happened to feel the motions of a bad passion, I used to think my prospect of salvation was completely over. I struggled in a variety of ways, both to overcome the bad passion and to quiet my conscience. All in vain. The lust of the flesh returned, and I was harrassed with thoughts of this sort:—'Thou hast committed this or that sin; thou art impatient; thou art envious; in vain hast thou entered into holy orders.' Now if I had rightly understood Paul's doctrine of the Flesh lusting against the Spirit, I should not, so long and so miserably, have afflicted myself. I should have reflected, and said, as I do at this day, in similar situations; Martin, As long as thou remainest in the flesh, thou wilt never be entirely without sin; thou art now in the flesh, and therefore thou must experience a contest with it: And this is agreeable to what Paul says, the Flesh resisteth the Spirit. Despair not thou, then, but strive manfully against all carnal dispositions, and fulfil not their lustings. Do thus, and the law shall have no condemning dominion over thee.

"Truly religious persons crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; and hence their sins do not finally ruin them. For if they obey the flesh by gratifying its concupiscence, they infallibly lose their faith and the Holy Ghost. Moreover, if they do not abhor their sins, sincerely repent, and return to Christ, that they may recover their faith and the Holy Ghost, they will die in their sins. Wherefore I can speak no comfort to those, who dream they have faith, and yet live in sin. Against all such there is a dreadful sentence in force; namely, They that live after the flesh, shall die. And further, the works of the flesh are manifest;—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, &c. and such like: THEY WHO DO SUCH THINGS, SHALL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD."

"The severe threatenings of Almighty God against sin, have a due effect upon the minds of true believers, so as to deter them from breaking his laws. They arm themselves with the word of God, with faith and with prayer, and do not give way to the lusts of the flesh. In fact, they so resist the flesh as to nail it to the cross, with all its sinful desires. Hence it is that the flesh, though yet alive and capable of showing some signs of motion, cannot perform what it would, being bound hand and foot, and nailed fast to the cross. Such are the principles and such the practice of truly pious persons. The same important truths may be expressed a little differently, thus; The faithful, while they live on the earth, do actually crucify the flesh;—that is, though they are sensible of its lustings, they do not obey them. Furnished with the armour of God, namely, faith, hope, and the sword of the Spirit, they oppose the natural, or carnal man; and with these spiritual arms, as it were with nails, fix him to the cross of Christ; and compel him, against his will, to be subject to the spiritual man or new creature. Afterwards, when they die, they entirely put off the carnal man; and they will rise from the dead with a body incorruptible, and free from sinful affections and lusts."

"To teach the doctrine of Justification by faith without works, and at the same time to insist on the necessity of good works, it must be owned, is a matter of considerable difficulty and danger. For unless the ministers of Christ be wise

and faithful dispensers of the Divine mysteries, and know how to divide the word of Truth rightly, the distinct provinces of faith and works will be confounded. Both these provinces should be explained and impressed on the mind with the greatest diligence, yet in such a manner, that each of them may preserve its proper bounds. Otherwise, if works only are taught, as is the case in the pope's kingdom, faith is lost. Again, if nothing but faith is inculcated, carnal men soon begin to dream that there is no need of good works. How careful is Paul to avoid being misunderstood! In the fourteenth verse of the fifth chapter, he had observed that the whole law was fulfilled in one word. 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' Indeed!! an objector might say,—'Then if so, a man, by works of charity, may fulfil the law and be justified!—which is contrary to the whole epistle. No, says the apostle, I have neither forgotten, nor do I now contradict my former argumentation concerning faith. I am precisely of the same opinion; and that ye may perceive me to argue consistently, I add, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.* I do not mean that ye can be justified by the law; but this I mean; there are two principles of action within you, Flesh and Spirit; and I exhort you to obey the latter, that ye may be enabled to resist the former. It is but to a certain degree that ye can resist it; ye cannot entirely put off the flesh or kill it; and therefore, when I direct you to walk in the Spirit, I sufficiently indicate to you the impossibility of your being justified by works of charity.†

In furnishing the reader with these specimens of Luther's method of expounding Scripture, I have constantly aimed at giving the author's meaning, without adhering very closely to the letter. Certain allusions to the scholastic niceties of the times, and some other things of a like nature, which would have required long explanations, and contributed nothing to edification, are entirely omitted; and a few words are sometimes inserted for the sake of preserving the connexion. No apology needs be made for placing in this part of the narrative a brief account of our Reformer's Commentaries on the Epistle to

the Galatians.* The pious student of the history of the Reformation can scarcely be considered as forsaking his proper subject, and much less as misemployed, while he is perusing a few striking passages from a book which was of such signal service to the Church of Christ, in the sixteenth century.†

THE DIET OF WORMS.

THE eyes of all Europe were fixed on the DIET OF WORMS. That general and astonishing REVOLUTION of sentiment‡ which, we have observed, was taking place in the minds of the people, had proceeded, in regard to their religious views, with such incredible rapidity, that it behoved the emperor and the princes to take public cognizance of transactions, which could now no longer be buried in obscurity. Accordingly Charles V. in his circular letters to the electors and other members of the Diet, informed them that he had summoned the assembly of the empire, for the purpose of concerting with them the most proper measures for checking the progress of those new and dangerous opinions, which threatened to disturb the peace of Germany, and to overturn the religion of their ancestors.§

After the Diet had met, a considerable time was spent in formalities, and in making some general regulations respecting the internal police of the empire. They then proceeded to take into con-

* For an account of other writings of Luther, see Appendix, Luther's Writings.

† The only English translation of Luther's Commentaries on the Epistle to the Galatians, which I have seen, was the work of several pious persons. It has many defects, but is nevertheless a very useful performance. The book is scarce; and I cannot but observe, that a modern translation of BOTH the editions of Luther's Commentaries on this Epistle, with a few judicious notes, would be a most valuable present to the Christian world.

‡ For M. Bucer's opinion of these Commentaries, see Append. M. Bucer.—In modern times it has been the fashion to treat this work rather roughly, and to suggest the necessity of many cautions. The reader will determine for himself, whether more judicious or more efficacious cautions have been given by others, than those interspersed throughout the Commentaries by Luther himself.

* Gal. v. 16.

† Luth. Op. V. 417, et seq.

sideration the religious questions and controversies. The papal legates pressed hard for an immediate edict of condemnation against the man who had so long disturbed the peace of the Church, and who, for more than six months, had been under actual sentence of excommunication, as an incorrigible heretic. It would be endless to recite the various artifices and manoeuvres of the leading actors in the scenes at Worms; nor would this be so properly pertinent to the plan of our history, as to describe the progress of real religion itself in the hearts and understandings of mankind. Our industrious memorialist* details with great exactness the conferences between Pontanus, the elector's chancellor, and Glapio, a confessor of Charles V. in which fruitless pains were taken to compose the differences. Frederic, in his instructions to his chancellor, appears to have been governed by the same maxims, which had uniformly regulated his conduct throughout this business: that is, he continued firm, but cautious, insisting in general on an equitable hearing in behalf of his subject Luther, and declaring that he himself did not pretend to be a judge of theological doctrines and disputes.

The conferences just mentioned were of a private nature, and were carried on with the utmost secrecy.† But the members of the Diet OPENLY withstood the pope's advocates, in their attempts to procure Luther's condemnation without deliberation or inquiry. Such a proceeding they considered as inconsistent with justice, and unauthorized by precedent. Moreover, the emperor himself admonished the principal nuncio, Aleander, that it behoved him to explain to the Diet some just and weighty causes of Luther's excommunication; causes too, which should be abstracted from the particular interests of the court of Rome and of the pope, and be evidently connected with the general concerns of religion. At present, he said, an opinion very much prevailed in Germany, that because Dr. Luther had defended the rights and privileges of his countrymen, and had declaimed against those odious and arbitrary impositions of which the princes themselves had complained more than once, he was on that very account dis-

liked and censured at Rome, and that, in fact, this was the real foundation of all the harsh and peremptory proceedings against him. So important a point must be cleared up before any further steps could be taken; and an opportunity therefore was now afforded the nuncio, of proving, to the satisfaction of a full Diet, that the pontiff's damnatory edicts against Luther did not originate in partiality and injustice.*

Aleander undertook this business, and acquitted himself with considerable ability and effect. The papal historians magnify his eloquence and address on the occasion beyond all bounds. Pallavicinus, in particular, has given us a long and laboured philippic of his own making, which he supposes to have resembled the speech delivered by Aleander. The writers of the same class have in general followed the Italian author with confidence, and copied his misrepresentations without hesitation. They tell us, that he spoke for three whole hours with the greatest force and eloquence. But the Protestant reader, who has a relish for the instruction contained in Luther's Commentary on the Galatians, would probably think his time mis-spent in reading minute details of arguments in support of papal doctrines and papal authority. It will be proper, however, to subjoin a concise account of this celebrated speech.

1. He produced Luther's writings in the assembly; and, by quotations from them, endeavoured to prove that the whole sect of this notorious heretic ought to be abolished. Their principles were equally destructive to both church and state; for they annihilated the spiritual jurisdiction of the Head of the church, and even the authority of a general council: and if these were taken away, who would be left to interpret Scripture in doubtful cases? There would soon be as many religions, as there were men of fancy and imagination.

2. This was not the worst. The Saxon heretic subverted the foundations of morality, by denying the very existence of HUMAN LIBERTY, and by maintaining that good and evil depended on a fatal and inevitable necessity. Thus a

* Seckendorf.

† See Appendix—Pontanus and Glapio.

Aleander's defence of the Pope's damnatory bull.

* Maimbourg, Sect. 37.

door was opened to the most unbounded licentiousness, when men had at hand this ready defence, or at least this lawful excuse, for every crime they could commit—"OUR FATE DID NOT PERMIT US TO DO OTHERWISE."—He then accused Luther of overturning the efficacy of the sacraments, and of inculcating a notion of Christian liberty, which gave the reins to vice and wickedness. If you believe this heretic, said he, there is no obligation in vows that have been made with the greatest solemnity. In fine, if his notions prevail, there is an end both of Christian piety and the tranquillity of kingdoms. The whole world will be thrown into confusion; there will be left no ties of obedience, either to princes, or even to God himself; because, according to this novel system, the commandments of the Supreme Being are incompatible with the powers and capacities of his creatures.

3. Aleander then observed; that in spite of the pontiff's utmost endeavours, for four years past, to free the world from this GREAT EVIL, it was daily spreading itself more and more, and appeared to be desperate and incurable. This detestable heresy ought to be exposed to public execration; and so ought its deceitful, rash, obstinate and furious author. An imperial edict for this purpose was now, he said, the only remedy that remained. Nor was there any reason to apprehend lest such an edict should be attended with troublesome consequences. It would be made with the consent of the Diet, and, no doubt, would be executed in all the states of the empire. The catholic party, he added, was infinitely the strongest; and it was not likely that those powers who had hitherto supported Luther's cause, would incur the emperor's displeasure, by continuing to protect him.*

In our times, there can be no necessity to answer each of these positions of the papal orator by an orderly course of argumentation. The real Christian will be apt to conclude, that taken together, they constitute the most solid encomium on the labours of the man, who, by the ruling ecclesiastics of his own time, was represented as an object of universal detestation. He will not suffer his judgment to be warped by the specious terms which Aleander introduced into his ha-

range, but will reflect on the real force and meaning of those terms when used by a Roman catholic in defence of his peculiar tenets. The ambiguity of Scripture; the infallibility of the pope's interpretations; the intrinsic virtue of the sacraments; the natural strength and power of man; the merit of good works, and the obligation of monastic vows; these are among the avowed doctrines of the papal system: and as they were evidently at the bottom of Alexander's ostensible creed, we need not wonder that Luther's opposition to them should have been uppermost among the complaints of this zealous nuncio, strenuously defending the established corruptions. The enlightened Protestant, however, with these facts in view, will have no difficulty in determining how much our PERSECUTED REFORMER deserves the thanks of Christian posterity, for setting forth and confirming the supremacy of Scriptural authority, and for unfolding to mankind the long-lost doctrine of the desperate corruption of fallen human nature, and the preciousness of redemption by grace. These fundamental doctrines Luther taught with great zeal and precision. It was impossible therefore that he should not at the same time teach, that "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."* And how could this be done without calling forth the objection, "Why then doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" Or how could our theologian have established the grand Christian peculiarity of justification by faith in Jesus, and laid down the true principle of obedience,—faith which worketh by love,—without overturning that idol of self-sufficiency, the Pelagian notion of free-will, which even from the days of Justin Martyr, had made some encroachment on the church?†

Well would it be, if Christian people better understood their obligations to kind Providence for having raised up, at the critical moment, so penetrating a spirit, and so sound a divine, as Luther. These obligations would be better known, and also felt more sensibly, were we in general more accurately acquainted with the improvements and discoveries which Luther made. The pride and vanity of the human heart lead us to think highly

* Rom. ix. 16.

† See Vol. I. pp. 109, 110.

* Du Pin.—Maimbourg.

of modern attainments in religious knowledge, and to depreciate the productions of the sixteenth century. "The Reformers of that period did great things for the times and circumstances in which they lived, but their notions were in many respects crude and inaccurate, and liable to great abuse." Such things are EASILY said, and by being often said, they are apt to make durable impressions. It is very true that Martin Luther, as well as all the Reformers, did say things which are liable to abuse. I know nothing that is not liable to abuse. Even the Holy Scriptures themselves are thus liable in the hands of depraved men. Nevertheless, I am by far more confident that the conceits and refinements, and attempts at system, which abound in modern divinity, are hurtful to religious minds, and have a direct tendency to corrupt the pure word of God, than I am that the plain and manly expositions of Scripture by Luther have any such tendency; or that these are so likely as the former to mislead humble, contrite souls, who are seriously in quest of peace of conscience and eternal salvation. Again: "Several expressions of Luther, it is said, were chiefly levelled against popery; and might be proper enough in his time; but they ought not to be trusted to the bulk of readers in our age, without many necessary guards and cautions." This looks specious; and something like it has frequently been said of his Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. It is much to be wished, that such censures were not hazarded without a thorough examination of the merits of the case. For my part, after a most diligent perusal of that Commentary, I am well convinced, that no subsequent writer whom I have seen, has treated the important subject of the Epistle to the Galatians with greater perspicuity, or illustrated the mind of the Apostle more happily, or inculcated a spiritual and holy practice more forcibly, or interspersed his expositions with more safe, and sound, scriptural cautions against abuses of every sort, than the author himself has done throughout this admirable work.—Let this hint suffice.

The papal historians* would persuade us, that the emperor and the other princes were so terrified by Aleander's representation of Luther's impieties, that they

instantly proceeded to deliberate on the very important subject, and resolved to condemn the growing heresy as subversive of the fundamentals of the Christian religion. But from the accounts of these writers themselves it is not difficult to collect, that besides the eloquence and arguments of Aleander, there were other weapons which the orator condescended to use, for the purpose of influencing the decision of the Diet of Worms.

We are informed, by an authority which in this instance is not to be disputed, that Aleander acquainted the cardinal Julius de Medicis, then at Rome,* how the Lutheran party increased daily in strength, how the minds of the Germans were alienated from the Roman court, and how great was become the danger, lest all that nation should be lost to the pope through a want of care and timely exertions. These tidings roused the pope's advisers to adopt vigorous measures. They augmented the authority of Aleander, the legate; they supplied him with MONEY; and they empowered him to distribute, among persons of distinction, the most efficacious diplomas, with a view to obtain their assistance in the papal cause. Our author does not scruple to avow, that it was by the operation of this threefold engine that Aleander gained over to his own purposes the members of the German Diet.†

After all, it does not appear that this celebrated Diet came to any regular voting on the business of Luther in full assembly. The records of their proceedings, published by authority at the dissolution of the Diet, take notice of many weighty affairs which were then considered and brought to a conclusion; but they contain not a single word on the subject of religion: which silence may seem the more remarkable, when we attend to the circular letter of Chas. V. in calling together the members of the assembly.‡ The original materials of this important part of the history are so imperfect and inconsistent, that much care and study are requisite to develop the truth, and to separate it from the very partial and erroneous representations of the popish writers.—The learned reader will be the best qualified to appreciate the success of my labours.

* This Cardinal was afterwards Pope Clement VII.

† Pallav. I. 25.

‡ Page 298.

A patient examination of the evidence relative to the Lutheran transactions at Worms, has convinced me that the following account, connected with the preceding, is more full and satisfactory, and also more consistent, and nearer the truth, than any statement of the same events which has fallen in my way.

The elector of Saxony, foreseeing the important questions, of a political as well as of a religious nature, which would be agitated at the next Diet, took care to be at Worms some weeks before the meeting of the general assembly. There this wise and good prince, from conversations with the emperor and others, soon discovered that mischief was meditated against Luther. His enemies, in general, were contriving to have him brought before the Diet, with the design, no doubt, of securing the person of the heretic: and we find that the emperor had once so far acceded to their wishes,

Luther summoned to appear at Worms; and the summons recalled;
A. D. 1521.

as to issue express orders for his appearance. The summons for this purpose was sent to the elector; but this prince refused to concur in that mode of conducting the business, and Charles recalled his summons. All this

took place before the middle of January, 1521.* In fact, at this moment the cautious Frederic scarcely knew what course to steer. Perfectly upright and conscientious, he wished for nothing so much as an impartial hearing of the whole cause, and an equitable sentence in consequence; but he had great fears, lest, by calling Luther to Worms, he should entangle him in the dangerous snares of his adversaries; and moreover, he did not then know what Luther himself might think of such a proposal. In this obscurity of circumstances, the good sense and good principles of the elector determined him to adhere steadily to two points: 1. By no means to compel Luther to appear among his adversaries against his own will; and, 2. In every event, not to permit him to stir a step towards Worms, without a complete and unequivocal safe-conduct, nor to write any letters of passport in his behalf without the express directions of the emperor.—In the meantime he caused Luther to be made acquainted with the

intentions of his malignant adversaries; and the question to be put to him, What he would do if he should be cited to appear at the Diet?

The answer of our intrepid Reformer was perfectly in character. He said, if he should be called by so high an authority as that of the emperor, he would conclude it to be the Divine Will that he should go; and if violence was done to him, as probably might be the case, he would recommend his cause to God, who had saved the three children from the fiery furnace. And if it should not please God to preserve him, his life was but a small thing compared with that of Christ and with HIS sufferings. "Though Kings and Princes," said Luther, "conspired together against the Lord and his Christ, yet, as it is written in the same psalm, Blessed are they that put their trust in him. It is not our business to determine whether more or less benefit will accrue to the Church from my life or my death; but it is our bounden duty to beseech God that the reign of Charles may not commence with blood, shed in an impious cause. And for my part, as I have often said, I would much rather die by the Romanists alone, than that he should be involved in this business. But if I must die, not only by pontifical but also by civil injustice, God's will be done. You have here my resolution. Expect from me anything rather than flight or retraction. I mean not to flee; much less to retract. So may the Lord Jesus strengthen me! I can do neither without scandalizing godliness, and hurting the souls of many." This letter was addressed to his friend Spalatinus, the elector's secretary.*

To the elector himself he writes, as being the subject of this prince, with more ceremonious respect; and probably with a suspicion also, that his letter might be shown to the emperor. He calls the elector his most illustrious prince and gracious master, and says,

"I rejoice from my heart that his imperial majesty is likely to undertake the management of this cause, which is indeed the cause of the Christian world in general, and of the whole German nation in particular.—I have ordered copies of

Luther's intrepid Letter to Spalatinus.

His letter to the Elector.

* Com. de Luth. XC.

* Com. de Luth. XC.

all my writings to be transmitted to your Grace; and I now most humbly offer again, as I have repeatedly offered before, to do everything which becomes a servant of God and of Christ to do, the moment I shall be informed what my duty is from the clear evidence of the Holy Scriptures.

"I have therefore with all submission to entreat your Grace to present my humble petition to his imperial majesty, that he would graciously be pleased to grant me a safe-conduct, and sufficient security against every kind of violence, as I have great reason to be apprehensive on this account; and that he would also appoint learned and good men, unsuspected, and well skilled in the knowledge of their Bibles, to try this cause; and that for the sake of Almighty God I may be protected from every outrage till I have been indulged with a fair hearing, and have been proved to be an unreasonable, ungodly man, and, in short, no Christian.

"I humbly beg, also, that the secular power may so far interfere in my behalf, that my adversaries, the defenders of the Roman See, may be compelled, during this state of the business, to desist from their wicked and malicious attempts against my life, honour and dignity, and in particular from publicly burning my writings; though as yet I have never been tried, much less convicted of any crime.

"In regard to myself, provided I am but allowed a safe conduct, I shall, in humble obedience to the emperor's summons, most cheerfully appear before the next general Diet at Worms; and there by the help of Almighty God, so conduct myself before just, learned and impartial judges, that all may be fully convinced that I have done nothing from an inconsiderate, rash, refractory spirit, or with a view to temporal honours and advantages; but that every line I have written, and every doctrine I have taught, has proceeded from a conscientious regard to my oaths and obligations. I own myself unworthy to be styled a Doctor in sacred learning; nevertheless, it will appear that I have constantly intended to promote the praise and glory of God, the happiness and salvation of the catholic church, the prosperity of all Germany, the overthrow of dangerous abuses and superstitions, and the emancipation of the whole Christian world from innu-

merable, tyrannical, impious, and disgraceful grievances.

"That the gracious elector of Saxony, together with his imperial majesty, may deign to turn a Christian eye to the present state of religion, burdened and enslaved as it is in so many ways, is the prayer of,

"The elector's obedient and suppliant Chaplain,

"MARTIN LUTHER."

The extraordinary piety and firmness so manifest in these letters, must have been highly pleasing to the elector of Saxony; especially as both the public and private proceedings at Worms every day convinced him more and more of the necessity of our Reformer's presence. He was disgusted to find that secret consultations, to which he was not admitted, were continually held at the emperor's apartments, for the purpose of ruining Luther: moreover, an imperial mandate was issued, by which the magistrates were commanded to collect together all the writings of the heretic. Lastly, attempts, though fruitless, were made by the emperor to persuade Frederic, that it was his peculiar duty to call his own subject, Dr. Luther, before the assembly by his single authority, and also to supply him with the necessary passports.* The tendency of these machinations was sufficiently evident; and nothing was so likely to disconcert them all, as the actual appearance of the ACCUSED, secured by an effectual safe-conduct. Also, if Alexander's malignant sophisms and gross misrepresentations had impressed or puzzled the minds of any of his hearers, nobody could so soon or so completely undeceive them as Luther himself, by his knowledge, his eloquence and his plain dealing.

Influenced by these and similar considerations, the elector of Saxony, in full Diet, urged the propriety of proceeding no further in the affairs of Luther, till he himself could be heard in his own cause. The question before them, he said, was not merely, whether certain doctrines were false, and ought to be proscribed, but also whether Martin Luther was the author of them. Common justice therefore required that he should be called before the Diet, that they might learn from himself whether he really avowed

* Id. Add. II. LXXXVIII. and Add. XC,

and propagated the sentiments which were said to be found in his books.

It was impossible on any decent grounds to resist so wise and reasonable a proposition. In fact, the whole Diet almost without exception, though for various and even opposite reasons, concurred in this sentiment of the elector. The different Imperial Orders thanked the emperor for his good intentions in securing by his mandate, the books of Luther, and in general expressed their approbation of the measure. But still, they feared no material good was to be expected from the publication of that mandate. Luther's doctrines had spread throughout Germany, and had excited much thinking, much speculation and design; for all which there now seemed no remedy but to give the author a fair hearing. "Let him have a safe-conduct," said they, "and let the question be put to him, 'Whether he will retract such articles as militate against the holy Christian faith which we have received from our ancestors and preserved until this time.' When that business is over, he may be heard on other points, and the Diet may come to such equitable resolutions as the case shall require. If indeed he should refuse to recant, then, no doubt, the Orders of the empire will strenuously support the emperor's decree with all their might." They concluded with entreating his imperial majesty to adopt some measures by which many practices of the Roman See might be effectually corrected: * for, said they, they are become highly injurious and intolerable to the German nation.

Aleander, however, was most excessively alarmed on the prospect of Luther's appearance, and strenuously exerted every nerve to prevent it. The reasons, in opposition, adduced by this popish champion, might seem too futile and ridiculous to merit notice, if the most celebrated Roman catholic historians had not astonished posterity by recording them with apparent approbation and triumph. On few occasions has the weak-

Aleander endeavours to prevent the appearance of Luther before the Diet.

ness of the papal cause been more manifest; or the blindness and obstinacy of its advocates more inexcusable. The pope, said Aleander, who is supreme judge in religions concerns, has already determined this matter; his decisions ought not to be questioned. Besides, this Diet must be considered not as a sacred, but profane assembly, and therefore not competent to the trial of such causes: neither will Luther himself acknowledge the authority of the tribunal.

The conduct of Charles V. on this occasion, appears to have been regulated chiefly by artful political maxims. One historian indeed informs us, that he expressed a great desire to see the man* who had caused so much commotion in the church; and this curiosity in the young monarch, may seem neither unnatural nor improbable. We are sure, however, that by calling Luther before the Diet, he gratified his grand patron, the elector of Saxony; and in regard to the court of Rome, he preserved his peace with them, by dexterously compromising the matter in the following way. He declared, that though it was absolutely necessary to bring the accused before the Diet, lest it should be said that he had been condemned unheard, still that he was only to be heard so far as to answer, Whether he would or would not recant the errors which he had published.

Artful conduct of Charles V.

Nevertheless, Aleander bitterly complained that a downright heretic, already condemned by the Roman pontiff, should be treated with so much lenity and concession. "He ought to have been heard no further; or if it was thought proper to condemn him again with new formalities, most certainly that public faith ought not to be granted to him, which would have been denied to any man who was only accused of the crimes for which Luther stood condemned at the present moment. He was moreover a factious man, of great volubility of language, and great presence of mind; a man, who spake with such tones of voice, and such ardent looks as to be capable of raising a sedition." Then there was nothing, he added, which Luther so eagerly longed for, as a solemn public disputation, where he might have an opportunity of exhibiting his talents,

* These and many other interesting particulars in this account are not so much as hinted at by the popish writers. They are taken from very authentic accounts of the proceedings at Worms, deposited among the Saxon Archives at Weimar.

* Varillas.

and confounding such an assembly as the Diet of Worms; the members of which were so little informed in theological questions, that he would easily puzzle and deceive them by his address and his subtilities; and make them doubt, whether in condemning him, they had given to his expressions the right sense in which their author intended them to be understood.*

Such a representation, when stripped of all disguise, amounts briefly to this: That Luther ought to have been crushed at once by the strong hand of despotic power; and that the truth would be most effectually stifled by his non-appearance at Worms. It may be added, that the papal legate was not a little concerned for the credit and honour of the Roman See. The sixty days, allowed by pontifical lenity for the heresiarch's repentance, had elapsed long ago; and Luther was now deemed a detestable and excommunicated heretic, to whom no kindness or respectful consideration could be shown, without incurring the manifest displeasure of the pope.

It may, therefore, be considered as a clear proof of the great decline of the papal authority, that, notwithstanding

all the arts and all the menaces of Aleander, Charles ventured to grant Luther a safe-conduct to Worms, and again in return to Witten-

Charles V.
grants Lu-
ther a safe-
conduct.

berg. He even with his own hand wrote to the heretic, and calls him, our HONOURABLE, BELOVED, DEVOUT, DOCTOR MARTIN LUTHER, OF THE AUGUSTINE ORDER. He then proceeds to inform him that the Emperor, and the sacred Imperial Orders, then met in congregation, had determined to examine him respecting certain books which he had published; that they had joined in granting him a safe-conduct; and that he must not fail to appear before the Diet within twenty-one days, reckoning from the sixth of March, the date of the letter. The emperor concludes with repeating his assurances of protection from every injury and violence.*

Still the friends of Luther remained dissatisfied with even these pledges for his safety; so deeply were their minds impressed with what had happened to John Huss at Constance. It was agreed, therefore, that several of the princes of

the empire should also particularly and distinctly sign the safe-conduct, as a further security against the hostile designs of the Romans. Lastly, the sagacious elector of Saxony had the spirit to demand, and the perseverance to obtain from the emperor, in writing, an express renunciation of the detestable popish tenet, that GOOD FAITH IS NOT TO BE PRESERVED WITH HERETICS. This very curious fact, which originated in the wise precaution of Frederic, seems to have been kept a most profound secret till about the year 1541, when it was revealed to Pontanus, the elector's chancellor, by Conrad Pius P. son of C. Peutingger, one of Charles's privy councillors.*

Though this explicit grant of a safe-conduct was so important a point gained for Luther, that probably his life depended upon it, yet the elector of Saxony had by this time seen too much of the dispositions, both of the emperor and of the members of the Diet, to indulge any great hope of a favourable issue of the pending contest. The following short extracts from his letters are highly instructive:

No. 1. The Romans, with their adherents, particularly the men† who wear red hats, attack Luther in every way.

2. Dr. Martin is summoned hither, but I know not whether he will choose to come. Matters proceed slowly; and I augur no great good.

3. The cardinals and bishops oppose Luther with all their might. May it please God to order everything for good! I wish it were in my power to serve Martin! Most certainly I would omit nothing that is proper to be done, which might at the same time be useful to his cause.

4. Were it in my power, I would most readily assist Martin in everything which he could reasonably require. But, believe me, I am pressed to take part against him, by such persons and in such a way as will astonish you when I come to explain the truth. The grand object here is to drive him into exile. Whoever appears in the smallest degree to wish him well, is instantly deemed a heretic. May God order all things for good! and no doubt HE will not desert the right cause.

5. Martin's cause turns on this point, —whether he is to be sent into banish-

* Pallav.

† Luth. Op. II. 163.

* Com. de Luth. XCII.

† Cardinals.

ment? There is no remedy against these things. The event, however, is in God's hands; and if, through HIS help, I should be able to come to you, I shall have surprising things to tell. We have peculiar need of the Divine, not human assistance. I would have you to know, that not only ANNAS and CAIAPHAS, but also PILATE and HEROD, are the adversaries of Luther.*

The doubt expressed by the elector,† respecting the Reformer's obedience to the mandate which had summoned him to Worms, did not arise from any suspicion of timidity, or of feeble resolution in his character, but from a just apprehension that he might conclude his appearance before a court, which had already predetermined not to hear his defence, would prove altogether vain and nugatory. It appears from a letter to Spalatinus, that a temporary hesitation of this sort was actually produced in Luther's mind, by the information which he had received of the transactions at Worms. He writes thus on the 19th of March 1521:—

“My kind friend—I have received your account of the various things which I shall be commanded to do at Worms, particularly of the doctrinal articles, which I must recant. Depend upon it, I will recant no one thing, unless they produce better arguments against me, than that I have maintained things in my books which are contrary to what they are pleased to call the rights and customs of the Church. I shall not scruple to answer the emperor, that if I am called merely for the sake of recanting, I shall not come; since precisely the same thing may be done without this journey to and fro. Certainly if recantation be all that is wanted, I may recant here. Now if, in consequence of this answer, his majesty should denounce me as an enemy of the empire, and should cite me to appear for the purpose of taking away

my life, I shall obey the summons. For if Christ Jesus do but favour me, I am determined never to flee, or desert the word of God by leaving the field of battle. However, I see most distinctly these bloody-minded men will never rest till they have taken away my life. I own, I could wish that the PAPISTS ALONE might be guilty of my blood.”*

Notwithstanding this pause, Luther presently resolved upon his journey to Worms. Perhaps his great patron, the elector of Saxony, secretly directed his motions; or perhaps further reflection convinced him, that to appear before the Diet, secured as he was by safe-conduct, was the wisest step he could take. Possibly on the one hand he might indulge a hope, that after all, when he should once look his adversaries in the face, they would be ashamed to bid him hold his tongue; and on the other, he could not but foresee that his non-appearance would certainly be construed into contempt, or timidity and consciousness of guilt. It would be said, that after having so often and so long demanded a fair hearing of his cause, and after having received a direct challenge from the papal advocates, he had now refused to meet them before so impartial and in every respect unexceptionable tribunal as the general Diet of the empire.

He was accompanied in his journey by several friends, among whom are mentioned Jodocus Jonas, a name precious in the annals of German reformation. Jonas was at that time principal of the collegiate Church of Wittenberg, and was afterwards called Justus Jonas.‡ Some others joined them on the road. Luther was expressly forbidden to preach at any of the towns through which he had to pass; but our Reformer declared, that he had never promised to obey that injunction, and that the word of God ought not to be fettered. Accordingly he preached at Erfurt as he went, and at Eisenach as he returned, and in various other towns.‡ The hilarity and musical en-

Luther's
journey to
Worms.

Luther
preaches
his journey.

* The letters, of which these are extracts, are addressed by Frederic to his brother John, who succeeded him. Nos. 1, 2, & 3, were written before Luther came to Worms; No. 4, while he was there; and No. 5, after he had left that place. It appears clearly from Nos. 4 & 5, that the elector was not then aware that the enemies of Luther designed anything against him severer than a sentence of banishment.

† In No. 2.

* Com. de Luth. XCI.

† See Appendix, Justus Jonas.

‡ Du Pin, the most moderate of all Luther's adversaries, accuses him of declaiming, in the course of this journey, “in his usual manner against good works and hu-

tertainties, in which he indulged himself as he travelled, are invidiously spoken of by writers devoted to the popedom. In fact, music with him was a favourite and useful amusement; and it is certain that his temper was more cheerful, courteous, and sociable, than might have been expected in one, who with a superstitious conscience had been so long addicted to Romish austerities. What we have formerly observed of his moral character need not be here repeated: and in regard to his diversions, it will be readily allowed that so hard a student required a due proportion of these; and no proof can be adduced of his ever exceeding the bounds of moderation, temperance, and decorum.

Luther was considerably indispensed in the course of this journey. In a letter to Spalatinus, who was then at Worms,

His indisposition on the road to Worms.

he says, "All the way from Eisenach to Francfort, I have experienced such languor as I never felt before. Besides,

I hear the emperor had published a mandate to frighten me.* But Christ, nevertheless, lives; and I will enter Worms, though all the gates of hell and all the powers of darkness oppose. I mean to terrify and to despise the prince of darkness."

Let the student of ecclesiastical history scrutinize as narrowly as possible the behaviour of the champion of protestantism at THIS CRITICAL MOMENT. The more rigorous his inspection, the greater, if I mistake not, will be his admiration and satisfaction. "Si proprius stes, te capient magis." The hearts of Luther's best friends began to fail them as the danger approached. At Oppenheim, near Worms, they solicited him in the most vehement manner to venture no further. What favour could he expect

from men, who already began to break their word with him? The pope had published a definitive bull against him on January the third;* and the emperor, in compliance, had ordered all his writings to be seized; and, to disgrace him still more, the imperial mandate, as well as the papal bull, were every where put up for the public information.† Neither was it yet forgotten that an imperial safe-conduct had not been sufficient to protect John Huss from Romish deceit and cruelty.

When a great man is actually in the hands of his enemies, the die may be considered as cast; and in such cases it happens not unfrequently, that courage and firmness appear to be the natural offspring of extreme and unavoidable danger. But while Luther was at Oppenheim, which is the moment now in the reader's contemplation, we are to remember it was in his power, as yet, to have turned aside from the road to Worms, and sheltered himself from the fury of the papists. In fact, he was here met by Martin Bucer,‡ who had been sent with several horsemen, on the express errand to entreat him to take refuge in the castle of a neighbouring knight. Here also we find that he received letters from his friend Spalatinus, the contents of which must have been peculiarly distressing to his mind; as in a similar way they fervently entreated this persecuted servant of God to desist from proceeding further in this journey.

It was under such circumstances, and to such solicitations, that our Saxon hero, with his usual intrepidity, returned that ever-memorable answer, "That though he should be obliged to encounter at Worms as many devils as there were tiles upon the houses of that city, this would not deter him from his fixed purpose of appearing there: That these fears of his friends could only arise from the suggestions of Satan, who apprehended the approaching ruin of his kingdom, by the confession of the Truth before such a grand assembly as the Diet of Worms."§ Luther is said to have mentioned the circumstance a little before his death, and to have

man laws: One, says he, builds a temple, the other goes a pilgrimage to St. James or to Rome; a third fasts, prays, goes barefoot; all this is of no use, and ought to be put an end to: for whatever comes from the pope is only to oblige us to give. This was a small matter, if they did nothing but pillage men; but the worst is, they would persuade them, that these bodily works can justify and save them." Such is Du Pin's quotation from Luther, and such his complaint.

* This was the order above mentioned, page 303, issued by Charles, for collecting together all Luther's books.

* Page 289 of this Vol. † Du Pin, c. x.

‡ See Appendix, Martin Bucer.

§ Luth. Op. II. Du Pin, c. x.

made this observation: "So fearless can God render a man:—I do not know whether at this day I should be so bold."

The fire and obstinacy that appeared in Luther's answer to the kind remonstrances of his friends at Oppenheim, seemed to prognosticate much warmth and vehemence in his conduct before the assembly.* But it was not so. On the contrary, the reader may be surprised to find how much the zeal which animated our Reformer, was tempered on this occasion, notwithstanding the fervour of his natural constitution, with a laudable moderation and decorous respect both for his civil and ecclesiastical superiors.

Luther arrived at Worms on the sixteenth of April, 1521; and as he stepped from his open vehicle, he said these words, in the presence of a prodigious concourse of people, "God will be on my side."†

It has been truly observed,‡ that the reception he there met with was such as he might have esteemed a full reward of all his labours, if vanity and the love of applause had been the principles which influenced his conduct. Spalatinus, who was on the spot, assures us, that no prince ever experienced such honours. Immense crowds daily flocked to see him; and his apartments were constantly filled with visitors of the highest rank. In short, he was looked on as a prodigy of wisdom, and respected as one who was born to enlighten the understandings of mankind, and direct their sentiments;—a homage more sincere, as well as more flattering, than any which pre-eminence in birth or condition can command. Luther lodged with the Teutonic knights, near the elector of Saxony; and on the day after his arrival was conducted to the Diet by the marshal of the empire.§

On his appearance before that august assembly, he was directed to be silent till questions should be put to him. The Official of the archbishop of Treves, who was the emperor's speaker

Luther appears before the Diet.

* Maclaine in Mosh.

† Pallav. Du Pin. ‡ Robertson.

§ The crowd was so great, that it was found necessary to conduct Luther privately through a garden, and by back stairs, to the hall, where the Emperor and the Diet were assembled. Luth. Op. II.

on the occasion, then produced a bundle of books, and informed Luther, that, by order of his Imperial Majesty, he was directed to propose two questions to him. The first was, whether he acknowledged those books which went by HIS NAME, to be his own; and the second, whether he intended to defend or to retract what was contained in them? Upon this, before any reply could be made, Jerome Schurff, a celebrated doctor of the civil laws, who had come from Wittenberg in the character of Luther's advocate, called out with a loud voice, "You ought to recite the titles of the books." The Official then read over the titles in succession. Among which were, Commentaries on the Psalms; a little Tract on Good Works; a Commentary on the Lord's Prayer; and other books on Christian subjects, in no way related to Controversy.*

I shall answer the question, said Luther, as concisely, and as much to the purpose, as I possibly can.

1st. Unless the books have been mutilated or altered by fanciful sciolists, or by the

Luther's answers before the Diet.

arts of my adversaries, they are certainly mine. 2dly. Because this question relates to FAITH and the salvation of souls, and because it concerns the Word of God, the most important of all objects in heaven and in earth, and which deservedly requires of us all the most profound reverence, it would be equally rash and dangerous for me to give a sudden answer to such a question; since, without previous deliberation, I might assert less than the subject demands, and more than truth would admit; both which would expose me to condemnation from that sentence of Christ, "Whosoever denieth me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven." For this reason I humbly beseech your Imperial Majesty to grant me a competent

* The reader may smile at the management of Dr. Schurff, who, quite in the character of a practitioner of the law, took this very fair opportunity of bringing into view and exposing the unjustifiable lengths to which the enemies of his client had proceeded in condemning to the flames even his most unexceptionable writings. The Official called on Luther to own or disown such books as went by his name. "Let us hear the titles, let us hear the subjects of the books," said the lawyer.

time for consideration, that I may satisfy the inquiry without injuring the word of God, and without endangering my own salvation. After some deliberation, he was allowed to defer his answer till the next day, on the express condition, however, that he should deliver what he had to say *vivâ voce*, and not in writing.

On the following day he was told that he ought not to have petitioned for delay, because he had well known, for a long time, what would be the nature of his examination; and, moreover, that every one ought to be able at any moment to give an account of his faith; and much more a Doctor of great reputation, like Luther, who had been long exercised in theological discussions. At length however, said the Official, return an answer to the question of the emperor, who has so kindly granted you your request.

Luther then rose, and spoke before the emperor and the princes, in the German language, to the following effect:

His answer on the day following.

"I stand here in obedience to the commands of his most serene Imperial Majesty, and the most illustrious princes, and I earnestly entreat them that they would deign to listen to this cause with clemency. It will appear, I trust, to be the cause of truth and justice; and therefore if, through ignorance, I should fail to give proper titles to each of the dignified personages who hear me, or if in any other respect I should show myself defective in politeness, they will be pleased to accept my apology with candour. I have not been accustomed to the refinements of the court, but to the cloisters of the monastery; nor of myself have I anything further to say, than that hitherto I have read lectures and composed books with that simplicity of mind which ONLY regards the glory of God and the instruction of mankind.

"To the first question," continued Luther, "I gave a plain and direct answer; and in that I shall persist for ever. I did publish those books, and I am responsible for their contents, so far as they are really mine; but I do not answer for any alterations that have been made in them, whether by the crafty malice of enemies or the imprudent officiousness of friends.

"In regard to the second question, I humbly beg your most serene Majesty and their highnesses to take especial notice, That my publications are by no

means all of the same kind. Some of them treat only of piety, and of the nature of faith, and morals; and these subjects are handled in so evangelical a manner, that my greatest adversaries are compelled to pronounce them innocent, profitable, and worthy to be read by Christians. The pope's bull, indeed, though it actually declares some of my books innocent, yet with a monstrous and cruel INDISCRIMINATION, CONDEMNS THEM ALL. Now were I to retract such writings, I should absolutely stand alone, and condemn those truths in which friends and foes most perfectly agree.

"There is another species of my publications, in which I endeavour to lay open the system of the papal government, and the specific doctrines of the papists, who, in fact, by their corrupt tenets and bad examples, have made havoc of the Christian world, both in regard to body and soul. There is no denying this. witness the universal complaints now existing, how the papal laws and traditions of men most miserably entangle, vex, and tear to pieces the consciences of the faithful, and also plunder the inhabitants of this famous country in ways most shameful, tyrannical, and scarcely credible, notwithstanding that Germany by her own laws has declared, that any doctrines or decrees of the pope, which are contrary to the Gospel or the sentiments of the fathers, are to be deemed erroneous, and in no degree obligatory.—If, therefore, I should revoke what I have written on these subjects, I should not only confirm the wicked, despotical proceedings to which I allude, but also open a door to further abuses of power, that would be still more licentious and insupportable; especially if it were said among the people, that what I had done was confirmed by the authority of his most serene Majesty and a general meeting of the empire.

"Lastly, the defences and replies which I have composed against such individuals as have laboured either to establish the Roman tyranny, or to undermine my explanations of the fundamental principles of religion, constitute a third class of my publications. And in these, I freely confess, I have been betrayed into an asperity of expression, which neither becomes me as a clergyman, or as a Christian: however, I pretend not to set myself up for a saint, neither do I plead for the strictness of my life, but

for the doctrines of Christ. But, it is not in my power to retract even these writings as far as the matter contained in them is concerned; lest by such a step I should become the patron of the most arbitrary and impious usurpations, which in consequence would soon gather strength, and spend their fury on the people of God in more violent outrages than ever. Yet, since I am but a man, and therefore fallible in judgment, it would ill become me, in supporting my poor paltry tracts, to go further than my Lord and Master Jesus Christ did, in the defence of his own doctrines; who, when he was interrogated concerning them before Annas, and had received a blow from one of the officers, said, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?' If then our Lord, who was infallible, did, nevertheless, not disdain to listen to anything that could be said against his doctrine even by a person of the lowest condition, how much more ought such a contemptible being as I, who am all imperfection, to be ready to attend to whatever arguments can be brought in the way of objection to my positions? I entreat therefore your Majesty, and the members of this illustrious assembly, to produce evidence against me; and however high, or however low, be the rank of the person who shall be able, from the sacred Scriptures, to convict me of error, I will instantly retract, and be the first to throw the book into the fire.

"Permit me to suggest for the consideration of us all, That as Almighty God is wonderful and terrible in counsel, surely it behoves this august assembly to examine with especial care, whether the object which my enemies so ardently long to compass, does not in fact amount to a condemnation of THE DIVINE WORD; and whether such a measure, adopted by the first German Diet of the new emperor, might not lead to a dreadful deluge of evils. Under the protection of God, there is reason to augur well of this excellent young prince; but take care that you do not render the prospect of his government unfavourable and inauspicious.

"By a variety of instances from Holy Writ, and particularly by the cases of Pharaoh, of the king of Babylon, and of the kings of Israel, I could prove this important point, namely, that men have ruined themselves at the very moment

when they imagined they had settled and established their kingdoms in the most prudent manner. The ruling principle should be, THE FEAR OF GOD. HE it is who taketh the wise in their craftiness, and removeth the mountains and they know not, and overturneth them in his anger.*

"In saying these things, I mean not to insinuate, that the great personages, who condescend to hear me, stand in need of my instructions or admonitions: no,—but there was a debt which I owed to my native country, and it was my duty to discharge it. The reasons, which I have now alleged, will, I trust, be approved by your serene Majesty and the princes; and I humbly beg that you will disappoint my enemies in their unjust attempts to render me odious and suspected. I have done."†

As soon as Luther had finished his speech, which was delivered in the German language, he was ordered to say the same things in Latin. But he was so much out of breath, and so overcome with heat and the pressure of numerous persons of quality, that he found it necessary to pause a little. Upon which a courtier of the elector of Saxony, supposing him to be disconcerted and afraid to proceed in the Latin language, kindly admonished him to desist from the attempt, and assured him that he had said enough. Luther, however, did not relish this advice; but having quickly recovered himself, he again went over the same ground in Latin with prodigious animation, and to the very great satisfaction of all his friends, and particularly the elector of Saxony. It appears that this prince was so delighted with the piety, confidence, and ability of Luther on this occasion, that he took Spalatinus aside into his bed-chamber, and there expressed his approbation and astonishment in the following manner: "O, how excellently did Father Martin speak, both in German and Latin, before the emperor and the Imperial Orders. He was sufficiently, if not rather too animated!"‡

We may be sure that that part of Luther's harangue, in which he asserted the ancient honour and independence of the empire, and endeavoured to rouse the princes to vindicate their just rights against the encroachments of Rome, must

* Job. † Acta Worm. ‡ MS. Spal.

have been peculiarly grateful to German ears. His adversaries acknowledge that he spoke for two hours with the applause of one half of the assembly; until John Eckius,* the emperor's speaker, having lost almost all patience, before Luther had well concluded, cried out, in much heat and passion, That he had not answered to the point; That he was not called upon to give an account of his doctrines; That these had already been condemned in former councils, whose decisions were not now to be questioned: That he was required to say simply and clearly, whether he would or would not retract his opinions. "My answer," said Luther, instantly, "shall be direct and plain. I cannot think myself bound to believe either the pope or his councils; for it is very clear, not only that they have often erred, but often contradicted themselves. Therefore, unless I am convinced by Scripture or clear reasons, my belief is so confirmed by the Scriptural passages I have produced, and my conscience so determined to abide by the word of God, that I neither can nor will retract anything; for it is neither safe nor innocent to act against a man's conscience."—Luther then pronounced these words in the

Luther concludes.

German language: *Ich stehe nicht anders, Gott helff mir, Amen.* "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise. May God help me. Amen."

After the Diet had taken Luther's speech into consideration, their Speaker told him;—That he had not answered with the modesty that became his character and situation. That if he had retracted those books which contained the main part of his errors, he would have suffered no persecution for the rest. That for him, who had revived the errors condemned at Constance, to require a refutation and conviction from Scripture, was the wild proposal of a man scarcely in his senses. That on such principles, nothing would be left certain in the Church. That for these reasons, he was once more asked, whether he intended to defend all he had written as orthodox, or whether he would retract any part as erroneous.

Luther persisted in his former answer; and entreated the emperor not to permit him to be compelled to do violence to his conscience, by recanting what he felt

himself bound to believe on the authority of the word of God, unless he was proved to be mistaken by evident arguments from Scripture. Councils, he repeated, have erred frequently. "You cannot prove that," said Eckius. "I will pledge myself to do it," replied Luther. But night coming on, the Diet broke up.

During the whole of this interesting scene, the special partisans of the pope were filled with indignation; and many of the Spanish Roman Catholics followed Luther as he returned home from the tribunal, and showed their enmity by long-continued sneers and hisses.

On the next day,* the emperor directed a schedule, written with his own hand, to be read to the princes in full congregation. The purport of the schedule was this: Imprudent resolution of the Emperor.

"His ancestors had always respected the Roman church, which Luther now opposed: He could not with any propriety depart from their example: He was bound to defend the ancient faith, and support the papal See: And as Martin Luther could not be induced to give up any one of his errors, he was determined to proceed against him as a notorious heretic: Nevertheless he by no means intended to violate the safe-conduct which had been granted to him."†

This hasty and indiscreet measure, which was partly owing to the juvenile impetuosity and inexperience of Charles, and partly to the incessant solicitation of the papal party, produced complaints and murmurs in the assembly.‡ The emperor, by giving his opinion first, had broken the established rules of the Diet. He ought not to have given his judgment, till all the other states had given theirs. Such a procedure was esteemed a prejudging of Luther's cause, and manifestly tended to abridge the electors and princes of their right of voting freely in the matter before them. Party spirit ran high at this moment. Acrimonious papers on both sides of the question were publicly affixed to the walls; and the most violent and even threatening expressions are said to have been used. Had Luther been a man of a worldly temper, or actuated by political considerations, he might easily have turned these critical circumstances to his own advantage. Could he have been persuaded only to temporize a little, and to

* Not Eckius, the Leipsic disputant.

* April 19. † Acta Worm. ‡ Du Pin.

explain away or even soften a few of the most offensive positions in his publications, there seems abundant reason to conclude, that he might have gained an easy victory over his enemies at Worms, and at the same time have given a severe blow to the papal authority—so great was the impression he had produced on the members of the Diet; and so odious was become the systematic oppression of the Roman See.

But a true servant of God rarely suffers himself to be influenced by what are called the prudential maxims of men of the world. His conduct is straight and steady; and he commits the event to God. This holy, this Christian temper of mind, was eminently exemplified in the behaviour of Luther, during the remaining conferences at Worms.

Charles V. no doubt soon perceived the mistake he had committed, in having sent so premature a message to the Diet. That assembly, notwithstanding the peremptory declaration of the emperor, continued all that day, and all the next, in consultation, and no official information was sent to Luther, respecting a matter in which he was so deeply interested. The misunderstanding, however, was compromised in this way: Charles, at the instance of the Diet, consented that the heretic should be allowed a few days longer delay, during which time such of the princes as pleased might endeavour to persuade him to recant his errors; and if they succeeded, he promised that he himself would take care he should be pardoned by the Roman Pontiff.*

Accordingly, on the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth of April, incredible pains

Attempts to induce Luther to recant.

were taken by the princes, electors, and deputies of various Orders, to shake the resolution of this hero of the Reformation. In particular,

the archbishop of Treves summoned him to his own lodgings, where, in the presence of several persons of the greatest distinction, he was earnestly exhorted to be less obstinate, and to submit his own judgment to that of holy councils: He was told, that though he had written many good things, yet some of his books had excited incredible dissensions and tumults: and that if he persisted in those sentiments, the emperor would assuredly

proceed to banish him from the country. Much was added concerning the necessity of laws, and of obedience.

Luther humbly thanked the princes for their clemency and good-will towards him. He said, “he by no means censured councils in general, but only a part of the proceedings at Constance in regard to John Huss. If the faith of Christ was truly set forth, and Christ’s flock were fed in a real Gospel pasture, there would be no need to burden the Church with human traditions. He allowed that he ought to obey magistrates, even wicked magistrates; that the precepts for this purpose were to be taken in their plain meaning, and that he had often taught this doctrine in his writings. He was ready to do anything, provided he was not urged to deny the clear word of God.”

Luther was then ordered to withdraw; and the princes, after consultation, called him again before them, went over the same ground, and concluded with again exhorting him to submit his writings to the judgment of Charles, and of the princes of the empire.

Luther replied, That it should never be said that he declined the judgment of the emperor and the leading Orders of the state. He was so far from dreading a scrutiny of that sort, that he wished it to be as accurate as possible, provided always, that everything was to rest on the authority of the Holy Scriptures. He humbly besought, them, therefore, to do no violence to his conscience, by urging him to deny the express declarations of the Divine word. They should find him completely obedient in all other respects.

Are we to understand, then, said the elector of Brandenburg, that you will not give way, unless convinced from the Holy Scriptures? “Yes, most kind and gentle sir,” replied Luther, “or by very clear and evident reasons.”

Upon this the assembly broke up. When it immediately occurred to the archbishop of Treves, that possibly he might succeed better at a private, than a public meeting. He therefore took Luther into his chamber, with two doctors, namely, Eckius, his official, as above mentioned, and Cochleus, the dean of Franefort, a celebrated papal advocate, who had come to Worms on purpose to oppose the heretic.

Luther, however, had the good sense

* Pallav.

and caution to object to a secret conference of this kind, unless several creditable persons, of his own friends, were likewise admitted. This being agreed to, a dispute of some length ensued concerning the rise of various heresies and the decrees of councils; but not the smallest advance was made towards an accommodation.*

It was on the 25th of April, 1521, that the archbishop of Treves made his last efforts to reclaim this obstinate heretic.†

He commissioned two learned doctors, one of whom was Conrad Pentinger, privy counsellor to the emperor, to try to the utmost, whether they could not persuade him to submit to the judgment which Charles V. and the several Imperial Orders should pass upon his writings. Luther, as usual, agreed, provided they would depend solely on scriptural authority; otherwise, he said, nothing could be more opposite to his principles. "Trust not," continued he, "princes, or the sons of men, for there is no safety in them. Cursed is he who putteth his trust in man."

The same persons then entreated him to consent that a selection of various articles should be made from his publications, and that these should be submitted to the judgment of a general council. Luther continued inflexible. Neither threats, nor exhortations, nor promises, availed to make him change his resolution, or vary from the answer he had so often given, respecting the absolute necessity he was under of abiding by the sole authority of the sacred Scriptures.

The elector, archbishop of Treves, appears to have been a bigoted Roman Catholic, but a man of gentle manners, and of a humane disposition. His conduct at Worms, in regard to Luther's cause, has been ascribed to different motives, as natural timidity, or friendship for the elector of Saxony. There is, however, no imputation on his sincerity in his negotiations with Luther. So earnestly did this prelate wish for an accommodation of the differences, that when all other methods had failed, he took Luther into his closet, and there, in the kindest man-

ner,—no other person being present,—exhorted him to submit to some of the proposals that had been made to him, respecting the final judgment of the emperor and the Imperial Orders, or of a general council. Luther answered roundly, That he by no means thought it safe to entrust the decision of so important a matter to persons, who, when he was called before them under the public faith, had yet persecuted him afresh, had already given judgment against him, and had even approved of the pope's bull.—Lastly, the archbishop called in Spalatinus, and, in his presence, asked Luther, whether he himself could suggest any healing measures, that were likely to succeed. "Nothing better," replied Luther instantly, "than the advice of Gamaliel; 'If this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot resist it.'" The emperor and the princes may inform the pope, that I feel perfectly assured this whole religious agitation and controversy, in which I am now concerned, will of itself die away in less than two years, unless God be actually on my side."

What would you do, said the archbishop, suppose an extract of certain propositions from your books should be made, and the articles so extracted be submitted to the judgment of a future council? "I hope, kind sir," replied Luther, "they would not be those which were condemned by the council of Constance." I fear they would, said the archbishop. "Then," rejoined Luther, "I neither can nor will be silent, in regard to such a proposal; for I am sure that the decrees of that council condemned the word of God; and rather than give up the word of God, when the case is quite clear, I WOULD LOSE MY LIFE."

In about three hours after this conversation, Luther received a message from the emperor, which directed him to leave Worms, "because, notwithstanding the most friendly admonitions and entreaties, he persisted in his contumacy, and would not return into the bosom of the church." He was allowed twenty-one days to return home, during which time the public faith was pledged for his safety; but he was strictly enjoined not to preach to the people in the course of his journey.

"This is the Lord's will," said Martin, "and blessed be the name of the Lord!" He then, through the Official, returned most respectful thanks to the

* Spalatinus and Justus Jonas were among the friends of Luther who were present at this meeting.

† This is the name which had long been given him by the papal party.

emperor, and the members of the assembly, for their patience in hearing him, and their liberal treatment in general. He said, he had wished for nothing but a reform in religion, on the plan of the Holy Scriptures; nor did he now request anything for himself, but to be allowed the free use of the word of God. Let that only be granted, and he was ready to undergo everything without exception, for the sake of his Imperial Majesty and the Imperial Orders.—
 Luther leaves Worms. He left Worms on the following day, the twenty-sixth of April.

The elector of Saxony, among all the leading characters assembled at Worms, was the only assured patron on whom Luther could depend. And even this virtuous prince by no means openly avowed the Reformer's principles. He contended only for a fair hearing, and an equitable decision.

The landgrave of Hesse, though favourably disposed to reformation, as yet stood aloof, not venturing to join the persecuted party. Luther however informs us, that the landgrave visited him at Worms, conversed on doctrinal points with a jocose levity, and on his departure gave him his hand, using these very remarkable words, "If your cause be good, may God protect you!"

Lewis, the elector Palatine, also, when several members of the Diet proposed to initiate the example of the council of Constance, by delivering the church at once from the author of the pestilent heresy, who was then in their power, went so far as nobly to withstand this infamous design, declaring, "it was intolerable, that, for the sake of gratifying certain ecclesiastics, the public faith should be violated; it was a thing which would brand the German name with eternal disgrace."

Even George the duke of Saxony,* a rigid Roman catholic, expressed himself on the same occasion in the strongest terms of disapprobation: "The morality," said he, "of the ancient Germans, forbid them to violate promises; and the princes ought to avoid a scandalous transaction of this sort, particularly in the first Diet of the new emperor."

When we reflect on the very few sin-

cerce friends whom Luther could number at Worms, it may seem a remarkable part of the history of this memorable Diet, that a poor, private monk, already condemned, and solemnly excommunicated by the pope, should have obtained a safe-conduct for his journey, be visited in the manner above described* by the most respectable personages, be admitted into that august assembly of the emperor and princes, be allowed to speak there for hours, be heard with patience and candour, defending his cause, and after all be dismissed in safety, under the public faith, and in spite of numerous and most powerful enemies, who thirsted for his blood, and exerted every nerve to exhibit afresh the horrid scenes of the council of Constance.—The splendid talents and attainments of Luther, the tyrannical oppressions and profligate morals of the Romish clergy, and lastly the state of preparation for a truly evangelical reform, into which men's minds had been brought by the agitation of various religious questions, all these circumstances, no doubt, concurred to procure for the Reformer a more gentle and humane treatment than might otherwise have been expected. Pious minds, however, will be disposed to look further than secondary causes. Both in these and the subsequent events they will recognize the hand of an overruling Providence, secretly controlling the designs of wicked men, and directing a variety of critical junctures in human affairs, apparently independent of each other, to cooperate wonderfully in the formation of one great crisis, that should be favourable to the establishment of pure religion in Germany.

As an instrument of promoting the German Reformation, Martin Luther was of immense importance: accordingly, his life seems to have been under the Divine protection in a peculiar manner. It is true the public faith was pledged for his security in returning home; but the operation of his SAFE-CONDUCT was to terminate in twenty-one days: also his adversaries at Worms were meditating a bloody edict against him; and in a very short time, therefore, it was expected that all their violence, malice, and revenge, would be supported with the strong arm of the secular power.

The elector of Saxony foresaw the

* Paul Sarpi, and Seckend.

* Page 308 of this Vol.

rising storm; and finding it impossible to protect his subject in the open manner

Luther protected by the Elector of Saxony.

that he had hitherto done, he contrived a plan of concealing him for a season, from the fury of all his enemies. Luther did not much relish the scheme; and would rather have met the difficulty and danger in an open way, and trusted the event to God: but as it originated in Frederic's kindness, he thought it only a becoming respect to his prince to acquiesce in his advice. The secret was revealed to him by Spalatinus on the evening before he left Worms. Three or four horsemen, in whom Frederic could confide, disguised themselves in masks, and contrived to meet the persecuted monk near Eisenach, on his return home. They played

He is concealed in the castle of Wartburg.

their part well. They rushed out of a wood, secured Luther as it were by force, and carried him into the castle of Wartburg.* This business was managed with so much address and fidelity, that he was completely secured from the effects of the impending prosecution; his implacable adversaries missed their blow, and became doubly odious to the Germans, who, as they were unacquainted with the wise precaution of Frederic, imagined their favourite countryman was either imprisoned or perhaps murdered by Roman emissaries. It has however been conjectured, and on no improbable grounds, that the whole transaction respecting Luther's concealment, was planned and executed with the knowledge, and even the approbation of his Imperial Majesty.

Though Charles V. to serve his political purposes† by gaining the friendship of Leo X. seems to have had no scruples in sacrificing Luther to the vengeance of that enraged pontiff and his cardinals, he had yet the precaution not to push matters to extremities against the heretic, till he had first secured an important vote‡ of the Diet in his own favour, and against the interests of his grand rival Francis I. Even his Italian encomiasts allow, that the German princes would probably have

resisted the emperor's wishes, respecting the measure just mentioned, if he had previously exercised any severity towards the intrepid defender of their religious liberties. On the other hand, the papal ministers, who did not comprehend the secret reason of the delay of the formalities of Luther's condemnation, became excessively uneasy, lest, after all, they should be disappointed of that complete victory which they had supposed themselves to have actually gained over the Reformer and the infant Reformation. Moreover, the heretic had been suffered to depart under the protection of a safe-conduct; and the emperor, after having settled the most material civil affairs, had now dismissed the members of the Diet with a gracious speech.

Besides these, there were also other circumstances which had contributed to put Aleander, in particular, very much out of humour. Luther had been treated, he thought, with too much respect and kindness throughout. The dignity and authority of the Roman pontiff, whose cause the nuncio was bound to plead, had not been sufficiently supported: and the archbishop of Treves had used by far too much entreaty and submission in the course of the private conferences. All this had only served to increase the confidence, the audacity, and the obstinacy of the heretic, while it had weakened in a very great degree the supremacy of the Apostolic jurisdiction.

To pacify this offended legate, Charles V. employed him to draw up the final sentence against Luther, usually called the Edict of Worms. In the meantime, under the pretence of having

Edict of Worms, drawn up by Aleander.

certain questions of lesser importance to propose, he requested the members of the Diet to remain in the city three or four days longer.—These dark manœuvres succeeded.—The bulk of the Italian and Spanish nobles remained on the spot, while many of the German princes and electors went away, among whom were Frederic of Saxony and the elector Palatine.* The latter of these, when he heard of the publication of the severe sentence, declared with indignation that the thing was done without his knowledge.

The edict, as might be expected, was penned by Aleander with all possible

* May 3.

† See p. 290, of this vol., for the political motives of the emperor.

‡ A vote for raising 24,000 German soldiers, in case the king of France should molest the emperor. Pallav.

* Com. de Luth. XCVII.

rancour and malice. The first part of it states, that it is the duty of the emperor to protect religion and extinguish heresies. The second part relates the pains that had been taken to bring back the heretic to repentance. And the third proceeds to the condemnation of Martin Luther in the strongest terms. The emperor says, that by the advice of the electors, princes, orders, and states of the empire, he had resolved to execute the sentence of the pope, who was the proper guardian of the catholic faith. He declares, that Luther must be looked on as excommunicated, and as a notorious heretic; and he forbids all persons, under the penalty of high treason, to receive, maintain, or protect him. He orders, that after the twenty-one days allowed him, he should be proceeded against in whatever place he might be; or at least that he should be seized and kept prisoner till the pleasure of his Imperial Majesty was known. He directs the same punishments to be inflicted on all his adherents or favourers; and that all their goods should be confiscated, unless they can prove that they have left his party, and received absolution. He forbids all persons to print, sell, buy, or read, any of his books, and he enjoins the princes and magistrates to cause them to be burnt.*

Aleander introduces into this composition the most acrimonious personal invectives he could invent. He represents Luther not as a man, but a devil in the shape of a man, who had put on the habit of a monk for the express purpose of ruining mankind; and who had revived, collected together, and digested into one vile mass, numbers of heresies condemned long ago; and had also added new ones of his own invention. His preaching about faith was all a pretence, and a contrivance to cover his deceits. He was in reality a subverter of the true faith. Instead of bringing men into the liberty of the Gospel, as he promised to do, he put them under the devil's yoke; and, under the specious name of an evangelical profession, he destroyed the peace and charity of the Gospel, inverted the order of everything, and demolished the beautiful fabric of the whole church.

Du Pin was so ashamed of these flows in Aleander's rhetoric, that he has

entirely suppressed them in his account of these transactions.

But the grand papal advocate* boasts that this edict expressed the sentiments of the universal nobility and senate of Germany. He tells us, that when it was read to the electors and princes for their approbation, there was not a single dissentient.—There are, however, two circumstances, mentioned incidentally by this author, which alone would lead a careful reader to suspect the accuracy of this representation: 1. He says, that after the emperor had dissolved the Diet, he held the subsequent meetings, NOT IN THE HALL, where the assembly had usually met, but in HIS OWN apartments. 2. He also says, the edict was voted on the twenty-fifth of May, and "signed by the emperor on the morning of the twenty-sixth, but that it was dated MAY THE EIGHTH." A full Diet could not conveniently, perhaps not possibly, have assembled at the emperor's apartments: but the antedating of the edict of Luther's condemnation would, when that instrument came to be published, naturally induce a belief, that it was the general sense of ALL the members, taken before their dissolution. The reader will probably have anticipated these obvious inferences, and may be inclined to feel some surprise that they did not force themselves on the attention of so able a writer as Pallavicini.—This instance, among many others, shows how difficult it is for a prejudiced historian to be always on his guard: for, in whatsoever degree he may excel in the arts of misrepresentation and concealment, he will frequently fail to smother the truth effectually, provided his narrative is but full and circumstantial.

A BRIEF VIEW OF THE LEADING CHARACTERS WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE DIET OF WORMS.

I. The Duke George of Saxony.—

How very different were the motives which influenced the principal actors in these interesting scenes at Worms!—There wanted not some, who, though zealously devoted to the popedom, insisted strenuously on the necessity of a general reformation of the Church. But as they confined their views chiefly to discipline or external morals, and continued to build on the foundation of the

* Pallavicini.—Du Pin.—Gerdes II.—Goldast. Stat. Imp. I. 5. & II. 143.

* Pallav.

self-righteous system, their schemes proved totally abortive. Among these the Duke George of Saxony* distin-

* The judicious student of ecclesiastical history will observe, that I constantly endeavour to draw my proofs from the most unexceptionable sources. For example: To prove the corrupt state of the clergy, and the abominable practices of the Roman See, I would produce the evidence of George of Saxony, a most bigoted papist, whom the Roman Catholics always reckon among the most sincere and most active of the holy defenders of their religion. Now, as with them, the assertions of Luther and the other reformers go for nothing but exaggerations, misrepresentations, or direct falsehoods, let them listen at least to this duke, their steady friend and advocate, who generally, in religious concerns, opposed his relation the elector of Saxony, and who also entirely approved of Luther's condemnation at Worms. This George of Saxony exhibited to the Diet TWELVE HEADS of the grievances which called loudly for reform. Two of these are briefly as follows: 1. INDULGENCES, which ought to be obtained by prayers, fastings, benevolence towards our neighbour, and other good works are sold for money. Their value is extolled beyond all decency. The sole object is to gain a deal of money. Hence the preachers, who are bound to set forth truth, teach men nothing but lies and frauds. They are not only suffered to go on thus, but are well paid for their fraudulent harangues. The reason is, the more conviction they can produce among their hearers, the more money flows into the chest. Rivers of scandalous proceedings arise from this corrupt fountain. The officials of the bishops are equally attentive to scrape money together. They vex the poor with their censures for great crimes, as whoredom, adultery, blasphemy; but they spare the rich. The clergy commit the very same crimes, and nobody censures them. Faults which ought to be expiated by prayers and fastings are atoned for by money, in order that the officials may pay large sums to their respective bishops, and retain a portion of the gain for themselves. Neither when a mulct is inflicted, is it done in a way to stop the commission of the same fault in future, but rather so that the delinquent understands he may soon do that very thing again, provided he be but ready to pay. Hence all the sacraments are sold for money; and where that is not to be had, they are absolutely neglected.—2. Another distinct head of the grievances produced by this zealous duke was expressed thus: The scandalous conduct of the clergy is a very fruitful source of the

guished himself. Of this singular character it must be allowed, that he had a zeal for God, though not according to knowledge. In a religious light, he appears to have been the very image of St. Paul before his conversion; to have united a laudable desire of defending establishments and promoting decency of manners, with the most intolerant spirit of bigotry, and the fiercest barbarity of persecution.

2. Aleander, and the leading ecclesiastics.—

The more we scrutinize the conduct of the leading ecclesiastics in general, and especially of the pontiff's legate, Aleander, the more thoroughly must we disapprove the principles which governed them in the affair of Luther. The honour of God, the propagation of the pure Gospel of Christ, the instruction of the poor and illiterate, and a tender sense of the value of immortal souls, all these things seem to have been purposely excluded from their very thoughts. Then how little regard did these same men pay to the Holy Scriptures! How often did Luther desire them to reason with him on that ground, and to inform his understanding better! solemnly declaring, that if they could prove his doctrines erroneous, he would instantly renounce them. No return was made to all his patient and fervent remonstrances, except a despotical order, conveyed in the most insulting language, namely, "That he must recant and submit." They had hoped by the recent publication of the pope's bull, and by the emperor's mandate for seizing his books, to terrify him, so that he should not venture to appear at Worms; and when this plan had failed, they saw no way left, but to say as little as possible, and proceed, as soon as they could, to crush the Saxon hero by a damnatory edict. This they called standing up for the holy church and dignity of the sovereign pontiff. Nobody is surprised that so sensual and debauched a character as Aleander, who aimed at nothing but his

destruction of poor souls. There must be an universal reformation; and this cannot be better effected than by a general council. It is therefore the most earnest wish of us all; that such a measure be adopted.*

* Arel. Vin.

own aggrandizement and the gratification of his passions, should have left no stone unturned to please his great master at Rome, upon whom his promotion depended; but it is a deplorable consideration to view the bulk of the clergy of those times concurring in and supporting the corrupt, systematic plans of such a pope as Leo X. and such a nuncio as Aleander,—whether they did so from a blind bigotry, a profound ignorance, or an exorbitant ambition.

3. The Emperor Charles V.

We have already assigned the probable reasons which determined this prince to take so decided a part against Luther and his friends. The succeeding events justify the accounts we have given. The whole history of Charles shows, that, to accomplish his projects, he made a conscience of nothing. Hence the bloody wars which he waged under religious pretences. At Worms his great object was to keep two sets of men, who thoroughly disliked each other, in good humour with himself, and to make them concur in supporting his political views. These, on the one hand, were the pope's ministers, with many Spanish and Italian noblemen; and on the other, the elector of Saxony and the rest of the German princes. In the beginning of the negotiations of the Diet, Charles is said to have exhibited some symptoms of a disposition towards a reform of the ecclesiastical discipline; a political artifice, which had the intended effect. The papal* party were alarmed, and considered their CRAFT as in danger.† Chievres also, the emperor's favourite and minister, let fall an expression which increased their anxiety, and convinced them how absolutely necessary it was now become, that a good understanding, and even friendship, should subsist between the Roman pontiff and his Imperial Majesty. The downfall of heresy, and the protection of the hierarchy, perhaps its very existence, depended upon it. Chievres had hinted, "that the emperor's conduct towards the pope would be regulated by the pope's conduct towards the emperor, and particularly by his assisting or not assisting Charles's grand rival, Francis, the king of France." We are told that Aleander was highly offended with this

speech,* as disrespectful to the sovereign dignity and authority of the pontiff. The advisers of Leo, however, thought proper to dissemble the affront; and Charles received a most gracious diploma from his holiness, expressed in the strongest terms of cordiality and satisfaction. The pope even condescended to thank him for having commenced at Worms the consideration of the important ecclesiastical concerns, and entreated him to finish the business which he had so properly undertaken.

The price which purchased these pontifical smiles was the harsh treatment of Luther, and the various measures preparatory to his condemnation. For the purpose of still further soothing Leo X. and fixing him in the emperor's interests, the final damnatory sentence was passed in the terms of that edict which was obtained in the manner above related; an edict which, when all the circumstances connected with it are considered, casts an indelible stain on the memory of Charles V. and which, for its irregularity, injustice, and cruelty, was highly disapproved, even at the time of its promulgation, by dispassionate persons of all descriptions.

4. The German electors and princes.

The clergy, on account of their avarice, ambition, and profligate manners, were in general, throughout Germany, become exceedingly odious and contemptible. The ecclesiastical dignitaries daily offended THE GERMAN ELECTORS AND PRINCES by their excessive insolence; and the court of Rome vexed both them and their subjects by the most intolerable exactions and tyrannical oppressions. There must, therefore, have been present at Worms, many members of the Diet, who, as they could vouch for the truth of Luther's accusations, would be inclined to go great lengths in supporting him in his spirited attacks on the hierarchy, and in his manly zeal for the reformation of abuses. Add to this, the learning, the good morals, and the acknowledged disinterestedness of the Augustine monk, would dispose not a few of these same members to believe him right also in his doctrinal sentiments; their eyes were half opened to the bigotry and superstition of the established system; and their minds could not fail to be much impress-

* Comment. de Luth. p. 146.

† Acts xix. 27.

* Pallav.

ed with the reasonableness of Luther's constant appeal to the Scriptures. But not to dissemble the truth, it by no means appears that the pure Gospel of Christ had as yet either fully reached their understanding, or deeply laid hold of their affections. The Gospel, considered as a practical thing, had made progress chiefly among the lower and middle orders of the Germans. Luther, it is to be feared, could reckon at the Diet of Worms a very small number of those who had learnt to "count all things but dross and dung to win Christ." He was embarked in a storm of immense violence; and only those who made a conscience of godliness would voluntarily partake in the danger; the rest would rather stand aloof, watch the effects of the tempest, and wait for its termination. Thus, this hero of protestantism, viewed as a bold assertor of the rational liberties of mankind, had the zealous concurrence of most of his countrymen; whilst, as a spiritual man, displaying a spiritual understanding and spiritual desires, and defending the simplicity of the faith of Christ, like one of his Master's little flock, he stood almost alone in the august and numerous assembly of Worms.

5. The Elector Frederic the Wise.

In this review of the component parts of the Diet, we must not omit this excellent prince, who showed himself so blessed an exception to the predominant character of the members of that assembly. We need not repeat the observations which we have frequently made concerning the disposition of Frederic. It may be sufficient to say, that, as far as appears, he had a greater insight into true Christian doctrine than any of the princes, and far excelled them all, both in pious regard to the Scriptures, and in an exquisite tenderness of conscience. Throughout all the scenes of Roman intrigue and perfidy, in the affairs at Worms, the conduct of the elector of Saxony displays a consistent firmness and a decorous dignity. He was not present in the Diet on the day when Aleander made his celebrated speech against Luther; and the papal historians say, that he pretended to be very ill. It is very possible he might have been so disgusted with what he knew of Aleander's proceedings, as to judge him unworthy of a hearing; but the more probable supposition is, that his absence was owing to real ill health. He

is well known to have left Worms in an extremely debilitated state of body on May the twenty-third.* A few days after, in a letter to his brother John, written during his journey, he says, he is so weak that he is obliged to be carried in a litter; and intimates, that, in regard to Luther, he knows nothing for certain respecting the ultimate resolutions of the emperor and such members of the Diet as remained at Worms.† Thus the integrity and the plain dealing of this prince are established by every document, even of the most private nature, which has come to light. He encountered the crafty schemes of the pope's advocates, as long as he could, by a direct appeal to common sense and the justice of the case; and when this method failed, he appears to have been concerned in no secret but one, namely, the concealment of the person of Luther; a secret this, as honourable to the conscientious and humane feelings of the elector, as the imperial edict was in the highest degree disgraceful to every individual who promoted its promulgation. If Charles V. connived at the contrivance for protecting Luther, or even actually agreed to that prudent measure, this consideration will go but a very little way towards justifying him from the foul charge of having put the life of our excellent Reformer into the most imminent peril: and, moreover, the thinking reader will, after all, be disposed to ascribe that lenity rather to the emperor's fears of offending the German nobility, than to any disquieting qualms of conscience which may be supposed to have harassed his mind on the reflection of having consented to so iniquitous and bloody a scene.

6. Martin Luther.—

There was nothing in the transactions at Worms, which more astonished all persons of serious reflection, than that this Augustine monk should have been enabled to acquit himself with so much decorum and propriety in a scene, for which, by his natural temper and habits of life, he seemed entirely unqualified. A circumstance truly marvellous! A mouth and wisdom were given him, which all his adversaries were not able to resist. "Such honour have all his saints." From this time the cause of

* Arch. Vin.

† Comment de Luth. 158.

God became more respectable in Europe. Take notice, however, that while others were admiring the talents, the intrepidity, and the Christian graces, exhibited by Luther in this contest, he himself alone was dissatisfied with the exertions he had made. He thought he had not sufficiently honoured his Redeemer. "I have great misgivings," says he, in a letter to Spalatinus some months after, "and am greatly troubled in conscience, because, in compliance with your advice, and that of some other friends, I restrained my spirit at Worms, and did not conduct myself like an Elijah, in attacking those idols. Were I ever to stand before that audience again, they should hear very different language from me." In another letter he expresses his dissatisfaction thus: "To please certain friends, and that I might not appear unreasonably obstinate, I did not speak out at the Diet of Worms; I did not withstand the tyrants with that decided firmness and animation which became a confessor of the Gospel! Moreover, I am quite weary of hearing myself commended for the moderation which I showed on that occasion."* Here we observe a humility of spirit unknown to men of the world. The truly godly, and they only, discern such an admixture of sin, even in their best performances, and are so quicksighted in the detection of their own internal evils, that in the very moments while the praises of their extraordinary virtues are resounding from all quarters, they themselves often find little to commend; often they see much to blame, and are heartily ashamed; and so far from glorying in anything they have done, they have every recourse to the cross of Christ, as the only sure relief to their burdened consciences.

The court of Rome and their advocates had vainly hoped, by the rigorous edict of Worms, to crush at once the infant Reformation. But the effects

Effects of
the Edict of
Worms.

produced by it were very inconsiderable. Several reasons are to be assigned for this failure; the first and chief of which, as is observed by the pious Seckendorf, should always be reckoned the good provisions of Almighty God. Among the subordinate causes, we may enumerate

both the disposition and the occupations of the emperor. He could not be sincerely zealous for the execution of a sanguinary and unjust decree, which was obtained by artifice and management, and was much disliked by most of his German subjects. Then he was obliged, after the close of the Diet, to return into Spain, to quiet the civil commotions with which that kingdom was convulsed. The absence of the emperor, during the critical season of the first impressions made on men's minds by the edict, had considerable influence in preventing its execution; and there can be no doubt, but his various distractions also, on account of the wars in Italy and the Low Countries, must have had the like effect. The papal historians represent it as a most unfortunate circumstance, that the legal administration of the government, as soon as Charles had left Germany, devolved of right upon the elector of Saxony, and the elector of Saxony, and the elector Palatine. Hence it was, they tell us, that the Lutherans triumphed in Saxony; and were allowed to go on in their own way in most other parts of Germany. Some of the princes and magistrates absolutely refused to execute the edict, and others took no notice of it. At Rome there was almost an end of the rejoicings on the supposed extinction of heresy, when the good catholics heard that the disciples of the Saxon theologian were become, in their language, writings, and actions, more insolent and rebellious than ever.* Alexander received most explicit orders from the cardinal Julius de Medicis to complain of these things to the emperor while he remained in Belgium, and to represent to him, in the strongest manner,—“That if, almost in his own presence, and before the ink, with which his Imperial Majesty had signed the edict, was dry, the Lutherans had dared to treat so solemn a decree with contempt, what was to be expected from them when the first alarm had subsided, and the emperor was employed in his remote dominions? In fact, from this celebrated edict of Charles V. and of the whole German empire, no advantage would arise, except that an audacious sect of innovators would have to boast, that they had rendered ridiculous both

* Epist. tom. II.

* Pallav. II. I.—Maimbourg, 44.—Dupin, c. XII.

his Imperial Majesty, and the Roman pontiff.”*

There is much truth in this representation, provided due allowance be made for the prejudices of the writers devoted to the popedom. Certainly the pope became truly ridiculous; but in regard to the emperor, whose conduct was equally reprehensible and more inconsistent, we must allow, I fear, that an enterprising prince extending his dominions, and surrounded with the splendour of great transactions, will always, according to the maxims of the present world, be sufficiently protected from the imputation of ridicule. The adversaries of protestantism, in their representation of the ecclesiastical differences of these times, never advert to that illumination of the understanding in religious concerns which every day was powerfully influencing the conduct of the Germans. The existing hierarchy, though a compound system of despotism, corruption, and superstition, they consider as perfect in principle, and infallible in operation; and any doubt of its authority, or disobedience to its commands, or deviation from its example, they deprecate as a rebellious attempt to alter what is deemed already complete, and sanctioned by the Divine appointment. And because, in the early opposition to the reigning evils, some excesses or irregularities broke out among the people,—which indeed is always almost sure to happen during the effervescence of an incipient reformation,—instead of ascribing these things to the vices of men, and the imperfection of human nature, or to the dexterous snares and frauds of Satan, they constantly treat them as the genuine offspring of the principles of the Reformers.—Thus do they at first voluntarily shut their eyes to that flood of pure scriptural light which spread itself through Germany; and thus afterwards, by partial and prejudiced views, do they confirm themselves in their deplorable state of darkness and ignorance. In our times it is not necessary, for the security of the protestant faith, to say much concerning either the delusions or the delusive arts of the papal writers; but it is VERY NECESSARY, that the student of ecclesiastical history should be well guarded against BOTH, during his researches into the grounds and reasons of protestantism. Yet, after all, the best

guard will ever be,—an accurate, circumstantial knowledge of the leading characters and transactions, which were concerned in the recovery and establishment of religious doctrine and religious liberty. It is a strong conviction of this sort which has induced the historian of the Church of Christ to employ so much of his reader’s attention in a thorough investigation of the principles and motives of the great Saxon theologian. In many other parts of the sequel of this work, he may, consistently with his plan, be extremely concise; but in this part, which should exhibit the causes of the rise and progress of nascent Lutheranism, he finds himself involved in a mass of materials, hitherto indeed totally indigested in any language, yet at the same time so interesting, so instructive, and so precious, that his great difficulty is to condense and communicate, within moderate limits, the substance of the inestimable information they contain.

To conclude this long chapter: Be it then ever remembered with humble gratitude, that by the blessings of God, and chiefly through the instrumentality of Martin Luther, it was the revival and the display of Gospel LIGHT and TRUTH, which brought about that blessed change in Germany, and afterwards in other parts of Europe, which the papal advocates to this day denominate sedition, heresy, and innovation. While the advocates of papal despotism were endeavouring at Worms to take away the life of the intrepid Reformer, his books, which had been dispersed in abundance among the distant nations, and translated into various languages, were producing the most surprising and happy effects. Not only in Saxony, but in Denmark, Bohemia, Pomerania, and the towns situated on the Rhine, there were found intelligent expounders of the word of God in simplicity, and faithful preachers of the glad tidings of salvation.

—At Strasburg, Matthias Cellius defended the principles of Luther with great spirit and freedom. In his Apology, published in 1523, he had the courage to declare, That the example of all Germany was in his favour; and that, notwithstanding the edict of Worms, there was not a city, or town, or monastery, or university, or even a house or family, in which there were not

Importance of this part of the history.

Matthias Cellius defends Lutheranism at Strasburg, A. D. 1523.

* Pallav.

some of Luther's followers.* Even in many cities of Belgium, where the greatest severities were used to extirpate the new sect,† the pure doctrine of the Gospel maintained its ground against all the powers of darkness. This was a glorious season. The Spirit of God was at work with many hearts; and to those pious souls who, amidst the thick clouds of superstition and ignorance, were sincerely intending to serve God, the light of the DIVINE WORD must have been an un-

* Com. de. Luth. c. x.

† The reader may remember, that in a complimentary letter of Erasmus to Luther (page 244), the Prior of the monastery at Antwerp is highly commended, as being "almost the only one who preached Jesus Christ." He had been formerly one of Luther's scholars. The name of this man was James Spreng. He appears to have preached evangelically on Luther's plan for more than two years; when he was dragged to Brussels, there underwent much persecution; and, at last, through fear of the flames,

Recantation of Jas. Spreng, Feb. 1522.

made a public recantation, in the presence of Alexander, who was called the Apostolic commissioner. His recantation was published at Leipsic, and remains a memorable testimony both of papal cruelty and papal corruption of doctrine. The poor wretch, to save his life, was induced to abjure thirty of Luther's propositions; among which are the following:—1. Every action of the best men has the nature of sin, and needs the pardoning mercy of God. 2. Every action also proceeding from the human will needs the same pardoning mercy. 3. A partial sorrowing for sins is blameable.—Not content with this, his persecutors compelled him to pronounce his belief in what they called the doctrine of the holy catholic church,—thus: I believe that the works of holy men are free from sin, and therefore meritorious to the obtaining of eternal life. And I also believe that there are some works of man's free-will, which are faultless, meritorious towards eternal life, and need no pardoning mercy.—"I hope, however," says Seckendorf, "there are many Roman catholics who will deem these horrid doctrines unworthy of the name of Christian."—This same Jas. Spreng, being dismissed upon his recantation, began again to preach true Christianity in Flanders, and was again imprisoned at Brussels. He escaped by the assistance of a friend; published the account of his persecutions; deplored his former weakness and fall; and was afterwards, during many years, a preacher of the Gospel at Bremen in Lower Saxony.—Seult,

speakable consolation. The operation of this heavenly light is always to be considered as two-fold; first, as it respects the individual, and secondly, communities. Through "joy and peace in believing,"* it gives ease to the burdened conscience of the individual; it dispels all his slavish fears; and puts his mind in possession of the kingdom of God.† Then in regard to such countries or communities as are truly blessed with its salutary influence, it never fails to diffuse over them a rational spirit of mutual charity, in every view directly opposite to the oppressive, domineering principles of papal superstition and papal tyranny.—Here then we are supplied with infallible rules for self-examination; and well would it be, if both individuals and nations, who profess themselves to be Christian, were accustomed to try their own conduct and condition by such tests as could not deceive them.—"By their fruits ye shall know them."‡

CHAPTER VII.

FROM THE CONCLUSION OF THE DIET OF WORMS TO THE DEATH OF LEO X.

LUTHER'S PATMOS.

HIS EMPLOYMENTS.

HE IS CENSURED BY THE PARISIAN DIVINES.

..... BY KING HENRY VIII.

THE DEATH OF LEO X.

THE followers of Luther were much disheartened by the sudden disappearance of their leader. Various reports were circulated concerning him, and they knew not what to believe. Not only an anxious solicitude for the safety of his person invaded the minds of all who, throughout Germany, feared God, but at the same time a distressing apprehension of losing such an instructor in so early a period of his labours produced the most melancholy and inauspicious forebodings. The alarms, on this occasion, and the affectionate feelings of good people who were already in possession of a degree of evangelical light, and were in the way to obtain more, are well described

* Rom. xv.

† Luke xvii. 21.

‡ Matt. vii. 20.

by Nic. Gerbelius of Strasburg, in a letter, dated May the twenty-sixth, which was addressed and sent to Luther himself, but under the greatest uncertainty of finding him.

“Nothing can possibly be more obscure and contradictory than the various rumours which we receive concerning you. The report every where prevalent and the least changeable is, that assassins laid wait for you in ambush, seized, and murdered you. On the other hand, some say you are returned SAFE to Wilttemberg. Which is the truth we are entirely in doubt. However, all learned and good men, without exception, earnestly wish the latter account may be confirmed. You cannot believe how your adversaries exult and triumph in the hope of the former proving true. What madness, what ignorance is this! that men should not see what a train of evils, what torrents of human blood, must be the probable consequence of the massacre of Luther!—As for us, who aspire after Christian liberty and the salvation of our souls, and have known you to be a teacher of the true faith as it is in Jesus, we are afflicted in different ways and degrees; but, in general, it is impossible for me to make you comprehend how extremely anxious we are for your personal safety. It is not that we envy you the glory of being dead to this world, and of enjoying the kingdom of heaven, for the sake of which you have, with incredible firmness and magnanimity, proved yourself superior to the troubles and persecutions of the present time; but because you appear to us to have been the man, who, with a very few others, have rightly expounded the Gospel of Christ; and because we had entertained a well-grounded hope, that under your guidance, there might have been a restoration of all those good things, which have been long lost by the wickedness or indolence of our forefathers.—Wherefore, my very learned Luther, if you have any regard for me, and the rest, who are so anxious about you, and that Divine Gospel, which you have preached with many labours, dangers, and solitudes, I entreat you to let us know,—whether you are alive,—whether you are at liberty, or whether you have it no longer in your power to write and instruct us;—in short, in what circumstances you now are. It is said, that all persons who are proscribed who shall

dare to read your books, or profess to believe that you teach the truth.”*

Luther at first found his confinement to be a great matter of patience; and it was not without difficulty that he was brought to endure it with resignation. His health suffered considerably from the ^{Luther's} Patmos. change in his manner of living. The more rich and plentiful diet, which, as he had afterwards reason to believe, was supplied at the elector's expense, did not well agree with the constitution and temperament of a man who had long been accustomed to the labours and abstinence of the monastery. He complains, that his body was afflicted with the most obstinate and alarming constitutions, while his mind grew feeble and unable to resist temptations. He says, he became languid and almost lifeless in private prayer, and was addicted to too much eating and drinking, and to lazy practices. Such is the harsh sentence which this extraordinary man was inclined to pass upon himself. It is the peculiar character of a real servant of God to see his own faults in a strong light, and rarely to speak in mitigation of them. We must learn, however, to correct the impression which this account is calculated to make, by advertising to the positive evidence of his adversaries, to the well-known productions of his pen during his residence in the castle of Wartburg, and, lastly, to the inferences which we cannot but draw,—though indirectly,—from his repeated expressions of paternal care and affectionate concern for the condition of the church.

The Papists never charge Luther with indolence. On the contrary, they allow that in his solitude, which after the name of that island to which the apostle John was banished, he frequently called HIS PATMOS, he laboured with indefatigable industry, published many new books, confirmed his disciples in their attachment to him, defended his old heresies, and daily invented new ones.†

This account, in the language of protestantism, would be expressed somewhat differently; namely, that no man ever adhered more steadily than Luther to the leading principle of the Reformation, “Articles of faith are to be founded

* Seck. 161. † Maimbourg, Sect. 15.

only on the revealed will of God ;” that in his confinement he preserved a strong sense of the value of time; and that a profound veneration for the holy Scriptures, with an abhorrence of every species of priestcraft, constantly directed his judgment, invigorated his resolutions, and supported him in his almost incredible labours and trials.

A little book concerning the abuses of PRIVATE CONFESSIONS was one of his productions in the castle. As it was composed in the German language, and would

be read by many, it must have been highly offensive to the ecclesiastics in general.

“My design in this book,” says Luther, “was not to put an end to private confessions, but to render the practice of it USEFUL. There was no doing of this, without laying open some of those inconveniences which arise from a bad way of managing it. I touched on these things as delicately as possible; and yet my adversaries were up in arms against me on this account; not considering, that the whole world is full of stories respecting the scandalous things which take place under the pretence of secret confession; neither do they seem aware, how many facts connected with this subject I have passed over from a principle of Christian decency, lest the very mention of them should contaminate the reader’s mind. It is too true, that many of the monks urge the people to confess, not from a regard to piety, but for the purpose of enriching themselves. They live in the houses of the opulent, and acquire an ascendant over them by becoming acquainted with their secrets: they contrive to be with them when they are dying; and insinuate themselves into their last wills. Let men only consider what a source of evils, what a snare to consciences, the common practice of confessing has been, and they will not be surprised that I should have ventured to suggest certain amendments in this matter.” On the whole, it was the wish of this sound divine, that the church discipline respecting Confession might be regulated by the eighteenth of Matthew, verses 15—20; convinced as he was, that the Roman catholic mode tended neither to increase the faith nor amend the lives of the people, but rather to instil into their minds a persuasion, that by a private confession of sin, and a consequent submission to penances, or to

other injunctions of the clergy, the greatest crimes might be expiated, though the commission of them were ever so frequent or ever so notorious. How very different is all this from a true penitential sorrowing and humiliation for sin, and a comfortable expectation of pardon, founded on the faithful promises of Jesus Christ!

The Augustine friars at Wittemberg were among the first who dared openly to abolish the popish mode of celebrating PRIVATE MASSES. Luther received this news in his castle with great satisfaction, both as it demonstrated the zeal of his brethren who were embarked in the same cause, and as it exhibited a very pleasing and important effect of his own labours. More than a year had now elapsed since he had published his tract on the Babylonish captivity, in which he exposes the unscriptural doctrine of the Romish mass. He now resumed the subject, and with great precision and copiousness went through all that his adversaries could advance in favour of their absurd and unscriptural notions on this article of faith. This performance is intitled, A Treatise concerning the Abrogation of Private Masses; and is sufficiently long and laboured; but, happily, in our age it is quite superfluous to spend time in convincing Protestants, that the true scriptural idea of the Lord’s Supper is not a real sacrifice under the appearance of bread and wine, but a thankful commemoration of the GREAT OB-LATION once offered; not a repetition of sacred offerings, which have any intrinsic value in them for the expiation of sin, but a participation of the consecrated elements in obedience to the command of our dying Saviour. Luther took immense pains to place these points in what he conceived to be their true light; and his efforts were crowned with MUCH SUCCESS.*

It was not till after much doubt and consideration that Luther became fully convinced of the lawfulness of the marriage of all the clergy.—The case of the monks created the greatest difficulty to his mind, because they had voluntarily devoted themselves to a perpetual celibacy; whereas the rest of the clergy

* But not complete success. We shall afterwards have occasion to advert to his mistakes concerning the Eucharist.

were prohibited marriage only by unlawful ecclesiastical ordinances. In his *Patmos*, however, he wrote on these subjects with that fixed determination, which had been the result of much impartial inquiry and patient thinking.

On monastic vows. The book on MONASTIC VOWS is dedicated, in the most affectionate terms, to the author's father, who had formerly resisted his son's desires to withdraw from the world and enter a convent.* It may be sufficient to say of this work, that it is copious, instructive, and admirably adapted to the time in which it was published. As it exposes the evils of monastic promises and engagements, with various other abuses of popery connected with them, it necessarily gave great offence to a corrupt hierarchy, which daily found its authority to lessen, in proportion as the wicked devices that supported it were better understood, and more generally detested.—The Papists, as might be expected, clamoured against the Reformer's novel doctrines, and represented them as favourable to a life of ease, indulgence, and sensuality. "Priests might marry, monks might leave their cloisters, and the people no longer be afraid of the penal laws of the church."† On the contrary, Luther, in arguing with his adversaries, was never content to stand merely on the defensive. He constantly maintained, that the primary objects of papistical solicitude and contention was neither an evangelical purity of faith or practice, but rather the efficacy of certain external performances, as fastings, confessions, penances, and masses, contrived for the express purpose of affording false peace to burdened consciences, and keeping out of sight the atoning blood of Jesus, and the scriptural method of justification by faith alone, with the renovation of our fallen nature through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

James Latomus, a divine of Louvain, in a printed defence of the censures which the ecclesiastical faculty of that city passed upon Luther's writings,‡ had opposed the Reformer's views of the doctrines of grace and faith, and charged him with maintaining seditious and heretical opinions. There presently issued from the castle of Wartburg a most spi-

rited CONFUTATION OF THIS DEFENCE; "a confutation," says Seckendorf, "replete with so much solid learning and sound divinity, that it was impossible to reply to it without being guilty of obvious cavilling or downright impiety. This little book," continues he, "shines among the contemporary publications like the moon among the stars; and I will venture to assert, that if the author of it had never published anything else in his whole life, he would, on account of this single tract, deserve to be compared to the greatest divines which ever existed in the Church. At the time of writing it, he was furnished with no other book but the Bible; and yet he interprets the leading passages of the prophets and the apostles, and does away the deceitful glosses of sophistical commentators with so much exquisite erudition and ability, that the genuine meaning of the inspired writers cannot but be clear to every pious and attentive reader."—Though all this is true in the strictest sense, yet, as Luther's ideas of the doctrine of salvation by grace have already been explained at large, long quotations from this incomparable treatise are less necessary: and I shall rather choose to select a few short passages, that may serve to show the SPIRIT which this eminent servant of God preserved in his solitude, and during a persecution which so very much endangered his life.

Luther's reply to Latomus is dedicated to Justus Jonas, who had been recently appointed to the presidency of the college of Wittenberg. "As I wish to congratulate you on your new situation, and have not the opportunity of doing it in person, have the goodness to accept this proof of my disposition towards you; and beseech the Lord for me, that I may be delivered from wicked and unfaithful men, and that a door may be opened to me, for the praise of the merciful gospel of his Son.

"I suppose you have seen Latomus's defence of the Louvain divines, and how the man glories in his master the pope and his bull. My observations on his performance will, I hope, prove this at least,—That if Latomus's arguments had been published in due time, and those wise divines had weighed them, as they ought to have done, before they decided on my case, they would neither have condemned my books nor have burnt them. It is an easy thing, during Lu-

* See Appendix, Luther.

† Du Pin. ‡ Pag. 418.

ther's absence, to prate privately in remote corners, and to say,—‘this is wrong; and that is heretical,’—when these very persons would not have ventured even to touch on subjects of this kind in public.

‘I am convinced this ADMIRABLE DEFENCE would never have seen the light, had it not been for the pope’s bull, that has puffed up the author with a confidence which makes him boast that what he has done is highly approved.* The man still dreams of the horrors which formerly used to be raised by the papal thunders, and supposes that the world will be frightened by his little publication. Hence it is, that, in his attacks on Luther, he dares to trifle in this manner with the tremendous declarations of the word of God. For my part, I can have no wish, but that such conduct should be approved by such a bull. Again, I should be even sorry, if I were not condemned by such a bull. This whole business is in perfect harmony; the bull, the cause, the judge, the advocate;—from whose society, and its contagion, may the Lord Jesus preserve me and every pious soul! Amen.

‘You can scarcely believe with how much reluctance it is, that I have allowed my attention to be diverted from the quiet study of the Scriptures in this Patmos, by reading the sophistical quibbles of Latomus. To answer such a writer is a most irksome employment, which will neither increase a man’s knowledge, nor exercise his genius; but will certainly destroy some hours of precious time. I fancy this writer has imagined that Luther was either absolutely taken off, or at least condemned to perpetual silence; and that therefore he was now at full liberty to impose on the public, and exercise a tyrannical dominion over their faith. For it is made a grievous charge against me, that I have lessened the authority and influence of the clergy over the minds of the people. I heartily wish my fault in this respect was much greater than it is!

‘But I own, I have considerable fears, lest, during our violent contentions concerning grace and good works, we ourselves should be found deficient in both. For my part, when I reflect on the angry judgments of Almighty God, as displayed in the present situation of the

church, I could wish that my eyes might supply fountains of water to lament that dreadful havoc which the kingdom of sin and perdition makes of precious souls in these latter times. At Rome that monster of iniquity sits in the midst of the church, and boasts himself to be God’s vicegerent. The bishops flatter him: the sophistical school-divines obey his nod; and there is nothing which the cringing hypocrites are not ready to do for him. In the mean time hell opens wide its infernal jaws, and Satan sports in the destruction of men; and no one is found on our side, who with deep sorrow might stand as a wall of defence for Israel in this day of indignation.

‘It is my earnest prayer, that you, my brother, who by your appointment ought to teach the pestilential decretals of Antiehrst, may be enlightened by the Spirit of God to do your duty; that is, to UNTEACH everything that belongs to popery. For though we are compelled to live in Babylon, we ought to show that our affections are fixed on our own country, Jerusalem. Be strong, and of good comfort; and fear not Baalpeor; but believe in the Lord Jesus, who is blessed for evermore. Amen.’

1. One of Latomus’s charges against Luther is, that, in the beginning of the controversy, he pretended to submit to the pope. Luther answered, ‘I was very SERIOUS in my submission; and the remembrance of it is grievous to my mind. From the bottom of my heart, I entertained sentiments of the pope, and of councils, and of universities, agreeable to the common way of thinking. For though I fancied I saw absurdities in them, and things contrary to Christianity, yet I bridled my suspicions; and for more than ten years I followed Solomon’s advice, ‘not to depend on my own understanding;’ always supposing, that if there were really any things impious in the established system, there must exist in the academies learned theologians who would not hold their peace: moreover, there was scarcely any place, where I should have thought it less likely than at Louvain, to have found such stupid blockheads as are there at present.

‘In the course of this controversy my knowledge of the subject in dispute, as well as my courage, gradually increased. On the contrary, my adversaries, in their opposition to me, have betrayed the most astonishing ignorance and wickedness.

* He means, approved by the rulers of the church.

Had they but restrained themselves within any tolerable bounds, doubtless I should have grown more and more confirmed in their folly and madness. I thank the Lord Jesus Christ, that in the course of these trials, he has been pleased to favour me with such an insight into the Scriptures, as is a hundred times preferable to the scholastic divinity of the times. I am now most fully convinced that the pope is that monster of Antichrist foretold throughout the sacred writings.*

2. But Luther does not express himself with the MODERATION of a Christian.

Ans. I never set up myself for a holy man, nor even a moderate man. Take what liberties you please with my character; only acknowledge the truths contained in the Gospel. However, were I disposed to boast, my conscience tells me, that I never attacked any man's life or reputation; though, I own, I have exposed with considerable severity, a number of impious dogmas which militate against the word of God. I make no apology here; there are great examples on my side; as John the Baptist, St. Paul, and even Christ himself.*

3. Further, Latomus says, Luther's writings have a seditious tendency, and in no way make the people better.

Ans. Precisely the language of the Jews. They pretended to fear lest Christ should raise a sedition; and certainly they became no better for our Lord's expostulations. Ought Christ therefore to have held his tongue? Is this your divinity; 'They will not hear, therefore you must hold your peace?' In laying open faithfully the word of God, there is not the smallest ground for apprehending sedition.

4. To be brief. The grand accusations of Latomus were, that he described the Almighty as commanding his creatures to do impossibilities; and that the very best actions of the best men had the nature of sin.

In all ages it is a matter of patience to faithful expositors of the word of God, to find themselves continually misrepresented in this manner. Do they show from the Scriptures, that without divine grace we are altogether helpless and lost; and are deservedly exposed to the wrath of God, because of the voluntary malignity of apostate nature? They are then

charged with representing God as imposing laws on men, which they have not power to obey; though they never mean more than to humble man under a sense of his native depravity, and lead him to seek the remedy of the grace of Christ. Do they, in the very language of Scripture, describe the sin that dwelleth in us,* as mixing with all that we think, say, and do? They are instantly accused of saying that good works are sins. Instead of cavilling in this way, and setting up human imaginations and conjectures in opposition to the express testimonies of Scripture, it behoved Latomus, and all who have trod in his steps, to produce a direct confutation of the arguments adduced by Luther, and by others, who have preached and written as Luther did. And such a confutation can be attempted to no purpose, except by the authority of Scripture.

In the mind of our Saxon theologian there seems to have been an instinctive aversion to MERE VERBAL controversy. All his inquiries are about essential matters. He fastens on his objects with a retentive grasp; and in spite of the evasive arts of his adversaries, he compels them to join issue with him on some great practical doctrine.—So in his answer to Latomus, he shows that the NATURE OF SIN was the turning point in that debate.—“If,” says he, “in the passages I have quoted from St. Paul, it can be proved that the apostle does not use the word SIN in its true and proper sense, my whole argument falls to the ground; but if this cannot be proved, then Latomus's objections are without foundation. He blames me for maintaining that no human action can endure the severity of God's judgment. I reply, he ought to shudder in undertaking to defend the opposite sentiment. Suppose, for a moment, that any man could say, he has indeed fulfilled the precept of God in some one good work. Then such a man might fairly address the Almighty to this effect: ‘Behold, O Lord! by the help of thy grace, I have done this good work. There is in it no sin; no defect; it needs not thy pardoning mercy; which, therefore, in this instance I do not ask. I desire thou wouldst judge this action strictly and impartially. I feel assured, that as thou art just and faithful, thou canst not condemn it; and

* See ante.

* Romans, vii.

therefore I glory in it before thee. Our Saviour's prayer teaches me to implore the forgiveness of my trespasses; but in regard to this work, mercy is not necessary for the remission of sin, but rather justice for the reward of merit." To such indecent, unchristian conclusions are we naturally led by the pride of the scholastic system.—To conclude. This doctrine of the sinless perfection of human works finds no support in Scripture: it rests entirely on a few expressions of the fathers, who are yet by no means agreed among themselves; and if they were agreed, still their authority is only human. We are directed to prove ALL THINGS, and to hold fast that which is good. ALL doctrines then are to be proved by the sacred Scriptures. There is no exception here in favour of Augustine, of Jerome, of Origen, nor even of an antichristian pope.—Augustine, however, is entirely on my side of the question. And, therefore, though some of the fathers, in describing our natural frailties, may have studiously avoided the use of the word SIN, I think it much safer to use the language of Augustine and of certain other fathers, because they speak scripturally. Such are my reasons for choosing to call that SIN, to which you apply the softer terms of defect and imperfection. But further, I may well interrogate all those, who use the language of Latomus, whether they do not resemble the Stoics in their abstract definition of a wise man, or Quintilian in his definition of a perfect orator; that is, whether they do not speak of an imaginary character, such as never was, nor ever will be? I challenge them to produce a man, who will dare to speak of his own work, and say it is without sin, even in the sense in which they use the word. Why then is it so very heavy a crime in me to avow a sentiment which they themselves in reality carry farther than I ever did?

"But perhaps you will say, 'If, then, there is IN FACT so very little difference between us, why are you so contentious about the use of words, and why so prejudiced in favour of your own mode of expression?' I answer.—

"Your way of speaking leads to most pernicious views of the nature of sin. You attribute to mere human powers, that which is to be ascribed to divine grace alone. You make men presumptuous and secure in their vices. You

depreciate the knowledge of the mystery of Christ, and, by consequence, the spirit of thankfulness and love to God. There is a prodigious effusion of grace expended in the conversion of sinners: you lost sight of this; you make nature innocent, and so darken or pervert the Scripture, that the sense of it is almost lost in the Christian world."

Let this suffice as a small specimen of the wisdom and purity of the evangelical principles which shine through this confutation of Latomus. The learned reader, who values the Gospel of Christ as the pearl of great price, will enlarge on the subject in his own mind, and observe the near resemblance which subsists between the papistical notion of SIN, and certain modern corruptions in divinity. Happily, the days of religious persecution are no more: happily we do not, like Luther, endanger our lives by maintaining, that, "without the grace of God, it is impossible for us to keep his commandments, and that, after all, we need the tender mercy and forgiveness of our judge:" nevertheless, the MATTER of the controversy, now briefly reviewed, must always be looked on as of the last importance, if anything is to be called important, in which the glory of God, the necessity of the grace of Jesus Christ, the exercises of real humility, and the comfort of afflicted consciences, are eminently concerned.

Luther concludes his book with observing, that he is accused of treating Thomas Aquinas, Alexander, and others, in an injurious and ungrateful manner. He defends himself by saying, those authors had done much harm to his own mind; and he advises young students of divinity to avoid the scholastic theology and philosophy as the ruin of their souls. He expresses great doubts whether Thomas Aquinas was even a good man: he has a better opinion of Bonaventura. "Thomas Aquinas held many heretical opinions, and is the grand cause of the prevalence of the doctrines of Aristotle, that destroyer of sound doctrine. What is it to me," continues Luther, "if the bishop of Rome has canonized him in his bulls?"

He exhorts the president Jonas, and his other friends at Wittemberg, to exert themselves in replying to the rest of the papal advocates. "Is not," says he, "the glory of the Gospel a common cause. I have bruised the head of the

serpent, why do not you trample on his body?"*

I know not whether any man that ever lived had a greater reverence than Luther for the Holy Scriptures. It was the sight of them, through God's blessing, which illumined the mind of the Reformer: it was the want of them, which, through the iniquity of papal artifice and tyranny, held the people in the darkness of ignorance and superstition. Luther, therefore, easily foresaw the important consequences which must flow from a fair translation of the Bible in the German language. Nothing would so effectually shake the pillars of ecclesiastical despotism; nothing was so likely to spread the knowledge of pure Christian doctrine. Accordingly he rejoiced in the design of expediting the work; while his adversaries deprecated the execution of it, more than any heresy of which the greatest enemy of the church could be

Translation
of the New
Testament.

guilty. It was in his Patmos at Wartburg that he began to apply himself to this great undertaking. In the conclu-

sion of his confutation of Latomus, he tells his friend Jonas, that in his confinement he had no books at hand except the word of God: "not," says he, "that I set any great value on having a multitude of books, but I should like to see, whether Latomus has quoted the fathers fairly. But I have now done with him. I really grudge the time spent in reading and in answering this worthless publication; particularly, as I was EMPLOYED IN TRANSLATING the Epistles and Gospels into our own language."

From several authentic documents, it appears, that, during his solitude in the summer of the year 1521, he not only translated all the New Testament, but also took great pains to improve his knowledge of the Greek and Hebrew languages, for the purpose of rendering his intended version of the Scriptures more complete. "I find," says he, "I have undertaken a work which is above my strength. I shall not touch the Old Testament till I can have the assistance of yourself and my other friends at Wittenberg. If it were possible that I could be with you, and remain undiscovered in a snug chamber, I would come; and there, with your help, would translate the whole from the beginning, that

at length there might be a version of the Bible fit for Christians to read. This would be a great work, of immense consequence to the public, and worthy of all our labours."*

Such, during a captivity of more than nine months, were the employments of this active servant of God, who, notwithstanding, accuses himself of doing too little, and of eating too much. Besides the compositions which have been mentioned, he wrote many letters in his castle to his trusty friends and intimates, which very much lay open the unfeigned sentiments of his heart. The plan of this history admonishes us to be brief; otherwise the temptation to produce copious extracts from them is great. A strong and pious confidence in God, an unbounded benevolence to the "household of faith," and a determination to hazard everything in the cause of religious truth, mark the spirit of Luther in everything he says or does. He encourages the faithful, he reproves the timid, he laments the oppression of the church, he exults in the prospect of her deliverance. With inexpressible tenderness he comforts his desponding friends; while, on all occasions, he withstands his most powerful enemies with an unconquerable intrepidity.

During his residence in the castle of Wartburg he suffered his beard and hair to grow, assumed an equestrian sort of dress, and passed for a country gentleman, under the name of Yonker George. He sometimes amused himself with the exercise of hunting in company with his keepers; and his observations on that diversion, in a letter to Spalatinus, are curious and interesting.

"Give yourself no concern in regard to my suffering in this exile. It is of no consequence to me, provided I am not burdensome to the people of this house. I would have no one be put to inconvenience on my account. I suppose the prince supports me, otherwise I would not stay an hour here, if I were convinced that my wants were supplied at the expense of the master of this family, though I own, he furnishes everything I wish for with the greatest cheerfulness.

* This extract is from one of Luther's Letters to Nic. Amsdorff, the rector of the university at Wittenberg, dated Wartburg Castle, Jan. 1522.

* Luth. II. Confut. Latom.

Lately I spent two days in seeing the painful, yet agreeable, amusement of those famous people called hunters and fowlers. We caught two hares, and some miserable young partridges. Laudable employment indeed for men of leisure! For my part, theological subjects occupied my thoughts even while I was among the dogs and the nets. And any pleasure that I might receive from this species of relaxation, was fully balanced by the sentiments of grief and pity excited in my mind by an interpretation which I could not but give to the symbolical scenes at that time under my contemplation. This, thought I, is an exact representation of Satan, who, by his snares and his dogs, namely, the corrupt theologians and ecclesiastical rulers, pursues and entangles simple, faithful souls, in the same way that the harmless hares and partridges are taken. To be brief, the similitude was so striking, as to affect me exceedingly." In a letter to Melancthon, he says, "I sit here in my Patmos, reflecting all the day on the wretched condition of the Church. And I bemoan the hardness of my heart, that I am not dissolved into tears on this account. May God have mercy upon us!"

In another letter to the same person, he discovers evident symptoms of impatience.

"For the glory of the WORD OF GOD, and for the mutual confirmation of myself and others, I would much rather burn on the live coals, than live here alone, half alive, and useless. If I perish, it is God's will; neither will the Gospel suffer in any degree. I hope you will succeed me, as Elisha did Elijah."

Melancthon, the excellent coadjutor of Luther, though learned, ingenuous, unblemished in his manners, and cordially attached to the best of causes, began about this time to exhibit more sensibly than ever the constitutional timidity of his temper. Far superior to all the rest of Luther's adherents in talents and attainments, he was inferior to many of them in courage and fortitude; and on that account unequal to the character of SUPERINTENDANT, which he was now called to sustain. Luther, who loved the man, and was well aware of his infirmity, frequently, in the very kindest manner, reproved his desponding spirit, and at the same time encouraged him to be both bold and patient in the cause of the

reformation. He also solicited the Elector Frederic, through the intercession of Spalatinus, to provide for the more comfortable support of this learned professor, whose character contributed so much to the reputation of the university of Wittemberg.

In fact, not only Melancthon, but the rest of his brethren, the ruling academicians, were much disheartened during the summer of this year, partly on account of the absence of their grand leader, and partly because they experienced not a little embarrassment from the excessive caution of the

Melancthon and his brethren are disheartened in the summer of A. D. 1521.

elector and his court. They were not allowed the full privilege of publishing any of Luther's writings, nor even of disputing publicly on certain questions, which, it was supposed, might give offence to persons of distinction who were much attached to the established religion. Luther, though no man that ever lived was more exemplary in the practice of lawful obedience "to the powers that be," made no scruple to refuse compliance with the will of the civil magistrate, whenever that will, in his judgment, was directly contrary to the commands of God. Accordingly, he exhorted his Christian friends of the university not to follow the counsels of the court, but to take the lead themselves, as he had done. "We should not," says he, "have had one half the success we have had, if I had taken the advice of the court." And about two or three months after this, he wrote to this last-mentioned friend in the warmest terms of expostulation and remonstrance. He tells him, that he was determined to publish what he had written against the archbishop of Mentz, however the prince and his secretary might dislike the measure, and that it was at their peril if they obstructed his design. "The peace and approbation of God are ever to be preferred to the peace and approbation of the world. What, though some of our friends have exhibited a turbulent spirit, will the Gospel, on account of their irregularity, come to nothing? Was there not, even among the apostles, a traitor, Judas? In ALL circumstances, we ought to adhere strictly to the simple WORD OF GOD, and not merely when the word happens to thrive and be respected among men. Let those, who please, take against us.—But why are we to be always looking on the dark

side of things? why not indulge hopes of better times?"

There is nothing which so completely lays open to posterity the real opinions and motives of this great Reformer as his private letters.—When the common people of Erfurt, together with the youths of the university of that place, had committed some acts of riot and violence against the clergy, Luther expressed his disapprobation of such conduct, thus: "It is very proper that the ecclesiastics, who prove themselves to be incurably profligate, should be checked and discouraged, but by no means IN THIS MANNER. This MANNER of doing it brings a just disgrace upon our Gospel, and hinders its success. Moreover, this way of showing kindness to us afflicts me exceedingly. For it is to my mind a clear proof that we are not yet worthy of being esteemed before God, as faithful ministers of his word, and that Satan makes a mock of all our labours."

It appears from his letters to Melancthon, that he was completely in doubt, whether he should ever return to Wittenberg; "but," says he, "I am ready to go where God shall please to send me. The accounts which I receive of your abundant success in religion and learning, during my absence, rejoice my heart exceedingly, and make me endure this separation much better. The very circumstance of your going on so prosperously while I AM ABSENT is most peculiarly delightful to me; because it may serve to convince those WICKED ONES, that however they may rage and foam, their desires shall perish; and Christ will finish the work which he has begun."*

Luther, while under confinement, wrote a long letter to his flock in general, which abounds in pious sentiments and affectionate expressions, and is well calculated to counteract the misstatements of those careless or irreligious historians, who would represent this eminent servant of God as a man of ambitious, factious, sectarian principles. He laments that he was not as yet reckoned worthy to undergo, for Christ's sake, anything

more than hatred and reproach. He owns, that if the Lord had not been on his side, he must long ago have been torn to pieces by his adversaries. He is thankful for the divine support, which had three times enabled him to appear before them with a becoming resolution, —at Augsburg, at Leipsic, and at Worms. "I was in hopes," says he, "at Worms, that the prelates and doctors would have examined me with the most diligent scrupulosity concerning every particular; but no other demand was made, no other language was to be heard, than the imperious charge, Retract, Retract the doctrines you have taught. I do not mention these things as matters of boasting, or as though they were done in my own strength; on the contrary, I would praise God for his goodness, in having so encouraged his unworthy servant, and dispirited our opponents, that they were thrown into the utmost consternation, and could make no stand in public debate against even a single mendicant monk. As they are apt to talk in an ostentatious way of their prodigious erudition, I recommended it to them to come to Wittenberg, and try whether they could prove themselves our superiors in the discharge of pastoral duties; but none of them dared to accept the challenge."

The mind of Luther had long been impressed with a deep sense of the importance of regular and judicious instructions from the pulpit. He had experienced the advantage of them among his own people; and they were now athirst for further explanations of the word of God. To supply in some measure the failure of his usual personal services when present with them, he not only wrote down, during his captivity, a number of familiar expositions of the Epistles and Gospels in the German language, and sent them to be printed at Wittenberg, but also took very great pains to institute lectures or preachings in the afternoons of holydays. He desired Melancthon to discharge this branch of clerical duty; and he most earnestly exhorted his flock to an assiduous attendance, instead of spending their time in drinking and gaming.

How incessant were the labours, how indefatigable was the spirit of this great Reformer!

Evangelical publications, and evangelical preachings, with constant exhorta-

* This does not agree with an insinuation of the learned translator of Mosheim, namely, that Luther could not bear to see another crowned with the glory of executing a plan which he had laid.—Mosh. Sect. I. Chap. II. 18.

tion to study diligently the Holy Scriptures, were the external means on which Luther always relied for the propagation of Christian truth, and the deliverance of the people from popish darkness and slavery. Wise and persevering in the use of these means, he had the consolation to hear more and more of their blessed effects. The Augustinians of Wittenberg left off the celebration of private masses, new preachers of the Gospel daily lifted up their voice throughout the electorate of Saxony; and though some persons of the higher ranks, both among the magistrates and the clergy, were intimidated by the imperial edict of Worms, the common people gladly attended to the pure doctrines of salvation. At Zwickau, in particular, during the

A. D. 1521. Hausman accepted the pastoral office. This town appears to have been highly favoured by Providence; for the sentiments of Luther, from the very first agitation of the ecclesiastical controversy, were there received and taught in private assemblies: There also, among other preachers of the Gospel, was distinguished the very intimate friend of our Reformer, the celebrated Frederic Myconius,* who had fled from the persecuting rage of George the Duke of Saxony: and in regard to N. Hausman, if we had no other reason for mentioning this excellent minister, his name might deserve a place in these memoirs, on account of the singular eulogy pronounced on him by Luther: "WHAT WE PREACH, HE LIVES."

Friberg was the capital of a very small district, which was governed by the brother of George duke of Saxony. This prince, called Henry duke of Saxony, began to show some regard to evangelical doctrine. He expressed his detestation of the pope's bull, and commenced a correspondence with Luther; but through fear of the edict of Worms, and of his brother George, one of the most violent bigots of the age, he was, for the present, checked in his religious researches. His duchess, Catherine of Mecklenburg, exhibited a laudable pattern of Christian fidelity in the profession of divine truth. She was in imminent danger of persecution from the bitter hostile spirit of her husband's counsellors; but her trust was in God. In her letters, written several

years afterwards, she declares herself ready, through the divine assistance, to suffer patiently anything that could happen to her for adhering to the sacred Scriptures.

Thus the good seed, sown under various circumstances, was springing up and bearing fruit in almost every corner of Germany. The Christian student of ecclesiastical history, who has skill and leisure for the employment, might furnish a pleasing and useful collection of the fragments of true piety and spiritual understanding, which appeared in the early years of the preparation of men's hearts for the blessed Reformation.

Amidst the consolation which Luther in his retreat derived from the accounts which he was continually receiving of the courage and success of his disciples, and the progress of his doctrines, the report of several events reached the castle of Wartburg, which must in some measure have damped the joy and the expectations of the captive Reformer.

1. He was so much affected with the news of CERTAIN PROCEEDINGS at Wittenberg, that he determined to run the hazard of making a private excursion to that place, for the purpose of conversing with his friends on subjects which deeply and anxiously interested his thoughts. The exact circumstances of this clandestine visit are but imperfectly known; and we can do no more than form conjectures respecting the PROCEEDINGS which seem to have given rise to this extraordinary step. Many of the canons of Wittenberg disgraced the nascent reformation, both by an obstinate adherence to the reigning superstitions, and by a shameful profligacy of manners. In the next place, the untractable temper of Carolstadt showed itself more and more, and gave great concern to Luther. "I lament," says he, "the behaviour of this man. Indeed we have it in our power easily to withstand his precipitate motions, but then we shall give occasion to the adversary to triumph on account of our internal discords; and not only so,—our weaker brethren will also be much offended.*"

A passage in one of Luther's letters to Spalatinus may be supposed to throw further light on this subject. "I came to Wittenberg, and among the most sweet meetings and conversations with my friends, I found this mixture of worm-

* See Append. Fred. Mycon.

* Letter to Amsdorff.

wood; namely, that several of my letters and little publications had been completely suppressed. They had not even been heard of or seen by any one. I leave you to judge whether I have not just cause to be much displeas'd with this treatment. IN GENERAL, what I have had an opportunity of seeing and hearing gives me the highest satisfaction. May the Lord strengthen and support the courage of those who wish well to the cause! In the course of my journey, however, I was not a little vexed to hear various reports concerning the restless disposition of some of our friends; and I have promised to print, as soon as ever I return to my asylum, a public exhortation applicable to the circumstances. I must explain myself more particularly at another time. Commend me to our illustrious prince, from whose knowledge I have judg'd it proper to conceal this little excursion to Wittemberg and back again. You know my reasons. Farewell. I am at this moment in Amsdorff's house, in an apartment with my dear Philip Melanethon."

2. It was in his Patmos that Luther first heard of the solemn censure, which the divines of the faculty of Paris passed on his writings, April the fifteenth, 1521.* The university of Paris was the most ancient, and at that time the most respectable of the learned societies of Europe. In 1517 they had ventured to call in question the pope's infallibility; and Luther himself is charged with having repeatedly acknowledged the Parisian doctors to be wise and orthodox theologians; and with having also promised to submit his cause to their arbitration.† It seems therefore extremely probable that he must have been disappointed, and in some degree chagrined, when he found that that assembly of divines on which he had most relied, and among whom there probably were some spiritual persons of an enlightened understanding, adhered IN THE MAIN to the old prejudices and the scholastic divinity, and had actually pronounced his doctrine to be "erroneous both in faith and manners, and proper only to deceive simple people; that it was injurious to all the doctors, and derogatory from the power

of the church; openly schismatical, contrary to the sacred Scriptures, blasphemous against the Holy Spirit, and pernicious to the Christian commonwealth."

3. Another disagreeable event, which about the same time must have proved a trial to the irritable temper of the Reformer, was the celebrated answer to his treatise on the Babylonish captivity, published by Henry VIII. king of England. We learn from the papal archives,* that this prince, before his contest with the Saxon divine, had been soliciting the pope to bestow on him some honourable title, similar to the Catholic or Most Christian King. It is even said, that the title of MOST CHRISTIAN MAJESTY had been intended for Henry, but that the design was prevented by political considerations. The book was presented to Leo with the greatest formality, the English legate observing that his royal master had been instructed by the very best preceptors,‡ was well versed in sacred learning, had frequently acquired praise in disputes with the most learned persons of his own country; and that he now gloriously dared to contend with Luther, who was a man of no contemptible erudition. Leo, in return, spoke of the royal performance in such terms as if it had been dictated by immediate inspiration; and as a testimony of the gratitude of the church, conferred on its author the title of Defender of the Faith; an appellation still retained by the kings of England, though avowedly hostile to those religious sentiments, by defending which Henry merited from the court of Rome that illustrious distinction. This prince had been educated in a strict attachment to the church of Rome; and notwithstanding his active disposition and violent passions, had a love for learning. Moreover, he was particularly exasperated against Luther, because he had treated Thomas Aquinas, the king's favourite author, with great contempt. The young monarch, therefore, ambitious of fame of

He is censured also by Henry VIII.

Luther is censured by the Parisian divines. A. D. 1521.

* Pallav.

† In fact, the father of Henry VIII. being of a suspicious temper, and desirous of keeping his son from the knowledge of public business, occupied him entirely in pursuits of literature. Father Paul tells us, that as he was not the eldest son, he was intended to be archbishop of Canterbury.

* See Vol. iii. Du Pin.

† Comment de Luth. lxxiii. and cxxiii. Mainbourg, Sect. 46.

every kind, determined not only to oppose the progress of Lutheran tenets by his great authority, but to combat them also with scholastic weapons; and with this view he wrote in Latin his book on the seven sacraments, in opposition to the novel opinions.

Martin Luther, however, was neither to be overawed by the reputation of the university of Paris, nor by the dignity of the Sovereign of England. He soon published his animadversions on both, in as vehement and severe a style, as in the course of his numerous polemics he had ever used to his meanest antagonist. This treatment prejudiced Henry still more against the new doctrines; but the public admired these fresh instances of the undaunted spirit of the Reformer; the controversy drew more attention; and in spite of the combination both of the civil and the ecclesiastical powers, the Lutheran opinions daily acquired new converts in every part of Europe.

Neither Henry's book, nor Luther's defence, are of sufficient importance to engage our notice. Silence, or a soft answer, is, in many cases, the best reply to calumnies: but this was a lesson which Luther was slow to learn; though afterwards he perceived the unreasonableness and the inconvenience of having unnecessarily irritated the spirit of a vain-glorious and capricious monarch, which he found it impossible to appease. "Grievous words stir up anger." The propensity to resentment which Luther found in his own nature, ought to have taught him to deal more gently with the tempers of others. His friends at the time blamed the acrimony of his language to Henry VIII.; most of his admirers since have had the same sentiments; and I cannot but think that the laboured apologies of Seckendorf had better have been spared.*

There was, however, this essential difference between the faults of the Protestant reformer, and those of his adversaries, namely, that even against his most inveterate enemies, he never proceeded farther than the use of intemperate language. By principle, as we may see more distinctly hereafter, he was an enemy to persecution, and prayed for the conversion of those, against whom he inveighed. On the other side, nothing but blood and torture would satisfy the

rage of the papal despots. In the course of this year, Belgium began to be the scene of their sanguinary violence; some particulars of which shall afterwards be related.

It was, doubtless, a grateful piece of news to Luther in his confinement, to find that the powerful pen of Melancthon had been employed in defending him against the decision of the Parisian divines. Melancthon answers the Parisian divines. "I have seen," says he, "the decree of the Parisian sophists, and at the same time the apology of my friend Philip Melancthon. From my heart I rejoice. Christ would never have so completely blinded their eyes, if he had not determined to take care of his own cause, and put an end to the despotism of his enemies."*

Concerning his wrangle with Henry VIII. he makes the following observations. "I was well aware that whatever I might reply to that absurd and virulent Thomist, the King of England, I should give offence to many. I have treated him as I thought proper, and even necessary, for many reasons. These are unknown at present, but will be manifest by and by." And in another letter to the same person,† he says, "My prince, the elector, has repeatedly admonished me to express myself in gentler terms, and so have many other of my friends; but I have always returned the same answer,—that I cannot comply with their wishes. The cause in which I am concerned is not an ordinary one, which may admit of concession and dissimulation. Of these I have foolishly been guilty already too often."

After all it must be owned, that it is much easier to censure Luther for want of moderation, than to exhibit a pattern of Christian meekness in a similar heat of controversy; and more particularly when a man is on the right side of an important practical question, which was most manifestly the case with Luther in his contest with Henry VIII. In ages of greater refinement, indeed, whether men are conscious of defeat or of victory, they are more accustomed to abstain from gross and indecent language; yet even then, in its place there is often manifested on the one hand an affectation of coolness and indifference, and perhaps

* Sect. 188.

* To Spalatinus. Jul. 1521.

† Spalatinus.

an attempt at strokes of irony, which sufficiently bespeak the wounded spirit of the vanquished; and on the other, an insolent and contemptuous sort of eulogy, which as it originates in the pride and palpable superiority of the conqueror, proves more hurtful to the feelings of an antagonist than could any hard words or disgusting allusions. If Martin Luther had lived in our times, and had not learnt, through the influence of the precious doctrine which he taught, to bridle and regulate better his disposition to resentment, yet would he probably have managed his replies and rejoinders with a more decorous disguise; but it does not thence follow, that he would either have experienced less turbulence of passion in his own mind, or have produced less painful sensations in the minds of his adversaries, though these might have been less obvious, because designedly more concealed. The internal heat and fury of a combustion, when confined by powerful obstacles, is not to be estimated by the little blaze and smoke which affect the senses.

In the month of December of this same year, at the age of forty-six, died Leo X. a pontiff renowned for his encouragement of literature and the fine arts; on which account his name has been transmitted to posterity in the most adulatory strains of Erasmus and many others.* He has been charged, on good authority, with a profane contempt, or at least neglect of religion.† Some would represent him as a deep and penetrating politician; while others, after acknowledging his good natural endowments, trace the voluptuary throughout the whole course of his life, ever impatient of care and business, ruining all his faculties both of body and mind, and shortening his existence by excesses. The facts are our surest guides in determining his character; and of these we need not enumerate many. This pope is memorable because of the diminution which the papal authority received

through his ignorance, imprudence, and precipitation. Moreover, thousands in contemplating his conduct had learnt to despise his pretensions to the sacred character; and as if Leo had been eager to confirm their prejudices, he issued bulls against heretics, while he himself was dissipating his time and health in prodigal and luxurious pleasures, in the company of debauched cardinals, and in promoting expensive and licentious spectacles at the theatre. Mr. Hume's coolness and moderation in speaking of Leo X. is strikingly curious and entertaining. According to him, it was "his GENEROUS and ENTERPRISING temper" which exhausted his treasury, and obliged him to use every invention which might yield money to support his projects, pleasures and liberalities. It was also "the penetration of his genius, and his familiarity with ancient literature," that rendered him fully acquainted with "the ridicule and fallacy of the doctrines, which as supreme pontiff he was obliged by his interest to promote;" and therefore we need not wonder that he employed "for his profit those pious frauds" which his predecessors had made use of for their selfish purposes. On the subject of Leo's sale of INDULGENCES, this author makes the following still more extraordinary reflection. Their "sale seems, therefore, no more criminal than any other cheat of the church of Rome, or of any other church. The reformers, by entirely abolishing purgatory, did really, instead of partial indulgences sold by the pope, give gratis a general indulgence of a similar nature for all crimes and offences, without exception or distinction."

It is quite unnecessary to make any remarks on these and such like passages; they are laid before the student of ecclesiastical history, for the purpose of making him aware of the astonishing lengths of impiety and misrepresentation to which this elegant historian is generally disposed to go, when he would mitigate the faults of the profane, or deride the sincerity of the believer. Mr. Hume is rarely out of humour with anything but pure Christianity.

* See Appendix, Leo X.

† Paul Sarpi.

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM THE DEATH OF LEO X. TO THE ELECTION
OF ADRIAN IV.TURBULENCE OF CAROLSTADT.
STORK, MUNZER, &C.
NEW POPE ADRIAN.

IN the first week of the month of March 1522, Luther left his Patmos and returned to Wittemberg, without the consent or even the knowledge of his patron and protector, Frederic. The active spirit of the Reformer ill brooked his long confinement, and moreover, the distracted state of the infant protestant church absolutely required his presence. Already he had once ventured out of his asylum, and made a short visit to Wittemberg, without the privity of the elector; but matters were now daily becoming more critical; and as Luther had resolved, at the hazard of his life, to resume again his character of a public actor in the concerns of religion, he immediately acquainted his prince with the bold step he had taken, and the motives which compelled him no longer to remain a concealed spectator of transactions which oppressed his mind with the most painful apprehensions for the credit of the dawning reformation.*

The excessive and even dangerous zeal of Carolstadt was one of the afflicting causes which influenced the conduct of

Luther on this occasion. Carolstadt was a professor at Wittemberg, of considerable learning and ability, who had exposed the papal tyranny and superstition with great spirit, and, in general, deserved well of the Protestant cause. His name, though not specifically mentioned in the damnatory bull against Luther, was well known at Rome; and through the malicious instigation of Eckius, whom he had opposed in the Leipsic disputation,† he had been suspended from all communion with the church.‡ This useful colleague of the great Reformer soon discovered, during the absence of his master, a temerity of judgment and a violence of temper which absolutely disqualified him for the helm in the present tempestuous conjuncture. Not content with promoting

in a legal and quiet way, the auspicious beginnings of reformation which had already appeared at Wittemberg, in the gradual omission and rejection of the private mass and other popish superstitions, he headed a multitude of unthinking, impetuous youths, inflamed their minds by popular harangues, and led them on to actions the most extravagant and indefensible. They entered the great church of All Saints, brake in pieces the crucifixes and other images, and threw down the altars. Such indecent and irregular conduct by no means becomes those, who profess themselves the disciples of the Prince of Peace: and though in the midst of his excesses, the sincerity of Carolstadt's endeavours to rectify the abuses of popery is not to be questioned, one cannot but lament that the same man, whose sagacity had penetrated the veil of papal delusion in many instances, should in others be distinguished also for a want of plain sense, and ordinary discretion.—It may be proper to give a brief detail of the circumstances which led to these outrageous proceedings.

Honest Carolstadt, mistaking the true meaning of Matthew xi. 25, where our Lord says, "I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes," rashly concluded that human learning was useless, if not injurious, to a student of the Scriptures. He frequented the shops of the lowest mechanics, and consulted them about the meaning of the Scriptures. He would be called no longer by the appellation of Doctor, or any other honourable title. He lived in a village, employed himself in rustic occupations, and maintained, that thinking persons stood in no need of learning, but had better labour with their hands. In consequence of his example and conversation, the young academics of Wittemberg left the university, and ceased to pursue their studies; and even the schools of the boys were deserted. Such proceedings were manifestly conducive to the excesses above mentioned, and in every view extremely hurtful to the nascent reformation, which was happily making rapid advances in various parts of Christendom. We have seen* that the Augustine friars of Wittemberg had begun to abolish the celebration of PRIVATE MASSES, and that Luther was

* See page 332 of this Vol.

† See ante.

‡ Com. Luth. lxxv.

pleased with the news, and employed his pen against that popish corruption. The elector, on the contrary, appears to have been alarmed on the occasion, and to have deputed one of his counsellors* to signify to the church and university of Wittemberg, That his highness had been informed of many innovations and alterations in the ecclesiastical usage, which were taking place every day at Wittemberg; and in particular, that the Augustinians had omitted to celebrate the customary masses. Six persons from among the canons and academics† were chosen to examine this matter, who, in a written report, not only expressed their approbation in general of what had been done, but boldly and solemnly exhorted the prince to put an end, throughout his whole territory, to the popish profanation of the Lord's Supper. "It became him," they said, "as a Christian prince, to act with dignity and spirit in such an affair; and not to regard the name of Heretic or of Hussite, which might be applied to him. Whoever faithfully supported the laborious and dangerous cause of the Gospel, must expect much abuse and much reproach. Jesus Christ required this service from him. He had deigned to illumine with the knowledge of the truth the mind of the elector of Saxony more than any other of the princes; and his highness would do well to remember, that in the day of judgment God would call him to a severe account of the use of the talents committed to his care."

To this, the Elector directed the following answer to be given by professor Beyer. "That he wished to conduct himself in everything like a Christian prince, and leave nothing undone which might promote the glory of God, and tend to the better establishment of evangelical truth. But that the alteration proposed appeared to be a matter of great consequence, which called for the mature deliberation of the whole church, and ought not to be precipitately decided by a small number. If their advice was sound, doubtless it would be followed by others, and he might then undertake to begin the change

with some prospect of steady success.— That he had yet to learn, when the present mode of celebrating mass was introduced into the church,—perhaps several centuries ago; as also when the apostolic usage ceased. That as many churches and monasteries had been founded for the express purpose of saying masses, it deserved their consideration, whether, upon the abolition of masses, the REVENUES of the said foundations might not be withheld. Lastly, that as they did not seem inclined to take his advice, he owned himself to be only a lay person, and not skilled in Scripture, and intreated them, therefore, to consult calmly with their brethren, the rulers of the church and of the university, and so to settle the business, that no tumults or seditions might ensue."

The above-mentioned six deputies, in their rejoinder, adhered to the opinion they had already given, namely, that the abuses of the private masses ought to be abolished; and this, they believed, might be done without tumult or danger; but if not, the evil was so great, that it ought to be removed without any regard to the scandal or defamation which might be the consequence. That though the reformers were but a small part of the church, they had the word of God on their side; and this single consideration was paramount to every other, being an authority to which the angels and all created beings ought to bow. From the beginning of the world, it had always been found that only a very small part of mankind acknowledged the truth. Did not Christ himself commit the preaching of the Gospel to a few weak, despised, unlettered persons? and did not a similar dispensation take place at this very day? The true use and nature of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, together with many other points in religion, was most expressly laid down in the Gospel; notwithstanding which, the dignified priests, and the wise ones of this world, either from interested motives or complete blindness, continued to oppose the truth, and refused to accede to the most reasonable and pious reformations, they only excepted, whose eyes it had pleased God to open by a heavenly illumination. The ancient colleges and monasteries, they said, even to the time of Augustine and Bernard, were founded, not for the purpose of saying a

* Pontanus.

† Justus Jonas, Philip Melancthon, Nic. Amserdoff, John Doltz, Jerome Scurff, Andrew Carolstadt.

number of masses and babbling the canonical hours, but for the instruction of youth and the care of the poor. It was to the constitution of the more recent foundations, almost universally, that the present mode of celebrating masses was owing. Moreover, these foundations required a certain number of masses to be said every week by particular persons; and as this was a practice in itself absolutely sinful, the consciences of men ought to be completely released from such fetters without delay. And even if a certain number of masses were not specified, still the very principle on which the masses are celebrated,—namely, that they are good works, or sacrifices, or satisfactions for sin, which will therefore appease Almighty God, and be useful to others, and even to the dead,—is so contrary to sound doctrine, that they ought to be laid aside. The founders of these ordinances, if they could rise from the dead, would condemn what they themselves had done in this respect, and lament their own credulity, when they saw that these their donations had originated in the avarice of the ecclesiastics. Lastly, it appeared from the history of the church, that even to the time of Cyprian, the ancient custom of communicating in BOTH KINDS was preserved; and that in Greece and the Eastern churches the same truly apostolic practice obtained at this day. Therefore it was not their fault, if on account of certain alterations which were become absolutely necessary, some differences, or even tumults, should arise; these were rather to be laid at the door of the persons, who, for the sake of keeping up their dignity, their income, and their luxurious tables, continued to obstruct the light of the truth, and cruelly to wage war against the altars of God. They then added in most explicit terms, that if their ecclesiastical and civil rulers would but permit the sacred word of God to be publicly preached, heard, and read, even though they did not assent to the truth, but opposed it with all the arguments they could produce, provided they did not inflict cruel punishments on their adversaries, there would be neither sedition, nor discord, nor tumult. However, the right Christian rule was, neither to regard the madness of the enemy, nor the greatness of the danger. Christ did not hold his tongue, though he foresaw that the preaching of the Gospel would cer-

tainly be attended with discords, seditions, and the revolution of kingdoms; nor were his apostles more negligent and timid, or less strenuous in instructing the people, because the wise men of this world at that time detested the very name of the Gospel, and looked upon it as the firebrand of those disturbances, schisms, and tumults, which raged among the Jews with so much fury at Jerusalem.

Satan, no doubt, would put men in mind of the various dangers to which they might be exposed, in order that he might the more effectually obstruct the progress of that religion, which he so perfectly hates. But as it is well known that such are his devices, they ought not to be much alarmed at these his frightful suggestions, but each of them keep to his post, like good soldiers in the field, and commit the event to God. They must expect desertions, but they should also remember their Lord's words, "Whosoever loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me."*

A serious argumentative statement like this would, doubtless, much affect the tender conscience of the elector of Saxony, but probably not determine that cautious prince to come to any positive decision respecting the ecclesiastical innovations. Accordingly, he appears to have connived at the proceedings of these bold reformers, but by no means to have sanctioned them.

It was precisely in this situation of things, when, for the purpose of silencing calumny and misrepresentation, a discreet and due regard to order was most peculiarly called for, that the violent spirit of Carolstadt broke out into the mischievous excesses above described. † Already he had done his utmost to discredit at Wittenberg the studies of literature, for the advancement of which, as subservient to the best of causes, Luther and Melancthon had much exerted themselves. He now ventured to administer the sacrament publicly in both kinds to all ranks and orders of persons, under all circumstances, and without due inquiry or preparation, or regard to any of the usual ceremonies. The senate and also the university of Wittenberg complained of these things in severe terms to the elector, who feeling himself unequal to

* Luth. Op. II. Comment. Luth. cxxx.

† Page 336.

the difficulty, directed his commissioners to interpose, and, with the consent of all parties, to effect such regulations as the circumstances required. These regulations were so favourable to the new system, that Frederic declared his commissioners had gone further than he had intended, and that they must not allege his mandate for what they had done. He said, he did not choose their alterations to be imputed to him; for it was known they were contrary to the commands of the imperial government; and it was also known, that the bishops were about to commence a visitation of his electorate.

In this convention, it was ordered,—
1st. That all persons who were penitent, and wished to be in the favour of God, should be exhorted to partake in the sacrament.—2dly. The popish notion of the mass being a sacrifice was entirely rejected: and 3dly. Steps were taken for the removal of the images out of the great church. These, surely, were very considerable amendments; and it is not to be wondered at, if they should have alarmed a German prince of no great power, who stood almost alone, who was himself far from having clear views in religion, and who had to contend with the pope, the emperor, and the neighbouring potentates, leagued in opposition against the free progress of the Gospel. Nevertheless, the violent and impatient spirit of Carolstadt remained dissatisfied with these triumphs of the truth, and there is too much reason for lamenting that an alloy of pride and un-

Violence of
Carolstadt.

governable self-will should have sadly debased the honest Christian zeal of this early reformer. He even avowed to Melanethon that he wished to be as great and as much thought of as Luther. Melanethon told him, that was the language of pride, envy, and unchristian emulation. But Carolstadt was deaf to admonition. He openly professed to have not the least regard for the authority of any human being. He said, he would stick close to the simple word of God, and that no man could be a Christian who found fault with what he did. How deceitful is the human heart, and how inconsistent a creature is fallen man! Carolstadt, with much Christian light in his understanding, and with abundance of honest zeal in his heart, at the very time that he was

making pretensions to an uncommon purity of motive and doctrine, and to an extraordinary respect for the Scriptures, proceeded from one disorderly act to another, till at length he committed those outrages which afforded a considerable handle for complaint to the enemies of the reformation, and made its best friends ashamed of their rash and presumptuous coadjutor.

It will now be some relief to the reader's mind to peruse Luther's observations on these transactions. The report of them reached him in his Patmos, and he wrote to the elector of Saxony thus:

“There is no reason to be frightened. Rather give praise to God; and rejoice in the certain expectation that all will end well. Things of this kind always happen to those who endeavour to spread the Gospel. We must not only expect Annas and Caiaphas to rage against us; but even a Judas to appear among the apostles, and Satan himself among the sons of God. Be wise, and look deeper than to the external appearance. Other agents, besides those which are merely human, are at work. Don't be afraid, but be prepared for more events of this sort. This is only the beginning of the business: Satan intends to carry matters much further yet. Believe me in what I now say; I am but a plain, simple man; however, I know something of his arts. Suffer the world to clamour against us, and to pass their harsh judgments. Be not so much concerned at the falling away of particular Christians. Even holy Peter fell; and also others of the apostles. Doubt not but they will in a short time rise again, as surely as Christ himself rose from the dead. The words of St. Paul to the Corinthians* are at this moment peculiarly applicable to our circumstances, namely, ‘that we should approve ourselves, as the ministers of God, in much patience, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours.’”

Luther's letter from his Patmos.

Luther concluded his letter with an earnest request for leave to print and circulate his own writings; and with saying that he intended to be very soon at Wittemberg.

The religious mind of Frederic was deeply affected by these sentiments of

* 2 Cor. v.

Sentiments
of the
Elector.

Luther; and he immediately commissioned one of his confidential magistrates to relate to him in his asylum the particulars of all the late proceedings at Wittemberg: How the pupils dwindled in number, and were called away by their guardians; how anxious the prince was, and how completely in doubt what course to take. That nothing was so distressing to his mind as the prospect of seditious tumults, but that the imperial government tied up his hands; and moreover, that the bishops had promised they would themselves preach the Gospel, and also would appoint proper missionaries for that purpose, and that it was impossible for him to oppose their laudable resolutions. He wished exceedingly to have Luther's advice at this crisis, but exhorted him not to think of coming to Wittemberg. The pope and the emperor would insist on his being delivered up to them, which would be the severest stroke that could happen to the elector: Yet he did not see how he could prevent it. He had never undertaken, nor had Luther desired him, nor was it indeed in his power to do more, than to procure him a fair hearing. In one point, however, he was absolutely determined, namely, if he could but find out what was the divine will, he would cheerfully bear, suffer, do, or avoid doing, everything which should appear to be his duty agreeably to that will. In a word, he remembered who said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light," and he would willingly bear, through the divine strength and help, the cross that God should lay upon him. The transactions at Wittemberg were most surprising: new sects arose there every day, and it was hard to say which were gaining or which losing ground. The Diet were to assemble at Nuremberg in a short time; and it was expected that much would be said and done respecting Luther's business: He had better therefore be quiet and remain in secret for the present: Considerable revolutions were at hand; and if it should happen, that the sacred Gospel was obstructed, such a turn in the events would be matter of the greatest grief and mourning to the elector.

The commissioner concluded all he had to say with the most kind, faithful, and affectionate assurances of the prince's friendship for Luther.

The judicious reader will easily anti-

cipate the inferences to be drawn from this very interesting narrative.

He will observe the elector of Saxony to be on all occasions the same man; thoughtful, temperate, and pious; approving, in the main, and even admiring Luther; but suspicious of his impetuous temper; and doubtful in some points, as to the line both of duty and of prudence respecting his own conduct.

He will be aware of the effect, which the confusions at Wittemberg would naturally produce on the mind of such a prince. They must have increased his disposition to extreme caution, hesitation and suspense of judgment.

Lastly, he will not forget, that the historian, in his relation of these documents, so secret at the time of the transactions, and even now so very little known, is thus extremely minute, chiefly for the purpose of explaining why Luther determined to leave his Patmos at this critical and dangerous moment. The propagation of pure Christianity and the salvation of men's souls appear to have been not only his primary but his sole objects. So long as he considered himself in the pursuit of THESE, "he counted not even his life dear to him."*

The conscientious Frederic, surrounded as he was at home with timid courtiers, and opposed abroad by bigoted dukes and princes, and still more by self-interested popes and prelates, failed to support the cause of truth in the manner that Luther wished. This reformer, from principle, uniformly resisted the smallest approach to the use of force or violence in spreading the Gospel; but the very same principle induced him earnestly to solicit the elector to interfere with his authority, and prevent the infliction of pains and penalties on those who favoured the new system. He begged also, that the preaching of evangelical doctrine might be less fettered, and would gladly have obtained some small stipends for the support of such poor clergy as had left their monasteries, and, at the call of the congregations, had become faithful ministers of the Gospel. But almost all Luther's petitions of this species, though by no means coldly received, were inefficiently complied with by Frederic; who daily found it expedient to adhere to his prudential maxims

* Acts xx, 24.

with a more deliberate circumspection than ever. The papal powers were cruel; artful, and active: The reformers, for the most part, were unskilful politicians; and some of them, as Carolstadt and his associates, extremely injudicious and headstrong; the fair prospect of reformation grew dark and cloudy; the tempest thickened, and it became absolutely necessary that the most skilful pilot should repair to the helm.

Besides the turbulent behaviour of Carolstadt and the other causes, which have been mentioned, of difficulty and confusion in the church, there took place at the same time another event

Stork,
Munzer, &c.

which threatened consequences perhaps still more pressing and dangerous, and loudly called for the presence of Luther. —Several persons, who really deserved the name of enthusiasts, had appeared in Saxony; among whom Nicholas Stork, Mark Stubner, Martin Cellary, and Thomas Munzer, have, by their follies, obtained a memorial in history. Stork was a baker at Zwickau, who had selected, from his acquaintance of the same calling, twelve whom he called apostles, and also seventy-two disciples. The other three, in a tumultuous manner, harangued the populace in the church of St. Catharine, of the same town. Nicholas Hausman, the pious pastor of the place, resisted these insane prophets to the best of his power, but could not control their fury.—They professed themselves to have a divine commission, and pretended to visions and inspirations. Munzer, in particular, will be found at the head of a REBELLION OF THE PEASANTS in 1525. At present it may be best to hear Melancthon's account of them in a letter to the elector of Saxony.—“Your highness must excuse the liberty I take; the occasion is urgent, and calls exceedingly for your highness's attention. Your highness is aware of the many dangerous dissensions, which have distracted your city of Zwickau, on the subject of religion. Some persons have been cast into prison there for their seditious innovations. Three of the ringleaders are come hither. Two of them are ignorant mechanics, the third is a man of letters. I have given them a hearing; and it is astonishing what they tell of themselves; namely, that they are positively sent by God to teach; that they have familiar conferences with God; that they can

foretell events; and to be brief, that they are on a footing with prophets and apostles. I cannot describe how I am moved by these lofty pretensions. I see strong reasons for not despising the men; for it is clear to me there is in them something more than a mere human spirit; but whether the spirit be of God or not, none, except Martin, can easily judge. Therefore, for the peace and reputation of the church, Martin should, I think, by all means, have an opportunity of examining them, and the rather as they appeal to him.”

The elector, who did not consider himself as competent to decide on such cases, and whom we always find constantly disposed to follow the will of God, so far as he knew it, inquired more particularly into the circumstances of the matter, and also called in the advice of some of his most learned counsellors. These could come to no decision: they felt the same doubt, which Melancthon had expressed; and were afraid of sinning against God by condemning his choicest servants. Upon which Frederic astonished all his ministers and counsellors then present,* by hastily making the following declaration. “This is a most weighty and difficult case; which I, as a layman, do not comprehend. If I rightly understood the matter, so as to see my duty, most certainly I would not knowingly resist the will of Almighty God: no; rather than do that,—though God hath given me and my brother a considerable share of power and wealth, I would take my staff, and quit everything I possess.” —Such was the integrity and tenderness of conscience of this prince! Many in Saxony also at that time seem to have feared God in like manner; and were brought to the light of the Gospel. That light, however, for the most part was dim as yet; and crafty hypocrites knew how to take advantage of the want of discernment in godly souls.

Melancthon pressed the elector still further to call in the assistance of Luther's judgment. “No person,” he said, “could manage the business so well; Stork and his associates had raised disputes concerning the baptism of infants, and had appealed to the supernatural re-

* Spalatinus was also present at the conference, from whose MS. this account is taken.

velations they had had from God; and that in regard to himself, he was by no means qualified to pronounce sentence in so difficult a cause."

The elector, in pursuance of his cautious and conscientious views, directed Melancthon to avoid disputes with these men; and to use every precaution for preventing such tumultuous proceedings as had happened at Zwickau. "He was himself," he said, "no interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, nor did he know whom he ought to appoint to examine the merits of the pretensions in question; but it was then impossible to recall Luther without imminent danger to the person of that Reformer. Luther was his subject, and he had so far supported him that he should not be condemned unheard; but beyond that point he could not go; for he felt it incumbent upon himself to obey the emperor, who was his lord and master. With respect to the fanatics, however, he had this to say, that if he could but see clearly what justice required, he was ready to discharge his duty at every hazard."*—In this state of doubt and suspense, Melancthon employed persons to procure the best information they could; and in the mean time he treated Stubner, who was a man of some learning, with hospitality, and meekly bore his fooleries, till the arrival of Luther, whose wise and manly treatment of the enthusiasts quickly, as we shall soon see, exposed the emptiness of their claims to a divine commission, and demolished all their authority and influence.

This sound Divine having been informed in his Patmos of the extraordinary pretensions of these men, had all

Luther's advice respecting the prophets.

along beheld their conduct with a jealous eye; and had answered the enquiries of Melancthon with much discretion.

"As you are my superior," said he, "both in discernment and erudition, I cannot commend your timidity in regard to these prophets. In the first place, when they bear record of themselves, we ought not implicitly to believe them; but rather to try the spirits, according to St. John's advice. As yet, I hear of nothing done or said by them, which exceeds the imitative powers of Satan. It is my particular wish that you would examine whether they

can produce any PROOF of having a divine commission. For God never sent any prophet, who was not either called by proper persons, or authorized by special miracles, no, not even by his own Son. Their bare assertion of a divine AFFLATUS, is not a sufficient ground for your receiving them; since God did not even choose to speak to Samuel, but with the sanction of Eli's authority. So much for their pretensions to a public character.—In the next place, I would wish you to sift their private spirit.—whether they have experienced any internal distresses of soul, the attacks of death and hell, and the comforts of the new birth unto righteousness. If you hear nothing from them but smooth, tranquil, and, forsooth, what they call, devout, religious contemplations, regard them not; for there is wanting the characteristic of the Son of Man, of the man of sorrows; there is wanting the Cross, the only touchstone of Christians, and the sure discernor of spirits. Would you know the place, the time, the manner of divine conferences and communications? Hear the written word, 'As a lion will he break all my bones.*' And, 'I am cast out of the sight of thine eyes. My soul is full of trouble, and my life draweth nigh unto hell.' The majesty of the Divine Being speaks not IMMEDIATELY, in a way that man should see HIM: None can see HIM and live. Do you try them therefore carefully, and listen not even to a glorified Jesus, unless you find he was first crucified."

I follow with close attention the progress of infant protestantism, because I am persuaded no scene was ever more instructive since the apostolic times. It will not be necessary to watch the reformation so closely, when it became more involved in civil transactions and was advanced into secular consequence. The purest christianity is generally in the outset of religious revivals, though it often happens, that together with the most scriptural displays of light and holiness, there appears also the wild fire of fanaticism and delusion. It was even so in the Apostles' days. But how absurdly do sceptics conclude from the disgraceful conduct of such men as Stork, Stubner, and their companions, that enthusiasm marked the whole progress of Lutheranism, when, perhaps, no man was ever

* Sock. Addit. p. 193.

* Isaiah, xxxviii. 13.

more remote from that dangerous spirit, than the Saxon theologian himself! It is, indeed, no small exercise of patience to faithful pastors, that while they are guarding their flocks with the utmost solicitude against gross cheats or fanatical illusions, they themselves should be uncharitably accused of supporting these things.

The true motives of Luther's quitting his Patmos are now before the reader; namely, on the one hand, the indiscreet and even mutinous conduct of certain sincere friends of the reformation; and on the other, the conscientious timidity* of the elector of Saxony, most lamentably manifesting itself both in not repressing the wild freaks of genuine enthusiasm which had produced so much disturbance, as also in not supporting with vigour the diligent and enlightened clergy of the poorer sort, who not only laboured without salaries, but were often imprisoned and otherwise severely punished for marrying wives, administering the communion in both kinds, preaching Luther's sentiments, and, in general, for transgressing any of the rules and customs of the Romish Church.†

Every part of this account is in perfect harmony with the numerous letters of Luther, written near the time of his return to Wittemberg, and also with other fragments of curious and secret history relative to these interesting transactions.

* Luther, in one of his letters to Spalatinus, rallies his friend respecting the prince's excessive caution on the following occasion. The Reformation had proceeded so far, that several of the divines at Wittemberg had married wives in the course of the year 1522. Among these was the Protestant John Bugenhagen; and Luther had requested the elector to give this worthy man some little present at the time of his marriage. The present came, together with a piece of venison, but not as sent from the prince, but from Spalatinus, and there was also added an injunction of secrecy.—Luther, in returning thanks, said, "We will keep the thing secret, don't fear. We knew perfectly well before you gave this caution, that the present would come from you, not from the prince." See the Appendix. Bugenhagenus.

† In a letter to Melancthon, Luther mentions an additional reason which moved him to return home; namely, his translation of the Bible into the German language. This was a great and very important work, in the execution of which he stood in need of the help of his friends. Melch. Adam.

They are, indeed, transactions, which well deserve the most diligent attention; in that, they have, as yet, never been distinctly and collectively detailed by any writer, and also as they throw much light on the principles and conduct both of Luther and his prince. "The whole world," says the excellent Seckendorf on this occasion, "cannot produce such an example of firmness, as appeared in the Reformer; a firmness too which carried along with it the evident marks of divine grace, and which withstood effectually, during the remainder of his life, all the machinations of his enemies."

Luther was at Borna, on his road to Wittemberg, when he wrote, to the elector, the letter above alluded to in page 336; and it is sufficiently manifest from the letter itself, that he had received the kind warnings sent to him by Frederic, not to leave his asylum in the present dangerous circumstances. But neither the affectionate caution of his friends, nor the cruel threats of his enemies, could induce the Saxon hero to depart in the smallest degree from what he thought a well-marked line of duty. He wrote in substance as follows, "That the accounts of what had passed at Wittemberg had almost reduced

Remarkable
Letter of
Luther to
the Elector.

him to a state of despair. That everything he had as yet suffered was comparatively mere jests and boys' play. He could not enough lament, or express his disapprobation of those tumultuous proceedings: the Gospel was in imminent danger of being disgraced from this cause. That, in regard to himself, he wished the elector to understand most distinctly, that ALL HIS HOPE AND CONFIDENCE depended most entirely on the justice of his cause. The Gospel which he defended and propagated was by no means a device of his own, but a heavenly gift from Jesus Christ our Lord; that himself therefore was a servant of Christ, and a teacher of the Gospel, and that in future he intended to go by no other name. Hitherto, continued he, I have offered myself for public examination and inquiry; not indeed from any necessity, but because I had hoped that so much humility on my part, might be an inducement to others to listen to the truth. But now that I see plainly, this extreme moderation is, by Satanic art, turned to the disadvantage of the Gospel, I mean no longer to concede in the man-

ner I have done during the last year,—not, however, through fear of danger, but from respect for my prince. When I entered Worms, I dreaded not the innumerable powers of hell; and surely this hostile duke George of Leipsic* is not equal in strength or skill to a single infernal spirit. Moreover, the faithful derive from the Gospel such a fund of courage and comfort, that they are allowed to invoke God as their father. Well therefore may I despise the vengeance of this enraged duke. Indeed, were the city of Leipsic itself in the same condition that Wittemberg is, I would not hesitate to go there, though I were assured that for nine days together the heavens would pour down duke Georges, every one of which would be many times more cruel than the present duke of that name. As it has pleased God to permit this same duke George to treat Jesus Christ with the utmost indignity, it was doubtless my duty to submit;—nay, I have prayed for him often, and will again pray for him; though I am persuaded he would kill me with a single word if it were in his power.—I write these things, that your highness may know, I consider myself, in returning to Wittemberg, to be under a far more powerful protection than any which the elector of Saxony can afford me. To be plain, I do not wish to be protected by your highness. It never entered my mind to request your defence of my person. Nay, it is my decided judgment, that, on the contrary, your highness will rather receive support and protection from the prayers of Luther and the good cause in which he is embarked. It is a cause which does not call for the help of the sword. God himself will take care of it without human aid. I positively declare, that if I knew your highness intended to defend me by force, I would not now return to Wittemberg. This is a case where God alone should direct: and men should stand still and wait the

event without anxiety; and that man will be found to defend both himself and others the most bravely, who has the firmest confidence in God. Your highness has but a feeble reliance on God; and for that reason I cannot think of resting my defence and hopes of deliverance on you. Still you wish to know **WHAT YOUR DUTY IS IN THIS BUSINESS**; and you express a fear that you may not have been sufficiently active. My answer is, you have already done too much, and that at present you ought to do nothing. God does not allow, that either your highness or myself should defend the cause of truth by force. If you do but believe this, you will be quite safe;—but if not, my faith on this head will remain unshaken, and I shall be compelled to leave you a prey to that anxiety which will attend your incredulity. If I should be taken, or even put to death, you must stand excused, even in the judgment of my best friends, because I have not followed your advice. Think not of opposing the emperor by force: permit him to do what he pleases with the lives and properties of your subjects. It seems impossible, however, that he should require you to be my executioner, when all the world know the privileges which belong to the place of my nativity. But if so unreasonable a demand should be made, and your highness would make me acquainted with the fact, I will engage,—whether you do or not believe me,—that no harm shall happen to your highness on my account, either in body, or mind, or estate. Be assured, this business is decided in the councils of heaven in a very different manner from what it is by the regency at Nuremberg; and we shall shortly see that those who now dream they have absolutely devoured the Gospel, have not as yet even begun their imaginary feast. There is another Being, abundantly more powerful than the duke George, with whom I have to do. This Being knows me perfectly well; and I trust I have a little knowledge of HIM. If your illustrious highness could but believe this, you would see the glory of God. But you remain in darkness through your unbelief.—Glory and praise be to God for evermore!''*

* The imperial government at Nuremberg had lately issued, in the emperor's absence, and during the confinement of Luther, an edict against the Reformer's principles; and, in consequence, George duke of Saxony, who had been present in the assembly, and instrumental in obtaining the edict and making it as severe as possible, was beginning to persecute, with the greatest cruelty, all persons who adhered to Lutheranism.

* Comment. Luth. cxix. Melch. Adam. Scultet. 101.

So extraordinary a letter has rarely been penned by a subject and transmitted to a kind prince, whose directions he was at that moment positively disobeying. But Luther saw a DIVINE HAND in this whole struggle for Christian liberty! As to Frederic, we see him trembling for the safety of Luther; and uneasy in his conscience lest he should desert the cause of God. What this wise prince would have done, in case Charles V. had seriously demanded Luther's person to be given up to the papal vengeance, it may be hard to say. His prudential maxims constantly led him to evade such a crisis, if possible; and as he was well acquainted with the activity, and also the violence of Luther's disposition, nothing could be more natural than for him, through the medium of his confidential friends and agents, to have said, "Remain in your asylum for the present; you are under a sentence of condemnation, and you had better not provoke your enemies to execute it. The duke George who lives at Leipsic is your inveterate enemy, and it seems you have heard of the severe edict of Nuremberg.* It is not in my power to defend you beyond a certain point. Moreover, were I disposed to use force, I might lose my life and property in contending with a potentate so powerful as the emperor of Germany. Still I would not shrink from my duty. Tell me plainly what you think I ought to do: perhaps I have been too timid in this momentous affair."

The preceding letter of Luther's must evidently appear to have been written in reply to such previous admonitions and observations as these;—even though the greater part of them were not actually to be found among the several documents already before the reader.

The elector, upon receiving this answer, was astonished at the intrepidity of the Reformer; and no doubt concluded, that, on his own part, the most consummate care and caution were never more called for than at the present juncture, for the purpose of tempering the impetuosity and fervour of the determinations of the Man, whom, however, it was impossible he should not both admire and love. He therefore did not choose to communicate in writing his sentiments to Luther

himself, but directed a trusty agent, Jerome Schurff,* to say and do everything which he wished to have said and done in this delicate business. Accordingly, Schurff visited Luther, and after assuring him of the kindness and good will of the elector, informed him, it was his highness's desire, that he should compose a letter to him in a somewhat different style from the former; a letter, for example, which he might show to his friends, and to the princes, and to the other great men of the country. In this letter he was to give the reasons which had induced him to return to Wittenberg, and he might openly avow that he had taken this step without the orders of his prince; at the same time he ought to make a decent declaration, that he certainly intended to put no person whatever to inconvenience. Schurff concluded with saying, That the elector's entire meaning was to prevent sedition; that he anxiously desired most particular care to be taken in that respect; and, therefore, for the present he would have Luther to abstain from preaching in the great Church where the late tumult had happened; and lastly, he requested that this whole negotiation might be kept a profound secret.

Schurff, in his answer to the elector, praised Luther to the skies; he looked on him as an apostle and an evangelist of Christ. He said, all ranks and orders, learned and unlearned, were delighted with the return of the Man, who was now daily, in the most admirable manner, teaching true doctrine, and restoring order everywhere. Lastly, he informed the elector, that he found Luther completely disposed to write such a letter as had been desired.

In fact, Luther transmitted, through the medium of Schurff, a copy of the required letter, and left it to the elector to make such alterations as he should think necessary; but he added at the same time these remarkable words, "That most certainly he would not censure to do anything which would not bear the light: that for his part, he should not be afraid, even if his former letter were made public: and that in regard to seditious tumults and commotions, he owned he had hitherto supposed, that the ecclesiastics

Luther
visited by
Schurff.

* The chief palace of this duke was at Dresden; but he was often at Leipsic.

* The same person who was Luther's advocate at Worms.

would be the greatest sufferers; but on a diligent review of sacred history, he had been led to a different opinion. It had always happened, he said, that the princes and rulers were themselves the first sacrifices to popular fury;—however, not before they had corrupted themselves, and ceased to support the true religion.”

Frederic in a few days informed Schurff, that there were in Luther's letter a few expressions which were rather too strong, and which therefore he wished him to alter. Luther assented.

The letter stands in the Latin edition of Luther's works without alteration, and is in substance to this effect:

“Most illustrious Prince, and most kind Master;

I have very diligently considered, that, in returning to Wittenberg without the permission of your clemency, and even without so much as asking that permission, it was my bounden duty to take care that this step should in no way prove injurious to your clemency. For I am well aware, that, with some appearance of truth, my conduct is capable of being represented as causing a multitude of dangers and difficulties to your person, to your government, and to your subjects; and more especially to myself,—being one, who has reason every hour to expect a violent death from the imperial edicts and the papal thunders. However, what can I do? The most urgent reasons compel me to this step; the Divine will is plain, and leaves me no choice. I must not act a double part to please any creature in existence. Then be it so; come what will, I return to Wittenberg in the name of Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of life and death.

That your clemency may not be ignorant of the just grounds of my conduct, I have determined to state faithfully the principal motives which have influenced my mind in this business.

But in the first place, I would beg leave to deprecate every supposition, which proceeds on the idea of my being moved by pride, or a contempt for the authority either of the emperor, or of your clemency, or of any magistrate. For though it may sometimes happen that the orders of human governments cannot be complied with; for example, when such orders are directly repugnant to the word of God, yet there is no case where THE POWERS THAT BE are to be

DESPISED. They are ever to be treated with the greatest respect. So did Jesus Christ; who, though he abhorred the sentence of Pilate, did not on that account either hurl Cæsar from his throne, or treat his representative with insolent language.

1. My first motive is, I am called back by the letters of the Church and the people of Wittenberg, and this—with much solicitation and entreaty. Now, since there is no denying that the reformation, which has already taken place in that church, has been effected through my instrumentality, and since I cannot but own myself to be, in an especial manner, the minister of the Church to which God hath called me, it was impossible for me to refuse a prompt compliance with their request, unless I intended to renounce altogether that labour and fidelity, which belongs to true Christian charity and love of souls.

There are, indeed, those who throughout execrate our religious emendations, and call them diabolical: but their impieties will not excuse me at the tribunal of God, who will judge me not by other men's consciences, but my own. I am most firmly persuaded, that from the first, my preaching and proceeding to divulge the Gospel of Christ is not of my own motion, but the work of God. Nor, through God's help, shall any kind of death or persecution shake my confidence in this matter; and I believe I rightly divine, when I say that no terror or cruelty will be able to extinguish the light which already has begun to shine.

2. During my absence from Wittenberg, Satan hath made such inroads among my flock, and raised such commotions, as it is not in my power to repress by mere writing. My PRESENCE among my people is absolutely necessary. I must live with them. I must talk to them. I must hear them speak. They must see my mode of proceeding: I must guide them and do them all the good I can. They are my children in Christ, and my conscience will not permit me to be absent from them any longer. Though I should offend your clemency, or bring upon myself the indignation of the whole world, the pressing necessity of the church ought in my judgment to take place of every other consideration.

3. A third motive is, I am much distressed by a well-grounded apprehension, that some great and violent sedition will

arise in Germany, and make that country undergo grievous punishments for its contempt and ingratitude towards a kind Providence. We see, indeed, numbers receive the light of the Gospel with lively approbation and thankfulness; yet many are to be found, who abuse the precious gift to carnal purposes. And there are those, who, though it is their duty, by a temperate conduct, to preserve peace and good order, aim at extinguishing every spark of heavenly light by cruel force and persecution; and thus do they madly inflame the bad passions of men, and, though not aware of it, in fact blow the trumpet of sedition. All this tends evidently to the destruction of the country, and without doubt is a heavy judgment of God for the punishment of the inhabitants. My sole object in writing so much was to break to pieces the ecclesiastical system of despotism; and this, in a considerable degree, is done already. I now suspect it to be the Divine will that matters should proceed much farther, as was the case with the Jews, when, on account of their persecution of the Gospel, and other wickednesses, it pleased God to destroy, root and branch, the city of Jerusalem and the whole Jewish constitution, civil and religious. It is only lately that I have begun to see, what, however, I might have seen long ago, because every line of sacred history clearly shows it, namely, that whether the thing be done with a good or a bad grace, not only ecclesiastical and spiritual dominion, but also civil and political constitutions, must, in the end, give way to the Gospel of Christ.

However, since God, through his prophet Ezekiel, requires us to oppose ourselves as a wall for the people, I have judged it needful to obey the Divine command, and, in concert with my friends, to take this matter into our most serious consideration, and to do everything which we possibly can, in the way of instruction, admonition, and exhortation, to avert, or at least delay for some time the heavy wrath of God. All I can do, MAY be in vain, and my enemies may ridicule my attempt; it will nevertheless be my bounden duty to do everything which I think may tend to promote the laudable end I have in view. For I may venture to add with great truth, and I wish your clemency to be assured of the fact, THAT THE DECISIONS IN THE COUNCIL

OF HEAVEN ARE VERY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHICH ARE PRONOUNCED IN THE IMPERIAL REGENCY AT NUREMBERG; and we shall soon see that those who now dream they have absolutely devoured the Gospel, have not as yet even begun their imaginary feast.

4. I could enumerate many other reasons, upon some of which, however, I do not lay any great stress, because I have not thoroughly considered them. It is enough for me that the Gospel is oppressed, and begins to labour. This single consideration has too much force in it for me to neglect my duty out of regard for any mortal being whatever.

I humbly, therefore, beseech your clemency, for these reasons, to take in good part my return to Wittemberg, without your clemency's knowledge, without having asked leave, and without orders. Your clemency is the Lord of my poor frail body and little fortunes; but Christ is the Lord of the souls which he hath put under my care; and Christ also hath given me a spirit for the work. By no means, therefore, must I desert these souls. I trust my Lord and Master Jesus Christ will show himself more powerful than our enemies, and that he will please to defend and preserve me against all their fury. But if not, may His good will be done! On my account, no danger, no adversity, shall happen to your clemency. And this promise I dare engage to fulfil.

MARTIN LUTHER."

Wittemberg,
March 14, 1522.

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One of the expressions in this letter, which the elector desired might be softened, appears to have been that in which a comparison is made between the decisions in the councils of heaven, and those in the assembly at Nuremberg. In the German corrected copy it stands thus, "The decisions in the councils of heaven are very different from those on EARTH."

From a letter to his friend Spalatinus, we collect, that Luther did not quite relish some of the alterations which the elector had desired to be made. "I am at this moment," says he, "sending my letter to the prince; who, by causing certain phrases therein to be altered according to his own mind, has discovered

many marks of timidity, and of want of faith. This infirmity of his I ought to bear; but he has insisted on my using one word which I own does offend me; namely, in that I am directed to call the emperor my most KIND, or most MERCIFUL* Lord, when all the world knows he is to me as hostile as possible; and there is not an individual who will not laugh at this downright hypocrisy; yet I would rather submit to the ridicule and to the imputation of this species of hypocrisy, than thwart the infirmity of the prince in this instance. In regard to my conscience, I quiet that from the charge of insincerity thus: It is now the established custom to address the emperor in that manner; so that those words are to be considered as his proper name and title, to be used by all persons, even those to whom he has the greatest enmity.—After all, I have a most settled aversion to hypocritical and disguised ways of speaking: hitherto I have given way to them quite enough: it is high time I should stand forth, and speak out.”

The pious student of the history of the Reformation will not think his time mispent in perusing such instructive documents as these. Their authenticity is indisputable; and they throw more light on the secret springs and movements of infant protestantism, than long chapters of modern speculation concerning the efficacy of secondary causes. It is much to be lamented that they have not as yet found their way into our most celebrated ecclesiastical histories. They have probably been deemed to contain too many religious reflections for the taste of the times. Certainly, it is not to be denied, that they lead the mind to see and adore the kindness and wisdom of an overruling Providence, which, by directing its various instruments according to the counsels of His own will, brought about, during the sixteenth century, the most wonderful and unexpected events in the Church. It has often been said, that nothing could have been done without the intrepidity of honest Luther. Let this be admitted; but let it not be added, that “such cautious men as the elector of Saxony could be of no use in the great struggle for Christian liberty.” This very prince was the instrument of preserving the life of the intrepid Luther; and it seems utterly improbable that that

inestimable life could have been saved during such a storm of papal fury, aided by immense papal power, unless there had been in Frederic THE WISE, besides his extreme caution, an extraordinary assemblage of qualities which added great weight and authority to his character. Whoever reflects on these things with scriptural ideas in his mind, will doubtless see the operation of a divine hand in raising up this excellent prince to preserve Martin Luther from the flames, to which he was condemned by Charles V. and Leo X. as well as in bringing into the scene of public action this eminent Reformer himself at the critical time when there wanted so disinterested and daring a spirit, and so wise an interpreter of the sacred oracles.

Luther, on his return to Wittemberg, resumed his favourite employment of preaching. He had to inform the judgment and calm the passions of a distracted multitude. Few persons, however, have been better qualified for the arduous task. He possessed in a very high degree the requisites which the most approved instructors in the art of eloquence have wished their pupils either to be endowed with by nature or to acquire by diligence. There prevailed almost universally a fixed opinion of his unexampled integrity, and of his extraordinary knowledge of the Scriptures. His great skill in the German language has been mentioned before:* to all which, if we add the immense importance of the subjects he had to handle, and his affectionate manner of addressing his countrymen, we may cease to wonder that Luther's discourses from the pulpit should have produced that happy restoration of peace and good order, which, quickly after his arrival at Wittemberg, are known to have taken place both in the town and the university.

The substance of seven of these discourses is to be found in Luther's writings. As no time was to be lost, they were preached in rapid succession: and as it was of immense consequence, in the unsettled state of the minds of the people, that the great Christian rules for a quiet and peaceable conduct, and for submission to authority, should be clearly set forth, forcibly impressed, and well remembered; the preacher, there-

Luther, on his return to Wittemberg, preached several times.

* Dominum clementissimum.

* See page 310.

fore, in these practical harangues was uncommonly grave, concise, and perspicuous. He showed his hearers, with how much charity and tender consideration the weakest brethren should be treated;—that various inconveniences in the external state of the church should be dispensed with, till the minds of men were sufficiently ripened to admit of more improvement;—that communion in both kinds ought not to be introduced by force, but that the people should be persuaded to it by substantial arguments; and, that in the mean time those, who pleased, might still adhere to the customary mode, without suffering molestation;—that the existence of images in the church might be tolerated for the present, though he wished to see their total abolition;—that adoration of them, however, ought by no means to be countenanced, but strongly protested against, by every Christian. He reprehended the promiscuous concourse to the Lord's supper, and insisted on a godly preparation, especially a lively faith in the Redeemer, without which the sacrament itself was nugatory.

Luther, on his first appearance in the pulpit, addressed his audience to the following effect. "Once more I am allowed to sound the Gospel in your ears; once more you may derive benefit from my exhortation. By and by death will come, and then we can do one another no good. How necessary therefore is it, that every individual should be furnished with the principles which are to support him at that awful moment! These principles are the great doctrines of Christianity; and by treasuring them up in your memories, you will act like wise men, and be fortified against the attacks of the enemy. I have often explained them to you on former occasions, and you have often granted me a kind and patient hearing. At present I would be as concise as possible.

Firstly; That we are by nature children of wrath, and that all our own thoughts, our affections, and our works, can do us no good, is a fundamental truth, and we should have some solid scriptural passage always at hand to prove it. The Bible is full of passages which imply the very essence of this doctrine; but the third verse of the second chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians is directly to the purpose. Fix that verse deep in your mind; 'We are

all,' says the apostle, 'children of wrath.' Beware, then, of saying, I have built a church, I have founded a mass, and such like.

Secondly; The great and good Jehovah sent his only Son to us, that we might believe on him; and that whosoever does believe on him, might be free from the law of sin, and become a child of God. He gave them, says St. John, power to become the sons of God, namely, to those who should believe on his name. In support of this point also, we should be well furnished with scriptural proofs, with which, as with the shield of Achilles, we may defend ourselves from the darts of the WICKED ONE. However, to confess the truth, I have not observed you to be deficient in the knowledge of either of these two fundamental articles of religion. I have preached on them very often before you; and I am not ashamed to own, that several of you are much more capable than I am of defending them by scriptural authority.

But there is a third point, my dear friends, which we ought earnestly to aim at,—namely, to do good to each other in love; as Christ hath shown his love to us by his works. Without this love, faith is a cold speculation, and of no account. So says St. Paul, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have all faith, and have not charity, I am nothing.' In this, dear friends, ye are, as yet, greatly defective. Nay, not a single vestige of love can I discover in you; a plain proof that ye are not grateful to God for his rich mercies.

Beware, then, lest Wittemberg should become like Capernaum. Ye can discourse excellently on the doctrines which have been preached to you; ye can even dispute acutely concerning charity. But this does not make a Christian. The kingdom of God does not consist in talk, but in power, that is, in works, and in practice. God loves the doers of the word in faith and love, and not the mere hearers, who, like parrots, have learnt to utter certain expressions with readiness. Once more; faith without love is, as it were, a dream, an image of faith; just as the appearance of a face in a glass is not a real face.

Fourthly, continues Luther, we have need of patience. There must be persecution. Satan never sleeps; but is constantly contriving something that is mat-

ter for our patience. Now patience begets hope. The Christian learns entirely to commit his cause to God; his faith increases more and more, and he grows stronger every day.

The heart which is furnished with these spiritual gifts thinks little of its own private advantages; but overflows with good-will towards his brother, and for his sake forbears to do many things, which otherwise he might be allowed to do. 'All things,' says St. Paul, 'are lawful to me, but all things are not expedient;' for all have not made equal advances in faith.

To be plain; we ought to bear with the infirmities of our brethren, and to feed them with milk; and not to be so selfish as to think of arriving at heaven ALONE, but rather to try whether we cannot gain our brethren by kindness, and make them our companions in the road to the mansions of the blessed, though, for the present, they may be inimical to us.—For example, if I had been with you lately, when ye were abolishing the masses, I should have endeavoured to moderate your heat and impetuosity. Your cause was good, but was managed by you with too much violence. There are, I trust, among the opposite party, many brothers and sisters who belong to us, and must be drawn to us with the cords of love. Let your faith be firm as a rock; but let your charity be pliable, and accommodated to the circumstances of your neighbour. Some can only creep, others can walk briskly, and others again are so swift that they can almost fly.

The error of those, who abolished the masses, consisted, not in doing a thing that was wrong in itself, but in not doing what they did in a right manner. Their proceedings were most rash and precipitate, and inconsistent with all the laws of order; and no wonder, therefore, that they gave great offence to their neighbours. Such a business should not have been undertaken without serious prayers to God in the first place: and in the next place the assent of the magistrates should have been obtained: and thus it would have been manifest that these new regulations were ordained of God. Long ago I might have taken the same step, if I had thought it either lawful or prudent. But the truth is, I so entirely disapprove the spirit with which you have acted, that if the mass were not in

itself an abomination, I should be disposed to re-establish it. I could indeed plead your cause before the pope, but I cannot acquit you of having fallen into the snares of Satan. I wish you had asked my advice, which you might easily have done; I was at no such great distance."

In a subsequent discourse, in prosecution of the same subject, he spake thus: "That the private masses ought to be abolished is as clear as that God is to be worshipped; and with my voice and my pen I would strenuously maintain that they are a most horrid abomination. Yet I would not pull away by force any one person from the mass. Let us preach the Gospel; and commit the event to the Divine will. Let us say, 'Beloved countrymen, abstain, I beseech you, in future, from the mass. Indeed, it is a blasphemous practice, and most highly offensive to Almighty God.' But by no means would I compel them, especially by the hasty and intemperate decision of a mob, to comply with our forms of sacramental communion. No; I would instruct, I would admonish them from the sacred pages, and if they took my advice I should have happily gained them over to the truth; but if not, it does not become me to drag them away by the hair of the head, or to use violence of any other kind; but rather to leave the word of God to its own operation, and to pray for them. By acting in this manner, the force of Scripture will penetrate the hearts of men, and produce an effectual and a durable change of sentiment. Proselytes will be made gradually; and when men are become, in general, of the same mind, then they will agree in laying aside their erroneous forms and ceremonies. In all this I am far from wishing to restore the use of the mass. If it be abrogated, let it remain so. All I affirm is, what you must be convinced of, namely, that faith, in its very nature, is incapable of restraint or coercion.

As an example, reflect on my conduct in the affair of the Indulgences. I had the whole body of the papists to oppose. I preached, I wrote, I pressed on men's consciences with the greatest earnestness the positive declarations of the word of God, but I used not a particle of force or constraint. What has been the consequence? This same Word of God has, while I was asleep in my bed, given

such a blow to papal despotism, as not one of the German princes, not even the emperor himself could have done. It is not I, I repeat it, it is the Divine Word which has done everything. Had it been right to have aimed at a reform by violence and tumults, it would have been easy for me to have deluged Germany with blood; nay, had I been in the least inclined to promote sedition, it was in my power when I was at Worms, to have endangered the safety even of the emperor himself. The devil smiles in secret when men pretend to support religion by seditious tumults; but he is cut to the heart, when he sees them, in faith and patience, rely on the written word."

These extracts from Luther's sermons may suffice as specimens of the wisdom and discretion with which that Reformer addressed and directed his congregation in a critical extremity, when the best friends of the protestant cause was almost in despair. They may also have other important uses, especially when taken in connexion with the other parts of this circumstantial account of Luther's motives for leaving the castle of Wartburg. For example; they demonstrate, in general, the enlightened state of the mind of the great German Reformer at this very early period of the reformation; and they furnish the completest answer to the invidious conjecture of those, who have imagined that the "true reason of his displeasure at the proceedings of Carolstadt was, that he could not bear to see another crowned with the glory of executing a PLAN which he had laid."*

* The facts prove that Luther laid down no plan at all. His eyes opened by degrees, and he was faithful to the light afforded him. He acted to the best of his judgment always at the moment, and committed his cause to God, completely ignorant of what he might be called to do or to suffer; but as completely disposed to obey what should appear to him to be the Divine will. The learned translator of Mosheim, in his note, quoted above in the text, supposes that Luther was ambitious of appearing as the principal Reformer. There is no doubt but he was in FACT the PRINCIPAL. Neither the caution of Frederic, nor the crudition of Melancthon, could have done much without the judgment, the vigour, and the activity of Luther. Be it granted then, that this Reformer was ambitious of appearing WHAT HE REALLY WAS; what is this but saying that

The people of Wittenberg heard their beloved pastor with the greatest satisfaction: and again tranquillity and concord began to flourish in the Church. The importance of Carolstadt vanished before the influence of Luther; and, after various travels and schemes, he became fixed at Basil, where he exercised the pastoral office for ten years, and died in 1531.*

Death of
Carolstadt,
A. D. 1531.

Luther, in a letter to the Prior of Eisleben, gives the following concise account of the misunderstanding between Carolstadt and himself:

"I offended Carolstadt," says he, "because I annulled his institutions; though I by no means condemned his doctrine. In one point, however, he grieved me much. I found him taking prodigions pains about ceremonies and things external, and, at the same time, very negligent in inculcating the essential principles of Christianity; namely, faith and charity. By his injudicious

he was but a man? St. Paul himself did not like to build upon another man's foundation. As to the glory of executing a plan by riot and tumult, nothing could be more contrary to Luther's principles than the use of force and violence, or than the breach of peace and decorum. See his life by Melancthon, in the Appendix to this Vol. See also Luther's Warnings against Sedition and Tumult. In this last tract he exhorts all men, not so much as to mention his name in a sectarian view; not to call themselves Lutherans, but Christians. "The doctrine," says he, "is not mine, nor was I crucified for any one. Paul and Peter forbid the people to call themselves after their names: why should I, who am soon to be food for worms, desire the children of Christ to be called by the name of so poor a creature? By no means! No! No! Let us have done with factious appellations; and be called Christians, because we possess the doctrine of Christianity. The Papists have very properly another name, because they are not content with Christ's name, and Christ's doctrine; they choose to be called Papists. Be it so; because they have a master. I desire to be no man's master. I hold, with the Church, the doctrine which belongs to us all in common, and of which Christ alone is the author." Seek. Ind. III. Suppl.

* As Carolstadt at length joined the Zuinglian communion, any further account of him will more properly fall in with the history of that church, than with the history of Lutheranism.

method of teaching, he had induced many of the people to think themselves Christians, however deficient in these graces, provided they did but communicate in both kinds, take the consecrated elements into their own hands, refuse private confession, and break images. Observe how the malice of Satan attempts to ruin the Gospel in a new way. All along, my object has been, by instruction, to emancipate the consciences of men from the bondage of human inventions of every kind; and then the papal fooleries would soon fall of themselves by common consent. But Carolstadt suddenly set himself up as a new teacher, and by his own arbitrary institutions endeavoured to ruin my credit with the people."

There now only remained, as an object of contention, the turbulence and fanaticism of the prophets, mentioned some

Treatment
of the
Prophets.

pages before.* The associates of Stubner pressed him to defend his pretensions openly, and to confront the

Reformer, who, by his sermons and his authority, had nearly restored peace and unanimity among the people. With much reluctance, Luther consented to hold a conference, in the presence of Melancthon, with this enthusiast and Cellary, and another of the same fanatical sect. Our sagacious Reformer patiently heard the prophet relate his visions; and when the harangue was finished, recollecting that nonsense was incapable of confutation, he briefly admonished him to take care what he did. You have mentioned, said he, nothing that has the least support in Scripture; the whole seems rather an ebullition of imagination, or, perhaps, the fraudulent suggestion of an evil spirit. Cellary, in a storm of indignation, stamped on the ground, struck the table with his hands, and expressed the most lively resentment that Luther should dare to say such things of so divine a personage. Stubner, with more calmness, told Luther he would give him a proof that he was influenced by the Divine Spirit; for, said he, I will reveal your own thoughts at this moment. You are inclined to believe my doctrine true, notwithstanding what has passed. The man, however, was totally mistaken in his conjecture;—for Luther afterwards declared that he was then

meditating on the divine sentence, "the Lord rebuke thee, Satan." The prophets now boasted and threatened, in the most pompous, and extravagant terms, what surprising things they would do to establish their commission; but Luther thought proper to put an end to the conversation by dismissing them with these words, "The God whom I serve and adore will confound your vanities." That very day they left the town, and sent letters to Luther full of execrations and abuse. The leaders, however, being gone, their disciples dwindled in number; and for the present the delusion was quashed.**

It was not, however, in the power of Luther, to infuse into all his followers the moderate and cautious spirit with which he himself, notwithstanding the warmth of his temper, was constantly possessed. He expresses his grief, that many monks, deserting their monasteries, flocked to Wittenberg, and married immediately, actuated by no better motives than those of mere sensuality; from which he foresaw the scandal which would arise against the Gospel. He complains that wickedness still abounded among those who professed to abhor the papacy, and that they had the kingdom of God among them too much in word, instead of power.† There were, however, some of those that deserted the monasteries, who gave the most shining proofs of genuine godliness, and who were the most active instruments of the propagation of the Gospel. Nor were their labours, or those of Luther, in vain: many souls were turned from the power of Satan to God. It required only the exercise of common candour and equity to acknowledge the utility of the Reformation in these and other important instances, and not to expect from the labours of a few upright pastors the entire renovation of the human species. Luther's zeal was no less vehement against the ABUSE of Christian liberty, than it was against papal bondage; he was cautious and slow in the promotion of external changes in the church, ardent and intent on the advancement of internal re-

* These fanatical prophets opposed the baptism of infants; and appear to have been among the very first of the turbulent German anabaptists;—a sect, which ought never to be confounded with the baptists of our times. Melch. Adam.

† Comment. de Luth. cxxiii.

ligion; he lamented the perverseness of hypocritical professors; he checked the ferocious spirits of the forward and the turbulent; and demonstrated his own sincerity by a perfect contempt of all secular arts to obtain applause and popularity. It was not to be supposed, that all men who had been habituated to folly and wickedness under the popedom, should immediately, on hearing his sermons, commence real saints; it is rather to be admired as a great effect of divine grace, that so many gave substantial proofs of genuine conversion.

His personal circumstances were all this time truly distressing. He thus describes them in a letter to Gerbelius of Strasburg.* "I am now encompassed with no guards, but those of heaven; I live in the midst of enemies, who have a legal power of killing me every hour. This is the way in which I comfort myself; I know that Christ is Lord of all, that the Father hath put all things under his feet, among the rest the wrath of the emperor, and all evil spirits. If it please Christ that I should be slain, let me die in his name; if it do not please him, who shall slay me? Do you only, with your friends, take care to assist the cause of the Gospel by your prayers.—For, through our grievous ingratitude, we hold the Gospel in word only, and not in power, and are more elated in knowledge than edified in charity, I fear our Germany will be drenched in blood." To Langus the pastor of Erfurt he wrote thus: "I must not come to you; it becometh me not to tempt God, by seeking dangers elsewhere, when I am full of them here already, excluded as I am by the papal and imperial anathemas, exposed to be murdered by any one, absolutely with no protection except that which is from above."

Amidst all these difficulties, however, he remitted not his usual vigor and activity. During his confinement he had studied the Hebrew tongue with persevering industry, and had translated the whole New Testament into the German language. And in the course of this year, 1522, he published the version. He then proceeded to apply his Hebrew studies to the translation of the Old Testament, which he

also published gradually, and finished the whole in the year 1530. In this work he was much assisted by the labour and advice of several of his friends, particularly Justus Jonas and Philip Melancthon. The whole performance itself was a monument of that astonishing industry which marked the character of this Reformer. The effects of this labour were soon felt in Germany; immense numbers now read in their own language the precious word of God, and saw with their own eyes the just foundations of the Lutheran doctrine. To decide on the merits of Luther's translation, would require not only an exact knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek, but also of the German language; certainly it was elegant and perspicuous, and, beyond comparison, preferable to any scriptural publication which had before been known to the populace. It is probable that this work had many defects; but that it was in the main faithful and sound, may be fairly presumed from the solid understanding, biblical learning, and multifarious knowledge of the author and his coadjutors. A more acceptable present could scarcely have been conferred on men, who were emerging out of darkness; and the example being followed soon after by reformers in other nations, the real knowledge of Scripture, if we take into the account the effects of the art of printing, was facilitated to a surprising degree.

The papacy saw all this, and sighed indignant.

Emser, a doctor of Leipsic, endeavoured to depreciate the credit of Luther's version; and the popish princes, within the bounds of their respective dominions, ordered the work to be burnt. Nor was their resentment appeased by the advice which Luther openly gave to their subjects, which was this,—patiently to bear their sufferings without resisting their governors, but not to come forward voluntarily and deliver up their German bibles, nor to do any act, which might testify an approbation of the requisitions of their superiors on the occasion.

In the mean time, George of Saxony, incensed at the growth of Lutheranism, and expostulating repeatedly with his nephew the elector, on account of his conduct, began to encourage the papal bishops to exert themselves in their respective dioceses.

The duke George is engaged at the growth of Lutheranism.

Among these, John à Schleinig, bishop

Luther publishes the New Testament in German A. D. 1522.

Also the Old Testament A. D. 1530.

* Epist. Lib. 2.

of Misnia, commenced an episcopal visitation in this year. The elector refused not his consent; too timid to withstand openly the power of the popedom, and too conscientious to undertake the decision of theological cases, to which he confessed his knowledge to be inadequate. A long course of superstitious servility from his early years had enfeebled, in religious matters, the intellectual powers of this prince, which, in secular affairs, were justly looked on as exceedingly eminent. His labours and expense in the collection of relics had been astonishing; yet, amidst all his superstitions, doubts, and embarrassments, he had constantly preserved a secret predilection for something of evangelical truth; and, on no occasion would permit it to be oppressed by violence, though through life he never openly supported it.* Thus, in the course of divine Providence, the foundations of the Reformation were laid in Germany by the preaching and exposition of the word of God, with no more aid from the civil power than that of a connivance, firm indeed and unalterable, but ever bearing the

marks of hesitation and indecision. That Frederic should permit the bishop of Misnia, an avowed and professional adversary of Luther, to visit the churches, might alarm the minds of many; but it produced no mischievous effects. He preached, he warned, he expostulated, through the diocese; but the papal arguments were now stale, insipid, and ineffective. So much light had been diffused through Saxony, that this prelate's defence of masses, of communion in one kind, of the pope's authority and infallibility, and of the rest of the Romish tenets, appeared ridiculous to the laity. Other bishops, with the consent of the elector, made the same peregrinations with the same effect; and it required all the power and rigour of the Duke George to keep his own subjects within the bounds of papal obedience. So much more happy did the subjects of Frederic, who enjoyed liberty of conscience, seem to be than themselves, who remained papists by constraint; and so much light, from the proximity of their situation, had they received concerning the nature of true religion.*

* There is on record a notable instance of the resolute determination of this good prince to protect his subjects from papal cruelty. A clergyman of Schmeidberg, in the electorate of Frederic, complained to the elector, that attempts had been made to carry him away by force to Stolpen, the place of the residence of the bishop of Misnia. This bishop also, about the same time, having before accused the said clergyman of not appearing to a citation which he had sent to him, had entreated the prince to compel his subject to obedience. Frederic replied, that the grounds of the citation ought to have been stated; and that he would not permit his clergy to be taken by force, and carried out of his dominions, without his knowledge and approbation. The fault of this clergyman appears to have been, that he laboured under the suspicion of being married. Some other cases of a like sort happened during this year. The bishop remonstrated; but Frederic continued steady; and would allow no force to be employed against his clergy. Further, he desired the bishop to appeal to him no more against them on the account of their being married. He might use, he said, his ecclesiastical jurisdiction against them, if he pleased. The elector had learnt, that this tyrannical bishop had shut up in a noisome prison, three clergymen belonging to the district of duke George; and had actually put another to death. Seeck.

But the difficulties of providing for the instruction and edification of the Lutheran churches began now to be more and more apparent. It was not possible, that public worship and the administration of the sacraments could be conducted decently and in order without some plan of ecclesiastical discipline. The court would do no more than grant a tacit protection to the pastors; and the great personal authority of Luther seemed to be the only cement of union among those who loved the Gospel. It was easy to foresee what feuds and divisions might arise from so uncertain and fluctuating a state of the church; and there was no opportunity of forming a general synod of pastors and elders, who might regulate the external state of religion. On the one hand, the bishops, and many of the clergy and monks, who still adhered to the old system, laboured to harass and perplex the minds of all serious inquirers after Divine truth; and on the other, many of the people panted for the benefit of a church order, more emancipated from superstitions, and better adapted to the evangelical ideas which they were continually receiving, either from read-

* Archiv. Vin.

ing the books or hearing the sermons of Luther and his associates. In this crisis the Reformer was consulted by the parochial clergy of some of the principal towns in Saxony, who approved of the alterations which he had introduced into Wittemberg with the consent of the inhabitants and the connivance of the elector, and who, therefore, were anxious to inquire and try whether improvements of a similar kind might not be made in other places. This application gave rise to a little treatise, which Luther, in the year 1523, published and dedicated to Nicholas Hausman, the pastor of Zwiebau, whom the author revered very highly, as has been already observed. The exordium of this tract may deserve to be quoted, as it will sufficiently explain the principles of the external Reformation which was gradually introduced into various parts of Germany, where Lutherism prevailed, and illustrate the customs of the churches while they were yet in an imperfect state of discipline. "Hitherto," said he, "by books, and by preaching, I have laboured among the people, to inform their minds and to draw their hearts from false dependencies; thinking it a Christian employment, if possible, to BREAK WITHOUT HANDS* the abomination which Satan, by the man of sin, had set up in the holy place. I have attempted nothing forcibly, nothing imperiously; nor have I changed old customs; being always afraid of doing mischief, partly on account of those who are weak in the faith, and cannot suddenly be divested of old prejudices, or induced to acquiesce in new modes of worship, but principally because of those light and fastidious spirits, who rush on without faith and without understanding, and delight in novelty only, and are presently disgusted, when the charms of novelty have ceased. In other subjects, persons of this turn of mind are sufficiently troublesome; in religion, however, they are peculiarly so: still it is my duty to bear them, though my temper must thereby be tried to the utmost;—unless, indeed, I were to cease all my attempts to spread the Gospel among the public. But, as I now flatter myself that the hearts of many are both enlightened and strengthened by the grace of God, and as the circumstances require that scandals should

at length be removed out of the kingdom of Christ, we ought to attempt something in HIS NAME. For it is highly proper, that we should consult for the good of the few, lest while we perpetually dread the levity and abuses of the many, we should do good to none; and lest, while we dread future scandals, we should confirm the general abominations. We will therefore endeavour, in the sacramental forms, so to regulate the use of them, that we may not only instruct the hearts of the people, but also recommend a public administration of them, without pretending to impose our own ideas upon others. And we entreat the brethren heartily, through Jesus Christ, that if anything better be revealed to them, they would exhibit it, that the public benefit may be conducted by public council."—The whole passage seems to be a memorable evidence of that thoughtfulness and caution, which marked the conduct of this early Reformer in all his public proceedings. On this plan he undertook to remove some of the most flagrant abuses in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to recommend communion in both kinds, at the same time that he still tolerated, till a more favourable opportunity occurred, many lesser matters not directly sinful, though inconvenient and useless: for the zeal of Luther, like that of St. Paul, exerted all its vehemence on the essentials of salvation,—real Faith, and real Piety. In externals and ceremonious subjects, he would, to many protestants, appear too remiss, especially to those who have not considered so much, as he did, the danger of needless divisions.

He complained, however, of an evil in the great church at Wittemberg, which it was not in his power to rectify, namely, the celebration of private masses, in which the very essence of religious merchandise and religious imposture consisted.* It is not easy to exculpate the elector of Saxony on this article, as he must have well known the danger and mischief of the traffic; but he appears either not to have had the fortitude to oppose the abomination, or, what is more probable, to have had some method of

* By means of these masses, those who had money supposed that they could secure to themselves the favour of God, in their journeys, voyages, and such like, and even after death. Luth. Op. II. 348.

* Dan. viii. 25.

pacifying his conscience in tolerating the nuisance.* Not long after, it pleased God to remove by death some of the more obstinate canons of Wittemberg, and Luther found an opportunity of gradually annihilating this great bulwark of popery. Neither did it escape the sagacity of our Reformer, that the alterations which were daily taking place, in consequence of the protestant doctrines, would in many instances be attended with a dangerous redundancy of ecclesiastical revenue. The monasteries and colleges would soon be deserted, and it was not probable that new inhabitants would succeed the old ones. Luther foresaw that much scandal and great abuses might arise from this circumstance, unless certain effectual precautions were taken in due time, to prevent the superfluous money from becoming a temptation to the rapacity or covetousness of worldly-minded men. He therefore published his thoughts freely on this delicate subject respecting the proper application of ecclesiastical property; and thereby, as might be expected, gave prodigious offence to the papal party. The little tract is in the German language, and has been called the COMMON TREASURY, because he proposed that a sort of common treasury should be made of the above-mentioned ecclesiastical revenues, and be applied to the erection of schools and hospitals, the maintenance of preachers, and other pious and laudable objects. Luther, for merely giving this advice, was accused of setting up himself, by his own private authority, as the supreme lawgiver, and also of attempting to gratify the German princes with the plunder of the church.† But there is not the least foundation for either of these charges.

During these unceasing efforts of the Reformer to promote the glory of God in the recovery and establishment of Christian liberty, his grand adversary, George duke of Saxony, had strained every nerve in opposition to the good cause, and, by continual exertions in support of the declining credit of the papal system, manifested his bigoted attachment to that corrupt communion. This faithful son of the Romish church, having in vain endeavoured, by repeated remonstrances, to persuade the elector to

use his authority in repressing the new religion, resolved to try whether he might not have better success with John duke of Saxony, the brother of Frederic. In a letter written with his own hand, he complained heavily to this prince of the heretical transactions at Wittemberg and Zwickau, and of the remissness of his brother the elector. The faithful clergy were insulted and even pelted with stones, while those of the Lutheran sect married wives, and wrote books in defence of the marriages of the monks. There were even some who were destitute of all religion, and denied the immortality of the soul. All these evils, he said, proceeded from the novel doctrines of the arch-heretic; and gave him the more pain, since he had found the contagion was spreading among his own subjects. He concluded with beseeching his nephew John to do his utmost to convince the elector Frederic how absolutely necessary it was become that he should clear himself of the suspicion of heresy, either by punishing the innovators, or at least openly expressing his disapprobation of their proceedings. He would gladly concur, he said, with his two nephews in suppressing the growing mischief, and had more to say on this subject. To this exhortation, John duke of Saxony, who will shortly appear to have been a staunch protestant, and who well knew how fruitless would be any attempt to argue with his prejudiced uncle, returned no more than a concise and civil reply,—that he would not fail to communicate with his brother the elector, and would be ready to pay due attention to any further advice the duke George might think proper to give.

But George, the most determined bigot of the age, was not satisfied with using persuasions only. He had recourse to what he supposed more efficacious methods of securing the unity of the church. Under the authority of the emperor, and in concert with Alexander and other enemies of the reformation, he had procured the severe edict of Nuremberg,* and was labouring in every way he could devise to render it effective. It was in obedience to the special directions of this edict that the bishops began their penal and coercive visitations; and it was under the sanction of the same tyrannical

* Secs. 217—223. 274—276.

† Du Pin. Maimbourg, 55.

* Seck. 190. See also the note in p. 344 of this Vol.

measure, that George, by imprisonments and other cruelties, supported, through every part of his own territory, the ecclesiastical inquisitions. Moreover, this active zealot, to render his plans of persecution more extensive, tried once more, by a literary correspondence, to obtain the co-operation of the elector of Saxony. He said, the reputation of that wise prince was suffering from a want of vigorous animadversion on the apostate clergy: he had heard, during his stay at Nuremberg, many reports of the profane doctrines and irregular practices of the schismatics under Frederic's jurisdiction: and to be brief, he neither understood nor wished to understand, all the obscure hints which were thrown out to the disadvantage of his nephew.

Upon the elector's demanding an explanation of this innuendo, he owned, that he had not heard of any specific charge being made against the person of Frederic, but that nevertheless numbers of people expressed their astonishment, that so good a prince should tolerate the heresy and disobedience even of his own professors and teachers. A doctor and ex-monk at Eisleberg, named Gabriel,* was said to be a principal instigator of all this mischief. Moreover, they accused Carolstadt of being married, and Melancthon of doing such things as the very Hussites would have held in abhorrence. The duke George protested that the hearing of these things gave him the greatest concern; and he heartily wished that those, who boasted of having caused so much evangelical light in the electorate of Frederic, had been preaching their Gospel at Constantinople; for he was sure they had brought upon their prince, now in his old age, abundance of ignominious reflections. He concluded with earnestly exhorting the elector to punish most severely the refractory monks and priests, and thereby give proof of his piety and regard to duty.

The elector replied concisely, but with great prudence and moderation. He had hoped, he said, that the duke his uncle on such an occasion would have behaved like a friend and a Christian; that he would not have given credit to slanderous reports, but have defended him from the charge of countenancing irreligion and impiety. Reports of that sort were to be despised, and their punishment left

to the Almighty. He himself should never approve anything that was contrary to the honour of God, the sound judgment of the holy fathers, and the salvation of mankind: and as to those who were guilty in these respects, it was at their own peril, they must take the consequences; and should they prove to be his own subjects, he would assuredly punish them, when convicted of having done anything illegal.

He confessed, it was true that Luther had returned to Wittenberg, but then it was without the prince's leave; and it was also well known that the prince had never undertaken to defend his doctrine. He said, he had many other observations to make in reply, but he was afraid of being troublesome to the duke;—he therefore concluded with entreating him never to suppose it possible that he could be disinclined to give the utmost attention to every proposal which tended to promote the glory of God and Christian charity.

Thus this wise prince, by avoiding a fruitless contention on the points in dispute, and by returning a discreet answer, which consisted chiefly in general declarations, adhered with consistency and dignity to his own cautious maxims, and effectually frustrate the inhuman designs of a sincere, but barbarous persecutor.

The reader will, however, understand, that it was only so far as the jurisdiction of the elector of Saxony extended that the designs of George were frustrated. The mild and decorous language of Frederic seems indeed to have abated somewhat of the fury of the duke in the course of their epistolary conflict, but to have produced no durable or substantial change on his mind in favour of reason, humanity, and Christian liberty. He continued to persecute with unrelenting cruelty those clergy of his own district who were in the least disposed to Lutheranism, and likewise all persons who ventured to communicate at the Lord's supper in both kinds: he recalled from the schools and universities, wherever he supposed the contagion of the new doctrines prevailed, all the students who were under his power or influence; and he purchased, with a view to destroy Luther's version of the New Testament, as many copies of it as he could collect, and severely punished such of his subjects as refused to deliver them up. Emboldened by these rigorous proceed-

* See Appendix, Gabriel.

ings of the duke, his bigoted ecclesiastics raged against the Lutherans with increased violence and rancour. The pulpits in Leipsic resounded with vindictive declamation; and the bishops in their visitations denounced the most cruel punishments against all who should dare either to read Luther's translation, or to go into the neighbouring district of the elector of Saxony for the purpose of hearing the sermons of the reformers. The blind persecutors were not then aware how completely they were defeating their own designs by these cruelties. The seminaries of education at Leipsic were more and more deserted: the young scholars, impelled by curiosity, a thirst of knowledge, or a hatred of compulsion, fled to Wittenberg, now become famous for rational inquiry and Christian liberty.

The papal historian Maimbourg confesses, that Luther's translations of the Old and New Testament were remarkably elegant, and in general so much approved, that they were read by almost every body throughout Germany. Women of the first distinction studied them with the most industrious and persevering attention, and obstinately defended the tenets of the Reformer against bishops, monks, and catholic doctors.*—Hence the necessity of some speedy ANTIDOTES, which might resist the ravages of such contagious publications.

Jerom Emser, † a Leipsic doctor, and a counsellor of the duke George, was fixed upon as best qualified to furnish

Emser at-
tacks Lu-
ther's trans-
lations of
the Scrip-
tures.

THESE. This champion of the papacy first published his puerile, but calumnious Notes on Luther's New Testament; and afterwards, through the encouragement of George and two bishops, produced what was called, "A correct translation of the New Testament into German," but which, in fact, was little more than a transcript of Luther's labours, some alterations in favour of the peculiar tenets of the Romish church excepted. The performances of Emser, as far as they were his own, were deemed contemptible in the highest degree, on account of the malignant cavilling disposition of their author, and also of his extreme ignorance of the German language. It would be lost time to detain the reader with instances either of his wretched

verbal criticisms, or of his hackneyed unwarrantable objections to the Reformer's doctrine of faith and works. There are, however, two circumstances relative to this business, which may deserve to be briefly mentioned, as they tend to characterize most distinctly the spirit of these adversaries with whom a reformer had to contend in the time of Luther.

1. Such were the prejudices and the blindness of George of Saxony, that as soon as Emser's version of the New Testament was ready for publication, he issued a proclamation, in which he treated Luther and his disciples with the most virulent and contumelious language: he not only reprobated his opinions in general, but also reproached him for being the real author of all the excesses, seditions, and mutinies, which had lately happened among the people; and in particular, laid great stress on the mischief which he had done to Christianity by his version of the New Testament: in prohibiting the use of which, he said, "he acted in obedience to the late edict of Nuremberg, agreeably to what was the acknowledged duty of every German prince."

2. The other circumstance respects the avowed declarations of Emser, "That he had confuted Luther's interpretations of the Scriptures, and opposed to them his own, constantly following that sense of any passage which the church approved. That, however, he was by no means convinced of the expediency of trusting the Scriptures with the ignorant multitude: The sacred writings were an abyss in whose depths even the most learned men had often been lost." "If the laity," said he, "would but take my advice, I would recommend it to them rather to aim at a holy life, than to study the Scriptures. The Scriptures are committed to the learned, and to them only."

This needs no comment.

Amidst the rough treatment which Luther met with from Emser and his patrons, he derived, like St. Paul, abundant consolation from reflecting how much the knowledge of the Bible was spreading among the people, whatever the cause might be, and even though a spirit of envy and strife and opposition was the undoubted motive of his enemies.—"I would have been glad," says he, "to have seen any one of the popish adherents dare to come forward and translate, without the help of Luther's

* Maimb. Sect. 51.

† See Appendix—Emser.

version, a single epistle of St. Paul, or one of the prophets. They would have made fine work of it, as may be seen from the few places where the Dresden impostor* has altered my Testament. In fact he has left out my preface, inserted his own, and then sold my translation almost word for word. If any person suspect my veracity, let them compare my book with the production of this plagiarist, and they will soon be convinced who was the real translator. It was sufficiently vexatious to see the duke of Saxony proscribe my version, and direct Emser's to be read, when they are really one and the same. The above-mentioned patchwork of this writer, where he undertakes to mend my translation, is not worthy of notice, and therefore I have determined not to produce a syllable in print against what he calls his version. In the mean time I cannot but look with a smile of admiration on those very WISE ONES, who calumniate and condemn my Testament, merely because it comes before the public under the name of Luther; but I pretend not to estimate the merits of those who steal the writings of others, affix their own names to them, and in this fraudulent way to extend their reputation among the people. There is a just Judge who will see to this. The best revenge which I can wish for is, that though Luther's name is suppressed, and that of his adversary put in its place, yet Luther's book is read, and thus the design of his labours is promoted by his very enemies.†

Though the bitterness, activity, and perseverance of George of Saxony, has secured to him an infamous precedence among the persecutors of those times, yet there were not wanting instances of the exercise of similar zeal and barbarity in support of the popedom. Henry duke of Brunswic is numbered among the princes who followed his example; and also the emperor's brother, Ferdinand archduke of Austria. This latter issued a severe edict to prevent the publication of Luther's translation of the Bible, which had soon gone through several editions; and he forbid all the subjects of his imperial majesty to have any copies either of that or of any of Luther's books. In Flanders the persecution appears to

have been extreme. Many, on account of their adherence to Lutheranism, were put to death, or deprived of their property, by the most summary and tyrannical proceedings. At Antwerp the monks were remarkably favourable to the reformation. Many of them suffered death with patience and firmness; others were punished in various ways, after having, through long imprisonment and the dread of losing their lives, been compelled to recant.

In nothing but their ZEAL did Luther imitate either the civil or the ecclesiastical persecutors of the protestants. He was now at open war with the pope, his cardinals and his bishops; but, on his part, it was entirely a war of reason and argument. From all his numerous and most acrimonious publications, not a single line has been produced where he wishes or recommends force and violence, in the smallest degree, to be used against the persons of his enemies. However, in proportion as the tempest thickened and grew daily more dangerous, our Reformer stood in need of fresh supplies of courage and activity. His opponents were powerful, and meditated the extirpation both of the teacher and his disciples. Their ears were deaf to the expostulations of reason, and their hearts hardened against the cries of humanity. Wherever the barbarous inquisitors had the civil power on their side, nothing but the apprehension of being condemned at the awful tribunal of the PUBLIC OPINION could suspend the uplifted hand of persecution. On this apprehension was grounded the invariable maxim of the Romish policy, namely, to keep the Scriptures from the people, to darken their understanding, and to implant in their minds an implicit confidence in the corrupt dogmas of their ecclesiastical constitution.

It was therefore the wisdom and the duty of Martin Luther to adopt a directly opposite system of conduct; and few men have been more admirably qualified to inculcate important truths on the minds of the people. Distinct in his conceptions, eloquent in expressing them, and fearless of danger, he confounded his adversaries, instructed the ignorant, and every day brought proselytes to the simplicity of the Gospel. He conversed, he preached, he wrote, with almost unexampled industry. He placed the controverted points in various lights, and

* Emser.

† Altenb. v.

often overwhelmed his adversaries with the rapidity of his productions.

This determined opposition to the hierarchy provoked the indignation of the papal adherents, and was, no doubt, the immediate cause of many cruel and sanguinary proceedings, both of the civil and the ecclesiastical powers. Nothing could be more natural than that Antichrist should become more furious and unrelenting, as its empire diminished and seemed hastening to destruction. The considerations of the sufferings of the godly deeply afflicted the mind of Luther; but there was no other vengeance which he dared to inflict beyond that of exposing the unreasonableness, the ignorance, the absurdities, and the blasphemies of his enemies. He might easily have excited the leading characters among his countrymen to hostility and rebellion, and still more easily the common people to sedition and mutiny; but such conduct would have been directly inconsistent with every part of his practice, as well as every article of his creed. In obedience to the sacred injunctions, he preached submission to authority, and himself constantly exemplified his doctrine; he assailed men's understandings ONLY; and while the infatuated papists, by multiplied and augmented severities, endeavoured to check the operation of his labours, he manfully persevered in the same course of legal and rational opposition; and though it was impossible that he should not thereby have rendered the spirit of bigotry and superstition still more malignant and outrageous, it was nevertheless his uninterrupted consolation to reflect, that his cause was the cause of God and his Christ; that he had wielded no weapon in the conflict but that of the Divine Word; and that while his own life, and the lives of his associates, were every moment in the most imminent peril through the barbarous zeal of his persecutors, he was in the mean time undermining the very principles of persecution itself, and paving the way for their total extinction.

This bold Reformer was never content to remain purely on the defensive. Besides his numerous exhortations and expositions of different parts of the Scriptures, we find him constantly making attacks on the essential doctrines and usages of the Romish communion. In the course of the present year, besides his translation of the Bible, he published

several tracts in the German language; the most elaborate of which is entitled, *Martin Luther, against the order, falsely called, the ecclesiastical order of the pope and bishops.*—In this work he styles himself simply the PREACHER. He was stripped, he said, by the pope's bulls, of the titles of priest and doctor, which, however, he willingly resigned, having no desire to retain any mark of distinction that was conferred by papal authority.

"Ye bishops," said he, "revile me as a heretic, but I regard you not. I can prove that I have a much greater claim to the title of Preacher, than ye can that ye answer the scriptural description of bishops. Nor have I any doubt, but that Christ, in the great day of account, will testify to the truth of my doctrine, which indeed is not mine, but that of God and the Spirit of the Lord. Your outrageous violence can profit you nothing; the more ye give way to this insanity, the more steady and determined, through God's help, shall be my opposition. Nay, though ye should kill me, Ye men of blood, ye will not destroy this doctrine as long as Christ lives. Moreover, I foresee there will be an end of your tyranny and your murders."

"Further, since ye are open enemies of the truth, I tell you plainly, that for the future I will not deign to submit my doctrine either to your judgment or to that of an angel from heaven. Surely I have already shown sufficient humility in offering myself three times for examination at the last diet of Worms:—and all to no purpose. I shall now go on and discharge my duty as a preacher. It is at men's peril if they reject my doctrine, for it is of God; I repeat it, it is of God."

"In one word, Sirs, this is my resolution. As long as I live, my attacks on your abominations shall grow bolder and fiercer. I will make no truce with you. And if ye slay me, ye shall still be farther from peace. As the prophet Hosea says, I will be unto you, 'as a lion, as a leopard by the way.' My most earnest wish is, that ye should repent; but if ye will not repent, there must be perpetual war between us. I shall put my trust in God, and not care one straw for your hatred; and ye will be in danger every moment of falling under the heavy judgment of the Divine displeasure."

The author then proceeds to show how much those were to be valued who were bishops indeed, and governed their flocks according to the rules prescribed by St. Paul to Timothy and Titus; and how exceedingly opposite to the apostolical standard was the general character of the bishops of his own time. They were ignorant, debauched, and tyrannical; enemies to the Gospel and the truth; idolaters, who followed the traditions of men, and worshipped the pope. The monasteries and collegiate churches were become, in a great measure, theatres of useless ceremonies. "I wish," says he, "that where there are now a hundred monasteries, there was but one; and that of a hundred collegiate churches, there were left but one or two, and that these were used as seminaries of education for Christian youth. For however holy these institutions may seem to be in their external appearance, they abound with hypocritical and Satanic corruptions: nor is it possible to prevent them from being the road to Hell, unless the pure Gospel should be constantly preached and taught as the governing principle, forming and establishing the Christian character, through the exercises of temptation and the cross, with a lively faith and hope."

The author likewise reprobates, in the most glowing terms, the pride, luxury, avarice, and licentiousness of the dignified ecclesiastics. Their boasted chastity and continence was all pretence, and was the source of infinite mischief to young persons. The Bishops would not marry, but were allowed to have as many harlots as they pleased. They went about with prodigious pomp and a numerous retinue; and ruined the souls of the poor, often driven to despair by their tyrannical excommunications, while their greedy Officials, like Verres of old, tortured their bodies after they had plundered them of their property.

"But," says he, "the most atrocious and most mischievous poison of all the papal usages is that, where the pontiff, in his bulls of indulgence, grants a full remission of sins. Christ, in the 9th of Matthew, did not say to the sick of the palsy, 'Put money into this box,' but, 'Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee.' No words nor conceptions can reach the atrocity and abomination of this Satanic invention: for, through this mean, the people are seduced from the

purity and simplicity of that faith which, by relying on the gracious promises of God, alone justifies and obtains remission of sins; and they are led to put their trust in the pope's bulls, or in paying certain prescribed sums of money, or in their own works and satisfactions.

"I do therefore earnestly entreat the Christian reader, through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to expect moderation in me while I speak on this subject, roused as my spirit is with a just and rational resentment. Surely every Christian must be grieved to the very bottom of his heart, when he is daily compelled to see and put up with such impudent and outrageous blasphemy against God. The bishops, on account of this one thing, deserve far greater severity than I have ever used in all that I have said of them. Nay, the strongest language which I could possibly use, when my feelings are most vehement and indignant with reflecting on the insanity of such proceedings, would not reach the one thousandth part of their aggravated guilt. However, let no man suppose that what I now say against these ecclesiastical tyrants is applicable to a sound state of the church, or to true bishops or good pastors. Our present rulers are not bishops; they know nothing of the duty of a bishop; they are wolves and murderers; they are the Antichrists of the apostle: they would ruin mankind, and extinguish the Gospel. I wish to speak plainly, and, as it were, to perform the office of a public herald; and to make it manifest every where, that the bishops, who at present govern the greatest part of the world, are not of God's appointment, but have the foundation of their authority in the traditions of men and the delusions of Satan."

Further, in the body of this spirited performance the author inserts what he calls **THE BULL AND REFORMATION OF LUTHER**, in con-
temptuous imitation and defi-
ance of the papal bulls. It

is to this effect:—"All persons who spend their lives and fortunes, and every faculty they possess, in endeavouring to overturn and extinguish the present diabolical constitution and government of the bishops, are to be esteemed as true Christians, fighting for the Gospel in opposition to the ministers of Satan. And though they may not absolutely succeed in their attempts, yet are they bound openly to condemn the said episcopa

Luther's
Bull.

constitution, and to set their faces against it, as an abomination. For whoever exhibits a voluntary obedience and subjection to that impious and tyrannical system, is so far a soldier of Satan, and at open war with the holy laws of God."

This is one of those passages in the writings of Luther, which has given great offence to the papists,* and has been produced by them as a direct proof of the seditious spirit of the Saxon Reformer. The reader of their animadversions would have been enabled to form a better judgment of the truth of their charge, and also of the candour and impartiality of those who made it, had they faithfully subjoined, as the case required, Luther's own distinct and express illustration of his meaning. Immediately after the declaration contained in his bull, he proceeds thus:—"These propositions I undertake to prove, even at the tribunal of Almighty God, by unanswerable arguments. The apostle Paul directs Titus to ordain bishops in every city; men, who should each of them be blameless, the husband of one wife, and whose character should agree with the rest of his description.† Such then is the mind of the Holy Spirit, speaking by the apostle Paul in the clearest terms. I call then on the bishops to defend themselves. They are at issue, not with me, but with the Apostle Paul, and the Holy Spirit, which as Stephen said, they always resist. Is it not plain that these are they whose mouths must be stopped, because they subvert whole houses, and teach things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake?

Nevertheless, it should always be carefully observed, that when I speak of overturning or extinguishing the reign of the bishops, I would by no means be understood as though this resolution should be brought about by the sword, or by force, or by any species of tumultuary violence and compulsion; such destructive methods are totally inapplicable to this important business, which is indeed the cause of God. The kingdom of Antichrist, according to the prophet Daniel's prediction, must be broken WITHOUT HAND;‡ that is, the Scriptures will be understood by and by,

Remarkable caution of Luther.

* Cochlæus.

† Tit. chap. i. and ii.

‡ Dan. viii. 25.

and every one will speak and preach against the papal tyranny from the Word of God; until THIS MAN OF SIN is deserted by all his adherents, and dies of himself. This is the true Christian way of destroying him; and to promote this end, we ought to exert our utmost power, encounter every danger, and undergo every loss and inconvenience."

During this vehement exercise of the voice and pen of Luther on the one hand, and the sufferings of the protestants from the sharp sword of persecution on the other, the Word of God was preached, with much success, in several parts of Germany, particularly at Nuremberg, at Francfort on the Maine, at Ulm, and at Halle in Swabia. At Milberg the Gospel was taught by the learned protestant Reformer John Draco; also at Bremen and Magdeburg by two fugitive Augustine monks, one of whom had stolen out of his prison at Antwerp, and the other had been forced to leave Halberstadt. At Zerbst, the finest city in the principality of Anhalt, Luther himself preached to a crowded audience in the Augustine monastery, with great effect on the minds of the people. The reformation was begun, likewise, at Stettin and Sunda, two very flourishing market-towns in the anterior Pomerania.* The inhabitants of the former requested two pastors to be sent to them from Wittemberg: at the latter, unfortunately, the Gospel was disgraced by the riotous proceedings of the tumultuous populace, who broke to pieces the images of the saints, and drove the monks from their monasteries in one day. A Danish domestic of Luther's appears to have sown the first seeds of Evangelical truth at Stolpen in the hinder Pomerania. Cnophius and Bugenhagen were schoolmasters of such great reputation at Treptow, that numerous pupils, not only from the neighbouring towns, but even from Livonia and Westphalia, came in quest of their instructions. Both these learned men, however, were so persecuted on account of their Lutheran principles, that Bugenhagen repaired to Wittemberg; and Cnophius, with his Livonian scholars also, left Treptow, applied himself to the ministry, travelled to Riga, Revel, and Dolpat, and in all those great cities, particularly Riga, inveighed against the

* *Comm. de Luth. cxxxix.*

popish abuses, and preached the leading doctrines of Christianity with much animation and fidelity. A turbulent colleague of Cnophius's instigated the inhabitants of Riga to commit various excesses, similar to those which had taken place at Wittemberg, through the indiscretion and violence of Carolstadt. Luther heard of the confusion, and wrote to the brethren there with the wisdom and affection of an apostle. "The leading doctrine," said he, "of all Christians, is faith in Christ; and the second is, love to our neighbour. But as to the selling of indulgences, worshipping of saints, and every other contrivance, which would make works the foundation of the salvation of our souls, avoid and fly from all such things as from the most immediate and deadly poison. Moreover, sound Christians manifest their piety, by preserving their faith entire, their love unfeigned, and their hope of salvation sure, whatever afflictions may attend the open profession of religion; and not by abolishing such external ceremonies of human invention as may be allowed to remain without scandal or a breach of the divine commandments."* In the same letter he pronounced the Livonians truly happy, in having embraced the salutary doctrines of Christianity with so much sincerity and delight. They inhabited, as it were, the extremities of the world, and had great reason to rejoice that the Gospel had reached them: but they must not, he told them, expect to be free from persecution. He foresaw its approach; he exhorted them to behave with Christian fortitude and patience under trials; and endeavoured by suitable advice in general, to prepare their minds for the afflictive discipline they might have to undergo. AT PRESENT indeed they might congratulate themselves on a comparative view of their situation with Germany, where the friends of evangelical liberty were grievously oppressed with the blasphemies of the popish princes and ecclesiastics, with sentences of pains and penalties, and even with fire and sword and bonds.

It appears from one of Luther's letters,† that even the Friezelanders had desired pastors to be sent to them from Wittemberg, and that Hamburgh had openly renounced the papal jurisdiction.

* Lib. II. Epist. and Melch. Adam in Cnophio.

† Lib. II.

Caspar Hedio, Martin Bucer, and John Oecolampadius, are names famous in the history of the Reformation; and these servants of God were teaching the reformed religion in Alsace and Swisserland about the same time.*

Who can doubt but there might be made a most valuable selection of instructive facts and circumstances relative to the expulsion of ignorance and superstition, and the first appearances of evangelical light, during the former part of this century, among the different nations of Europe? Much time, however, and perseverance, would be requisite for the execution of such a work. Many of the necessary authentic documents lie almost buried in obscurity and oblivion; and as they have not been judged proper for general history, or even worthy of it, the difficulty of collecting them increases every day.

To compare with any degree of accuracy the contemporary advancement of the dawns of reformation in different places, is no easy task; but so much, if I mistake not, is pretty manifest from this brief account, as may satisfy us, that the spirit of religious inquiry was greater, and the external progress at least of sound doctrine more rapid in many towns and districts than in the electorate of Saxony itself. We have frequently adverted to the reason of this; namely, the excessive caution of the elector himself, and the peculiar circumstances in which this pious prince was placed during the beginning of Luther's conflict with the Romish hierarchy. His maxims of mere connivance were found insufficient for the support of the Reformers and their disciples. Many of his subjects were advanced in scriptural knowledge, and listened to evangelical preaching with gladness; but they were not defended by the civil power from the tyranny of the ecclesiastics; much less were they encouraged in their religious pursuits by avowed declarations of Frederic and his court in favour of true Christian faith and Christian conduct. Hence dubious and timid minds would in many instances stand still, or perhaps withdraw themselves from danger and persecution; the sufferings of good men, and the menaces of the bigots in power, would naturally

* See Appendix, for Sickingen and Cronenberg.

induce a more reserved profession of principle, as well as more languid exertions in practice; and thus the good seed sown might sometimes be entirely choked, or bring forth no fruit to perfection. All the accounts of the reformation in Saxony accord with these observations. Neither Frederic, nor, as yet, the duke John, his brother, afforded it any POSITIVE assistance. On all sides the truth resounded in the ears of the people, insomuch that earnest seeking souls could scarcely fail of meeting with the instruction they wanted; yet, as the government continued to stand almost neutral, it was frequently in the power of a bigoted magistrate or ecclesiastic lamentably to obstruct the free course of Christian doctrine. But, wherever the eyes of an able and industrious pastor, or even of a lay character of weight and distinction, were happily open to the excellency of the new system, the Gospel triumphed in a most surprising manner. Such, at that season, was the preparation of men's hearts for its reception.

The following little incident alone throws great light on the maxims of the elector. Hausman, the good pastor of Zwickau, had consulted Luther respecting some ecclesiastical concern, and had also requested him to interpose with the elector in the business. Luther's answer is as follows: "In my judgment it is by no means advisable to say one word to our illustrious prince concerning this matter. I am perfectly sure he would say nothing decisive on the point; he would at last direct you to consider and determine for yourselves. I know the temper of the man. He will allow many things to be done by others which he himself would not take upon himself either to advise or order. Do you therefore, and the senate of Zwickau, determine the affair to the best of your judgment."

There remain two striking testimonies, that have not yet been mentioned, of the great success which had attended the labours of Luther about the end of the year 1522.

1. Hartmuth of Croneberg near Francfort, a military knight, and a bold defender of the Reformation, who himself had suffered exceedingly from the persecutions of the times, writes to Spalatinus in the following remarkable strain. He acknowledges that he has received a little book from Luther, "that pious

man, that man of God, that man sent by God;" and then adds, that "the Divine Word had taken such deep root, that unless it should please God to withdraw his grace, it seemed impossible for human, or even Satanic means, to tear it from men's hearts." All Luther's books were publicly exposed to sale in the shops at Francfort, notwithstanding the penalties threatened by the Imperial edict.

2. The other testimony is a very instructive extract from a letter of Frederic Canirmius, rector of an academy of Delft in Batavia;* the substance of which may be translated thus:

"Our adversaries, by mandates, epistles, and embassies, are daily meditating mischief against the Church; but the Lord infatuates the counsels of Abithophel; and their attempts become ridiculous, as in the fable, when a little mouse was the production of the large mountain in labour. The monks of this place are as inimical to the truth as it is possible; but this I say, were we but allowed to preach ONCE in public, there would be an end of their whole institution, the pillars of which are already undermined, in a great measure, by a few little discourses of mine in my own academy. But we must wait with patience the good pleasure of God, who, while he sees us so very zealous, thinks proper to withhold his help, lest we should arrogantly ascribe success to our own endeavours. We should also remember, that our heavenly Father is not only careful to bring into a state of grace such as have never yet been called, but also to build up and establish those who are called, that they may remain steadfast in their vocation. As soon as he shall observe us no longer depend on our own strivings, when Israel shall absolutely despair of deliverance, and shall put their WHOLE TRUST IN HIM, so that it shall have become plain that he alone, in the midst of the people, undertakes the work; then it is that at length he will suddenly appear, with unexpected help, in defence of his Church,—that all the praise and glory may belong to God. Amen. It grieves me to the heart to see Erasmus grow colder every day; and even disposed, as far as I can judge, to retract things which he said or wrote formerly with a degree of freedom. I see plainly his childish fears, which

* Scultet. Hist.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM THE ELECTION OF ADRIAN VI. TO LUTHER'S
LETTER TO THE DUKE OF SAVOY.

lead him to stand more in awe of losing the commendations of men than of God. Nicodemuses of this sort abound among us. However I doubt not but many of them would stand firmer, if we were allowed to publish openly the glorious doctrines of Christ, which alone can support burdened consciences."

The papal historians acknowledge with grief that Lutheranism had sadly increased in the latter part of 1522, and the beginning of 1523; and that the rapid ascendancy which it had gained appeared but too manifest at the Diet of Nuremberg. But, without warrant from facts, they invidiously ascribe this happy revolution of sentiment to the temptation, which the new doctrines held out to the German princes and magistrates, of enriching themselves from the spoils of the church.*—The best answer to all such insinuations is the preceding very circumstantial narrative.

Adrian VI. who had formerly been preceptor to Charles V. had succeeded

Leo X. in the popedom. He was a man of far greater sobriety and purity of manners than had been known for a long time among the pontiffs, and appears to have been unfeignedly desirous of reforming Christendom in general, and the court of Rome in particular. As it is not the design of this history to detail the selfish politics of intriguing cardinals in the election of their popes, it may be sufficient to observe, that the sincerer part of the Roman Catholics had sufficient reasons to approve the elevation of Adrian to his new dignity. They looked on him as one of their best theologians; and boasted, that they could now oppose to the most learned heretics, a pontiff who was still more learned, and who had already shown his zeal against Luther, by the advice which he had given to the divines of Louvain in 1519.†

DIET OF NUREMBERG.
THEIR EDICT. LUTHER'S ADDRESS TO THE
GERMAN PRINCES.
DEATH OF ADRIAN VI.
DANGEROUS SITUATION OF THE ELECTOR OF SAX-
ONY.
DENMARK AND SWEDEN EMBRACE PROTESTANT-
ISM.
THURZO.—J. HESSE.
MARTYRDOM OF VOES AND ESCH.
LUTHER'S LETTER TO THE DUKE OF SAVOY.

ONE of the first measures of the new pontiff was to send a legate* to the Imperial diet assembled at Nuremberg, with a diploma or brieve, as it is called, addressed to the German princes. The brieve is full of the most virulent invectives against Luther; who, the pope said, "notwithstanding the sentence of Leo X. which was ordered by the edict of Worms to be executed without delay, continued to teach the same errors, and by his fresh publications daily to corrupt the morals of the people. The contagion of his poisoned tongue, like a pestilence, pervaded the country to a prodigious extent; and, what was the worst part of the mischief, he was supported not only by the vulgar, but by several persons of distinction, who had begun to shake off their obedience to the clergy, plunder them of their property, and raise civil commotions. The pope had hoped that a venomous plant of this sort could not have grown in Germany; whereas, in fact, it had taken root, and shot forth large boughs, through the negligence of those who ought to have prevented the evil. Surely it was a most unaccountable thing, that so large and so religious a nation should be seduced by a single pitiful friar, who had apostatized from the way which our Lord and his apostles, and the martyrs, and so many illustrious persons, and among the rest, the ancestors of the German princes, had all followed to the very present time!" "What," said he, "is Luther alone possessed of wisdom and of the Holy Spirit? Has the church been in ignorance till Luther afforded us this new light? Ridiculous! Be as-

* Maimbourg, 55.

† See page 252. The Italian ecclesiastics did not much relish the election of Adrian VI. For, 1. he was a foreigner, and, in their language, a barbarian. 2. Though a bitter anti-Lutheran, he certainly wished to reform the abuses of the court of Rome. And, 3. he had been known to maintain that "a pope might err, even in a matter of faith. L'Advocat. Dict.

* Francis Cheregato.

sured, ye princes of Germany, this Lutheran patronage of evangelical liberty is a mere pretence. Already ye must have discovered it to have been a cloak for robbery and violence; and ye cannot doubt that those who have torn and burnt the sacred canons, and the decrees of councils and popes, will have no respect for the laws of the empire. They have shaken off their obedience to bishops and priests; they will not spare the persons, houses, and goods of the laity."

Lastly, Adrian exhorted the diet to be unanimous in their endeavours to extinguish this devouring flame of heresy, and bring back to a sense of their duty the arch-heretic and his abettors. But if the ulcerations and extent of the cancer appeared to be such as to leave no place for mild and lenient medicaments, recourse must be had to the cautery and the knife.

So the Almighty inflicted capital punishment on Dathan and Abiram, for their disobedience to the priest.

So PETER, THE HEAD OF THE APOSTLES, denounced sudden death on Ananias and Sapphira; And,

So the ancestors of the German princes, at the council of Constance, inflicted condign punishment on John Huss and Jerome of Prague, heretics that seem to be now alive again in the person of Luther, their great admirer.*

It was below the dignity, even of a conscientious pontiff, to admit into a brief, in which he was dealing out his threatenings against an obstinate heretic, any admixture of candid and ingenuous concession respecting the prevailing ecclesiastical abuses. In the instructions, however, given to his nuncio, we find acknowledgments of this kind, which

Adrian's
concessions.

might even justify the most acrimonious accusations of Luther. † For example: Cheragato was first to inform the diet how much the pope was troubled on account of the progress of Lutheranism, and how necessary it was to adopt vigorous measures for its suppression. The design of this heretic was to destroy all authority and order, under the sanction of Christian liberty. His sect was the cause of robberies, quarrels, and scandals. Mahomet had drawn men to his party by gratifying their sensual appetites; Luther seduced them in a similar way, by allowing monks, nuns, and las-

civious priests to marry. The nuncio was then charged to own explicitly, that all this confusion was the effect of men's sins, particularly of the sins of the clergy and prelates; that for some years past MANY ABUSES, ABOMINATIONS, and EXCESSSES, had been committed in the court of Rome, even in the holy see itself; that everything had degenerated to a great degree; and that it was no wonder if the evil had passed from the THE HEAD to the members, from the popes to the bishops and other ecclesiastics. "We have all," says the pope, "every one of us, turned to his own way, and for a long time, none hath done good, no not one. Let us give glory to God, and humble our souls before him; and every individual among us consider how great has been his own fall, and judge himself, that God may not judge us in his wrath. Nothing shall be wanting on my part to reform the court of Rome, whence, perhaps, all the mischief hath originated; that as this court hath been the source of the corruptions which have thence spread among the lower orders, so from the same a sound reformation may proceed." He concluded with observing how much he had this business at heart; but that they must not wonder if ALL these abuses could not be soon corrected. The disease was complicated and inveterate, and the cure must proceed step by step, lest by attempting to do 'all at once, everything should be thrown into confusion.

In regard to the schism which Luther had made in the church, the pope requested the diet to inform him what methods they themselves judged most expedient for suppressing it.

The cardinals at Rome are said to have been much displeased at the candid concessions of Adrian; though Sleidan, on this occasion, intimates,* that the pontiff's long and elaborate promises of his intentions to reform the church probably amounted to no more than an artifice, often employed by the popes, to raise men's expectations, delay the calling of a general council, and gain time for sounding the dispositions of princes; and for taking, meanwhile, effectual measures to secure the apostolical power and dignity. Luther appears to have thought the same; for he translated the pontifical mandates into German, and added short

* Goldast. Stat. Imp. i. 25. † Id. 27.

* Comment. III.

marginal notes; one of which on the expression "the cure must proceed step by step," is sufficiently sarcastic, namely,— "You are to understand those words to mean that there must be an interval of SOME AGES between each step."

Whatever suspicion may be excited respecting the perfect sincerity of Adrian's promises to reform the ecclesiastical state, it is impossible to doubt the validity of his testimony to the existence of the prevailing abuses; nor need we wish for a more complete confutation of the adulatory strains with which interested parasites were incessantly complimenting the Roman pontiffs. Moreover, as the life and conversation of the new pope was in fact decorous and laudable, it seems but reasonable that he should in general have credit for his 'declarations,' when he assured the German diet, "that he would not have accepted the papacy, unless it had been to meliorate the condition of the catholic church, to comfort the oppressed, to prefer and reward neglected men of merit and virtue, and, in fine, to do all the duties of a lawful successor of St. Peter." If these good designs were never carried into execution, there are two very substantial reasons for the failure. 1. The veteran hypocrites, with whom Adrian was surrounded at Rome, were too much interested in supporting the ancient corruptions of the papal domination, and too well skilled in the arts of obstructing any schemes of correction and amendment, to suffer the intended innovations to succeed, particularly as they were proposed by a pope declining in years, and ignorant of the ways of the world.* 2. As this pontiff

applied his thoughts merely to morals, and did not suspect any unsoundness of doctrine in the established creed, his attempts were fundamentally defective, and therefore, as to the event, unpromising in the last degree. It is indeed, at all times much easier to discover external than internal evils in the church; and hence, the complaints and resolutions of prelates, whose morals were more exemplary than those of their contemporaries or of their predecessors, have been frequent from age to age, and yet productive of no material good effects. We are assured from the best authority, that "A CORRUPT TREE cannot bring forth GOOD FRUIT."

The publication of the pope's brieve, and his explanatory instructions in the diet, seemed, at first, to have made a strong impression on a great part of that assembly; and, as his nuncio, among other things,* had accused the clergy of Nuremberg of preaching impious doctrines, and insisted on their being imprisoned, the bishops, and other dignitaries of the sacred order, stood up, and with immense clamour called out, "Luther MUST BE TAKEN OFF,† and the propagators of his sentiments The answer of the German princes. MUST BE IMPRISONED!" It soon appeared, however, that the German princes were in no disposition either to be soothed by the flatteries, or overawed by the menaces of a Roman pontiff. They told the nuncio, they believed he had been ill-informed respecting the conduct of the preachers at Nuremberg, who, in truth, were at that moment held in high estimation by the people; and that therefore if any harsh

* Nothing can show the true spirit of popery more plainly, than the observations of the celebrated historian Pallavicinus on the character of Adrian VI. and on his promises of reformation. "He was headstrong in his designs; and these were formed from abstract speculations, specious in appearance, but by no means suited to practice. There was in him a simplicity and a credulity, which made him listen to those who found fault with the conduct of his predecessor, Leo X. Then he was too vehement, too open, and too sincere, and most excessively imprudent in making a public acknowledgment of the corruptions of the Roman court." This historian proceeds to tell us, that the popedom is a mixture of sacred and profane dominion; and that therefore its administration requires a deal of knowledge in civil con-

cerns, and in the arts of government; and we are to understand that, for his part, he would rather choose that the head of the church should be a man of MODERATE SANCTITY, JOINED WITH EXTRAORDINARY PRUDENCE, THAN ONE WHOSE PRUDENCE WAS BUT OF THE MIDDLE SORT, WHATEVER MIGHT BE HIS CHARACTER FOR HOLINESS.

We need not wonder that such principles as these should lead Pallavicinus to disapprove of Adrian's projected emendations of the church; and to maintain, that the protestants would thereby have been encouraged: whereas according to him, "the flames of their treason were not to be extinguished by concessions, but quenched by showers of blood."

* Sleidan IV.

† Alten. II. "Tolendum esse Lutherum."

measures should be adopted against them, there would soon be a general outcry, that a design was purposely formed to oppress the cause of truth, and this might lead to sedition and civil commotions.*

In regard to the pope's complaints concerning Luther and his sect, they said in general, that they were always ready to do their utmost to root out heresies of every kind, but that they had omitted to execute the edict of Worms for the most weighty and urgent reasons. It was a fact, that all ranks and orders made heavy complaints against the court of Rome, and were now, through Luther's various discourses and writings, so well convinced of the justice of these accusations, that any attempt, in the present juncture, to execute by force the late damnatory sentence of the pope and emperor, would inevitably be attended with the most dangerous consequences. The people would instantly interpret such a procedure as a certain prelude to the oppression of evangelical light and truth, and to the further maintenance of those impieties and abuses which could no longer be borne; and thus Germany would soon be involved in tumults, rebellion, and civil wars. The princes therefore could not but think that a trial ought to be made of expedients less inflammatory in their nature, and better suited to the circumstances.

They applauded the pope's pious intention to reform the court of Rome, which he had ingeniously owned to be the source of all the mischief. This was truly laudable; but there were moreover particular grievances and abuses, an account of which they purposed to exhibit in a distinct memorial: these required effectual redress; and, if not obtained, they knew it would be in vain to expect the eradication of errors, and the re-establishment of peace and harmony among the ecclesiastical and secular orders in Germany. As the pope had condescended to ask their advice, they said they would not dissemble in their answer. His holiness was by no means to imagine that the members of the diet had their eyes SOLELY on the business of Luther, but also on a multitude of other evils, which had taken deep root by long usage, and through the ignorance of some and

the wickedness of others. For all these things, the most efficacious remedy which they could devise was, that the pope, with the consent of the emperor, should speedily appoint a free, godly, and Christian council, to be held in some convenient part of Germany, as Strasburg, Mentz, or Cologne, and that full liberty should be granted to every member of it, ecclesiastical or secular, to speak and give advice, for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Lastly, they promised that, in the mean time, they would request the elector of Saxony to interpose his authority, and prevent the Lutheran party from printing books, or preaching sermons, on subjects of a seditious tendency; and that, in general they would do their utmost to confine the preachers, for the present, to the exposition of the plain, pure Gospel of Christ, and make them wait for the determination of the future council respecting all doubtful controversial matters. Also the bishops, and the archbishops should appoint virtuous and learned men in their respective dioceses, to superintend the parochial clergy, whose business it should be to correct their errors and irregularities, as occasion required, with kindness and moderation; but by no means in such a manner as to excite just suspicion of a design to prevent the promulgation of Christian truth. As to the priests who had married wives, or the monks who had left their convents, they conceived it sufficient if the ordinaries inflicted the canonical punishments on the offenders. The civil laws had made no provision for such cases. But if these same refractory priests should be found guilty of any crimes of a different nature, then the prince or magistrate, in whose jurisdiction the offences were committed, should take care to enforce a due execution of the existing laws.*

This answer of the diet was delivered in writing to Cheregato, the pope's legate, who ventured to express his disapprobation of it in strong terms. Neither his most holy master, he said, nor the emperor, nor any Christian prince, had ever expected to hear such language from the diet. Since the solemn condemnation of Luther, that incurable heretic had not only persevered in his old errors, but had also been guilty of many new trans-

* Sleidan.

* Goldast. Stat. Imp. i. 30.

gressions. His punishment, therefore, ought not to have been lessened, but increased on that account. Their negligence in this matter was offensive to God, to the pope, and to the emperor. The reasons alleged by the diet in excuse were by no means satisfactory: men ought to suffer any inconveniences rather than endanger the catholic unity and the salvation of souls. He therefore most earnestly besought them, before the conclusion of their meetings, to agree upon the complete execution of the sentence against Luther.

Their manner, he said, of requesting a general council was such as might give umbrage to his holy master. For example, they had required that it should be with the consent of the emperor, that it should be free, and that it should be held in this or that city, and such like. All this had the appearance of tying up the hands of his holiness. Moreover, the legate expressed himself very much displeased with their promise to prevent, as much as they could, the printing and vending of heretical books. "I say," said he, "on this point as I do of the FET, THE SENTENCES OF THE POPE AND THE EMPEROR OUGHT TO BE IMPLICITLY OBEYED; the books SHOULD BE BURNT, and THE PRINTERS AND VENDERS OF THEM DULY PUNISHED. There is no other way to suppress and extinguish this pernicious sect. It is from the reading of their books that all these evils have arisen."

Lastly, he allowed that the answer of the diet concerning the married clergy would not have displeased him, if there had not been a sting in the tail of it, namely, in the observation that the secular princes or magistrates should take proper cognizance of the offenders. "Now," said he, "if by these words we are to understand that such offenders are to be punished by their proper ecclesiastical judges, it is very right; but if the explanation of them is, that they are to be tried by the secular jurisdiction, I do most earnestly desire the diet to correct this part of their answer, as being, in principle, directly contrary to the rights of the church. The secular magistrates have no authority over those who are once under the dominion of Christ and the church; neither do those priests or monks who have broken their vows, or have otherwise apostatized, cease, for that reason, to be still under the same ecclesiastical jurisdiction."

This reply of the pope's nuncio gave great offence in the diet. They observed, that he had shown a quick sense of whatever seemed to threaten a diminution of the papal authority or papal emolument, but little disposition to relieve Germany from the grievous oppressions under which it laboured. Instead, therefore, of multiplying words in the form of a long rejoinder, they said they had other business to transact of still greater consequence; and directed Cheregato to be content with their former resolution, till they could send a NATIONAL MEMORIAL to the pope, and receive the answer of his holiness respecting all their GRIEVANCES.* It would then be seen what reliance ought to be placed on the fair promises of the nuncio of the Roman pontiff.

Cheregato thought proper to quit Nuremberg before the memorial was drawn up. His sudden departure was considered as disrespectful to the diet, and prognosticated an unfavourable issue to the whole business.

Pope's nuncio leaves Nuremberg.

The German nation, in the time of the emperor Maximilian, had exhibited an accusation of ten grievances against the court of Rome. The number of these in the present new memorial were increased to a hundred; and are known by the name of the Centum Gravamina, so famous in the German annals. The articles of complaint were arranged in order, and immediately dispatched to Rome, accompanied with a concise but memorable protest, to the following effect:—"That the diet had laid all their grievances before the legate of his holiness, and had intended to furnish him with an exact and orderly copy of them for the perusal of his master, but he had surprised them by disappearing suddenly and unexpectedly: That they humbly besought the pope to redress their grievances effectually; and moreover, wished his holiness to understand, that if they were not redressed, and speedily too, the burden of them was become so oppressive and insupportable, that the princes and people in general neither COULD nor WOULD endure them

Remonstrance of the Germans.

* Paul Sarpi. Orthuin. Grat. Du Pin. Goldast, i. 33—58.

any longer.* Imperious necessity itself, and the iniquity of the multiplied extortions and oppressions under which they groaned, would compel them to use every method, with which God had intrusted them, to deliver themselves from the tyranny of the ecclesiastics.

These transactions were a decisive proof of the declining power of the pope-dom, and at the same time they manifested the hardy and daring spirit which had arisen among the German nations in support of their civil and religious liberties.

It would be tedious to relate the hundred grievances at length. In substance they may be reduced to these

The hundred heads:—1. Complaints of grievances.

large payments for dispensations, absolutions, and indulgences. By these things not only immense sums were squeezed out of the Germans, but a door opened to all sorts of crimes; and moreover, the money thus collected was consumed by the popes in maintaining the luxury of their families and relations. 2. The injuries done by directing ecclesiastical causes to be tried at Rome, rather than in their proper places by German ordinaries. 3. The artifices of the Romish court in the reservation of benefices. 4. The abuses of commendams and first-fruits. 5. The exemptions of the ecclesiastics in criminal causes. 6. The introduction of excommunications into temporal concerns; and the illegality of excommunicating several persons for one man's offence. 7. The encroachments of the ecclesiastical judges in lay causes, under divers pretences, and their scandalous sentences. 8. The shameful exactions of the clergy for administering the sacraments, and for burials and masses, and for licenses to keep concubines. 9. The faculties granted to the pope's legate, to legitimate bastards and bestow benefices. 10. The monks and nuns in Germany were allowed to be heirs to their own relations; but the contrary was forbidden; their relations were unjustly prohibited from becoming heirs to them.

The diet concluded their complaints with observing, that they could specify many more and still heavier oppressions, from which in equity they ought to be relieved; but they were disposed to say nothing of them, till it should appear,

whether they were likely to obtain justice respecting those already enumerated.

In fact they were all reducible to three heads; namely, grievances or oppressions, tending to enslave the people, to rob them of their money, or to appropriate to the clergy the jurisdiction of the secular magistrate.

The elector of Saxony was not present at the diet of Nuremberg. The infirmities of his advanced age, the natural irresolution of his temper, or the prospect of contentions and troublesome scenes concerning Luther, or, lastly, all these things put together, will easily account for his absence.—The pope at this time appears to have been excessively out of humour with this prince. Two pontifical briefs, addressed to the elector, were transmitted to him by Cheregato from Nuremberg; the former of which is expressed in the most severe, imperious, and insulting language;* and even in the latter, which the Italian historian† calls an affectionate letter, Adrian roundly charges the conscientious Frederic with a breach of promise made to cardinal Cajetan; namely, that he would not fail to punish Luther as soon as ever he should be proscribed by the pope, whereas it was well known that that heretic was allowed to remain in the electorate of Saxony, and was also encouraged and supported there, not only after the pope's sentence against him, but also after the imperial edict of Charles V.

Frederic the Wise was so much offended with these accusations of the pope, that he seems for a moment to have forgotten those discreet maxims by which he had constantly regulated his conduct.

John Planitz was a German nobleman, who represented the elector of Saxony in the imperial council of regency at Nuremberg. To him the prince, by letter, freely expressed his indignation at the contents of the pontifical brief. With more than ordinary warmth, he declared

* See the Appendix for this long brief. It is a great curiosity, as it demonstrates the prodigiously high ideas which the popes entertained of their own dignity and consequence; and with what outrageous insolence they could express their displeasure, when, like Adrian, they were unrestrained by political motives and a knowledge of mankind.

—See also Labbei Concil. Tom. xiv.

* Goldast. Peror. Cent. Grav. Sleidan.

† Pallavicini.

that he had never imagined it possible he should receive so extraordinary a letter, and he was inclined to suspect it had been forged at Nuremberg. He wished the pope's legate to be told that he himself would write to the council of regency, and express his readiness to appear before them and the emperor, for the purpose of defending his conduct against all unjust aspersions. Planitz, however, who appears to have been a sincere friend of the Reformer's,* represented to his master the imprudence of intrusting his reputation with so partial a tribunal as the imperial council of regency. He foresaw, he said, that much injury to the cause of protestantism would be the infallible consequence of such a measure; and that therefore the elector had better content himself with returning only general answer's to the pope's objections. Frederic was easily persuaded to abandon a resolution so opposite to his usual system of caution and evasion, and so

* Some judgment may be formed of the character of this wary privy counsellor of the elector of Saxony, from a letter which he wrote to his master during the sittings of the diet at Nuremberg.

"The pope, by his large promises, would make us believe that he intends to redress many of our grievances. But I make no scruple to declare plainly, that I give him no credit for sincerity. I look upon all his fine speeches as thrown out for the single purpose of aggrandizing the power and wealth of the Romish church. This has been the constant practice of the pontiff's hitherto; and the event will show whether a different system is now beginning to be adopted. For my part, I can expect no equitable decisions from the pope, till he makes the glory of Christ, and the salvation of mankind, to be the ruling motives of his conduct. And if such were, indeed, his present motives, why should he have thought it necessary to write to Ferdinand, the brother and representative of the emperor, as you will perceive by the enclosed copy, he has done, TO INSTIGATE HIM TO USE A ROD? He might as well have spoken out at once, and said a rod or iron. Surely if he were a shepherd of Christ's flock, he would think it his duty to cultivate peace, to investigate the truth, and to prevent errors and schisms, by mild, and not by compulsory methods. I firmly trust, however, that Almighty God will protect his own glory, and forward the salvation of men, in a way very different from that which suits the notions of the Roman pontiff." Tom. II. Alten.

uncertain and dangerous in the issue of the experiment. Accordingly he transmitted his defence in writing to Adrian himself, expressed concisely, and in the most general terms; and to his legate Cheregato he directed a brief explanation to be given of the line of conduct which he had prescribed to himself throughout the whole business of Luther. The elector deemed it but decent to avoid all personal altercation with the pope; but to his legate he positively insisted on the fact, that he had never made any other promise to Cajetan, than that "in the hope of putting an end to the ecclesiastical dissensions, he would stand engaged to compel Luther to appear before the cardinal at Augsburg."*

This conscientious prince, amidst all the doubts and difficulties which harassed his mind concerning the just limits of the papal jurisdiction, and several other questions relative to the rights of the ecclesiastics, steadily adhered to the grand practical maxim of implicitly obeying the revealed word of God, and also of maintaining with zeal and fidelity the unrestrained publication of the same among the people. He was much displeased with some parts of the diet's reply to Cheregato, particularly that which seemed to threaten the clergy with a species of inquisition that would inevitably fetter them in their preaching, and obstruct the free progress of the Gospel. Agreeably to this truly Christian view of evangelical liberty, he directed, before the final resolutions of the diet, a formal protest to be entered in his name against every restraint of that kind.

The resolutions were made in March 1523, and accorded with the answer which had been given to the pope's legate. They were called, notwithstanding the emperor's absence, The Edict of Charles V. and were printed and published throughout Germany, together with the pope's brieve, and his instructions to his nuncio; also with the answers and replies, and the hundred grievances.*

These transactions, and the publication of them, were, on the whole, undoubtedly favourable to the reformation.

Luther instantly saw his advantage, and availed himself of it with that un-

* Pallavic. Orthuïn Grat. Paul. Sarpi. † Goldast. stat. Imp. ii. 150.

daunted courage which constantly marked his character, and also with a defensive dexterity which was the result of much experience in repelling the incessant attacks of his enemies.

He published an address to the princes and noblemen of Germany, in which he gratefully acknowledged the satisfaction which their late edict had afforded him; but he had observed, he said, that there were many persons, and even some of rank and distinction, who were disposed to wrest the mandates of the diet from their true meaning,—“That meaning,” said Luther, “is to me as clear as the light; and therefore I judge it highly expedient at this time to publish my sentiments on this matter, as also the sentiments of those who agree with me in interpreting the doctrines of the Gospel.

“1. And first, the edict directs us to teach the Gospel in that sense which has been approved by the church of Christ. Now there are numbers who would misrepresent this injunction, as though Christians ought to follow the scholastic opinions of Thomas Aquinas, Scotus, and others that are held in high estimation by the Romish Church. Whereas in the edict we find no mention of these authors, nor even of the Romish church itself, but only of the church of Christ, and of the ancient interpreters of Christian doctrine; that is, as we understand it, of Hilary, Cyprian, and Augustine, whose authority we allow to be great, yet on no occasion such as to be produced in opposition to the holy Scriptures.

“When the diet, therefore, commands us to preach the Gospel in its purity, it is most absurd to suppose that they intend the scholastic trifles of Aristotle to be looked on as the standard of evangelical truth. For if that were case, what need could there be to call a general council? That the former is the genuine sense of the edict,” said Luther, “I argue also from this well-known circumstance; namely, that several of the princes, who have hitherto obstinately opposed every attempt at reformation in religion, have also refused to subscribe this resolution of the diet, and now do their utmost to prevent the publication of it among their subjects. To speak plainly, our adversaries neither know what the Gospel is, nor what were the doctrines of the ancient ecclesiastical writ-

ters; so immersed are they in those contentious, sophistical disputations, which the diet now commands us to lay aside. ‘You must preach the Gospel:’ So said Jesus Christ; and it is easy for the diet to repeat the words of the injunction; but how will they ensure obedience to it? For our part, we promise the most prompt obedience; and through God’s help, we will keep our promise. But it is with grief that I am compelled to own, that the church of Rome cannot possibly obey this imperial edict. For alas! they have no preachers of the Gospel. Moreover, if they were but willing to preach the pure Gospel of Christ, there would at once be a most glorious termination of all our dissensions!—The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. We must therefore pray our heavenly Father that he would send labourers into his harvest: We cannot procure them by our own exertions, neither can the emperor by his edicts bestow them on the church; They are the gift of heaven. The schools and the colleges of the priests and monks do not furnish them.

“2. Likewise, where,” continued Luther, “will the bishops find learned theologians to superintend the preachings of the clergy, and correct their mistakes by peaceable, mild, and affectionate exhortations, agreeably both to the letter and spirit of this edict? In vain will they look for such characters in the schools and monasteries, or universities: besides—a most wonderful change must take place in the whole department of our ecclesiastical rulers themselves. Their present system is that of coercion, by flames, anathemas, and excommunications. Had they treated me in the Christian manner now recommended by the princes, their own affairs would have been in a much better condition. God grant they may at length profit from the wholesome admonitions of this edict!”

He then proceeds thus:

“3. That article of the edict which prohibits the printing and vending of all books which have not been inspected and approved by proper judges, is entirely agreeable to a practical rule agreed upon in our university at Wittemberg during the last year. The publication of the Scriptures however must in no way be fettered; and this is the only exception.

“4. And now, ye most kind and benevolent princes,” exclaimed the Author, “I must entreat you to mitigate in some

respects the severity of your decree against the marriage of the clergy. Consider the revealed will of God, and consider the snares to which the pitiable weaknesses of men are exposed by a compulsion of this sort. I am sure that many, who are at present angry with me for not supporting the Romish system of celibacy, did they but know what I do of the interior practices of the monasteries, would instantly join me in wishing those hiding-places to be levelled with the ground, rather than that they should afford occasion to the commission of such dreadful impieties.

"Your consideration, however, in restraining the punishments of the married ecclesiastics to the penalties of the canon law, implies a severe animadversion on those cruel bishops and princes, who have hitherto been accustomed to torment such offenders against the pope's laws, with perpetual imprisonments, and even with death itself, as if they had committed the most atrocious crimes.

"And I am ready to own further, that, though it is too hard to deprive a pious and faithful clergyman of his benefice, and thereby of his maintenance, for no other fault but because he has contracted an honourable marriage, yet, if the former most important part of your decree, which enjoins the teaching of the Gospel in its purity, be but duly observed, it will necessarily follow that the rigour of the canon law will IN PRACTICE be mitigated by the legitimate prevalence of evangelical principles. Hath not our Saviour determined, that ONLY those are to be expelled from the church, who are convicted of manifest crimes, and obstinately refuse to listen to wholesome reproof? But there is no crime in marrying a wife, or leaving a monastery. And lastly, I cannot but observe, that there is no instance of a clergyman's losing either income or dignity on account of the sin of fornication."

The greatest advantage, which Luther and his cause derived from the decisions of the diet of Nuremberg, has not yet been mentioned; namely, the virtual suspension of the imperial edict of Worms. This, in the present juncture, proved a heavy disappointment on the expectations of the papal party, and the rather, as the duration of the suspension was in fact left undefined, depending on the proceedings of a future general council, the very assembling of which they

sincerely deprecated, and at all times did their best to procrastinate.

Accordingly, Luther boldly asserted his right to draw this inference from the terms in which the princes had expressed their edict. "By this decree," said he, "I do maintain that Martin Luther stands absolved from all the consequences of the former sentence of the pope and emperor, until a future council shall have tried his cause, and pronounced their definite sentence. For if this is not the meaning of the decree, I am at a loss to find any other; neither can I understand what else can be the design of this suspension of judgment, and this appeal to a general council."

On the contrary, the transactions of the diet of Nuremberg produced much discontent at Rome. The papal courtiers not only derided the childish simplicity of Adrian, in acknowledging disorders in the church which he ought to have concealed, but also censured severely the impolitic expostulations of Cheregato in his reply to the answer of the princes. It was his duty, they said, in the matters of less importance, to have given a favourable construction to some expressions of the diet, and to have connived at others which were less defensible; and in the mean time to have stretched every nerve to the utmost to procure the condemnation of Luther: whereas, by making nice and subtle distinctions, and insisting too much on the precise explanations of particular words, he had increased the ill humour of those determined audacious Germans, and had effected nothing to the advantage of the Roman See: nay, worse than nothing: The authority of the church was weakened; the sources of its wealth were stopped; and the heretics would doubtless become more daring and presumptuous than ever.

These sagacious Italians were not much mistaken in their prognostication. Luther and his disciples, in all their controversial writings after this period, often appealed to the testimony of Adrian, and to the HUNDRED GRIEVANCES enumerated by the representatives of the Germanic body, in confirmation of what they affirmed respecting the abuses and corruptions of the Romish court. The pope himself, if we may credit his historian,* was on the one hand astonished at the

* *Jov. Vit. Ad.*

obstinauy of the Reformers, and on the other disgusted with the dissolute manners of his courtiers; and not being able to correct either the one or the other, sincerely wished himself again in the

Death of
Adrian.

more humble situation of dean of Louvain!* Adrian died soon after he had received from his legate the account of what had passed at Nuremberg.

During all these trying scenes, the Saxon Champion of the Reformation exhibited a noble example of Christian faith, courage, and resignation. "It is impossible," said he, in a letter to Spalatinus, "that I can be silent when the divine truth is in danger. To propagate the Gospel is the sole object of all my writings. Never do I take up my pen for the purpose of injuring any one. John Faber, vicar of Constance, has recently attacked my doctrines in a work printed at Leipsic. Emsler also is about to publish something hostile. For me to pass by these things without notice would be to betray the truth: moreover, the late edict itself expressly provides against all attempts to obstruct the progress of the Gospel. For my part I have no fears. The doctrines which I teach, I am sure are of God; and I am ready to suffer patiently on their account whatsoever it shall please Him to inflict upon me." This letter appears to have been written in reply to the elector, who, in consequence of the late edict, had probably warned Luther afresh to be extremely moderate in his style. The diet, inconsistently, it should seem, with the mild, conciliatory terms of their edict, had commissioned the vicar of Constance to oppose Lutheranism throughout Germa-

* Adrian was born at Utrecht, of mean parents. He was made dean of St. Peter's, at Louvain, and afterwards provost at Utrecht. Being appointed tutor to prince Charles of Austria, king Ferdinand made him bishop of Tortosa; and through Leo X. he attained to the cardinal's hat. Upon his exaltation to the papacy, the people of Utrecht and Holland showed so much joy, that they wrote upon the tapestry hangings and the walls of their houses, "Utrecht has planted, Louvain watered, and the emperor given the increase."—Under which an arch fellow wrote, "God has done nothing at all in this matter." His epitaph deserves to be recorded:—"Here lies Adrian VI., who esteemed the papal government to be the greatest misfortune of his life." Brandt.

ny. Our Reformer, in such circumstances, could not remain an indolent spectator of the machinations of his adversaries.

Observe also another memorable instance of the disinterested courage and resolution of this extraordinary man. The elector and his court had apprehended so much danger to Luther from the diet of Nuremberg, that they would gladly have persuaded him to have once more returned to a place of concealment. "No, no," says he, in a letter to the same friend, "imagine not that I will again hide myself in a corner, however madly the monsters may rage.

"I perfectly well remember, dear friend, what I wrote to the prince from Borna;* and I wish you would all be induced to believe the contents of that letter. You have now had the most manifest proofs that the hand of God is in this business; for this is the second year in which, beyond the expectation of every one, I am yet alive; and the elector is not only safe, but also finds the fury of his brethren of the Germanic body less violent than during the preceding year. Our prince has not DESIGNEDLY involved himself in this religious contest: no; it is by the providence of God alone that he finds himself at all concerned in it; and Jesus Christ will have no difficulty to defend him. However, if I could but, without actually disgracing the Gospel, perceive a way of separating him from my difficulties and dangers, I would not hesitate to give up my life. I had fully expected and hoped, that, within the year, I should have been dragged to suffer death; and that was the method of liberating him from danger to which I alluded in my letter,—if indeed such would have been the consequence of my destruction. It appears very plain that at present we are not able to investigate or comprehend the divine counsels; and therefore it will be the safest for us to say, in the spirit of humble resignation, 'THY WILL BE DONE.'"

Thus did Luther, in the full conviction of the justice and importance of the cause which he supported, constantly look with a single eye to the protection of that Being, through whose providence he was made an honoured instrument of the revival of Christian truth and liberty. He

* Page 343 of this Vol.

considered the triumph of the Gospel as a sure event, and at no great distance; he rejoiced in the prospect of it; he had not the smallest anxiety on account of his own personal safety; and he laboured to impress the mind of his prince with similar sentiments of pious expectation, confidence, and fortitude.

The situation of the elector of Saxony was at this time such as to require all

Critical situation of the elector of Saxony, about the beginning of the year 1523.

the encouragement and advice which his religious and political friends could supply. The duke George had almost persuaded the regency at Nuremberg to OBLIGE Frederic to punish Luther; but this blow was warded by tell-

ing the duke, that, as he had been particularly offended by the Reformer, it would be more proper for him to apply alone to the elector for redress. Plainitz, during the sittings of the regency, informed his master the elector, "that for the last three months, whenever any question had been moved respecting Luther, there had always broken out such a flaming spirit of obstinate resistance to the Gospel, that he feared God in his anger would inflict some heavy judgment upon so irreligious a country." Yet the members of this very regency, in their late deliberations, had displayed a disposition much more inclined to equity and moderation than on former occasions; insomuch that the Suiabian league, as it was called, were supposed to be concerting violent measures, which had for their objects both the ruin of the elector of Saxony and the dissolution of the regency of Nuremberg.—The conduct of the duke George at this critical juncture was not a little suspicious. At Nuremberg he spake freely of the danger with which his nephews Frederic and John were threatened, of losing their possessions and rank in the empire; and he refused to take his seat in the regency, alleging as a reason, that the princes whom Luther, in his writings, had charged with the commission of high crimes, ought to prove themselves innocent before they were admitted to offices of trust and authority. His real designs, however, were easily discerned through this political finesse. If the nephews of George should eventually, on account of their attachment to the reformation, be plundered and degraded, their uncle, it was believed, hoped to be proportionally

enriched, and exalted; and moreover, the example of extraordinary conscientiousness and self-denial of the duke, in declining to act in an important official situation, because he at that time laboured under the accusations of Luther, was no doubt, intended by him to facilitate the introduction of a resolution among the princes, that all persons proscribed by the edict of Worms should be deprived of their rights, privileges, and possessions. For if so great purity of character was required of men in public situations of dignity and trust, that the grave, the religious duke George had refused to take his seat among the regents till he had acquitted himself of the calumnies of Luther, how could any other member of the Germanic body, whatever might be his rank or title, pretend to a just claim of precedence and sovereignty, while, either directly or indirectly, he remained under the BAN of the empire by the legitimate decision of the diet of Worms?

The hypocrisy, avarice, and ambition, which could suggest to the mind of this prince so flimsy a pretext, for the purpose of aggrandizing his own fortunes by the ruin of those of his near relations, have cast an indelible stain on the memory of the duke George of Saxony.

How striking is the contrast, and how honourable to the cause of religion, when we compare the conduct of Frederic and of Luther at this period with that of their enemies!

The elector, though oppressed with age and infirmities, was still in the full possession of his intellectual faculties, and continued to merit the appellation of Frederic the Wise. His penetrating eye foresaw the conspiracy which was then forming by the pope, the emperor, and several of the most bigoted of the German princes, with the express intent of crushing the infant reformation, and also every power that was friendly to its progress. But neither the firmness nor the integrity of this good prince, whenever the course he should steer seemed distinct and certain, could be shaken by the most alarming appearances.* In this

* This part of the character of the elector of Saxony has been already abundantly exemplified. The timidity and ambiguity of conduct which appeared in this prince on some occasions arose from doubts in his understanding, not from defect of courage or

year, 1523, he is well known to have secretly meditated the defence of himself and his persecuted subjects even by FORCE;* but was interrupted by entertaining serious doubts concerning the lawfulness of using arms under his very peculiar circumstances. For however disgusted Frederic might be with the political intrigues of Adrian and Charles V. or however indignant on account of the many tyrannical oppressions of the civil and ecclesiastical rulers, it was not his practice to give way to resentment or revenge, but rather to seek relief to his anxious and burdened mind by a diligent investigation of his duty. Accordingly, he solemnly required Luther, Bugenhagenius, and Melancthon, to write their deliberate sentiments on the following question. "Whether it was lawful for the elector of Saxony, in case his subjects, on account of their religion, should suffer violence either from the emperor or any of the German princes, to protect them by arms?" These great and good men decided at once, THAT IT WAS NOT LAWFUL; and principally for these reasons. 1. The princes were not yet fully convinced in their consciences of the truth of the reformed system of evangelical doctrine. 2. Neither had their subjects implored their protection against violence and persecution. 3. Nor had the several states of the provinces deliberated on the point. 4. Lastly, Those, who in their own defence have recourse to arms, ought, before all things, to be assured of the justice of their cause.†

Thus, notwithstanding the success with which the reformation had hitherto been attended, there seemed rising considerable obstacles to its further progress.—Luther disdained to hide himself a second time from the fury of his adversaries; and his friend Frederic, from scruples of conscience, did not dare to draw the sword in his defence. Both the Saxon elector and the Saxon reformer appeared, therefore, to be in most critical and peril-

honesty; and here again, not so much from doubts of existing grievance, as from scruples of conscience respecting that degree of resistance which, in redressing the grievances, he might be justified in making to the established authorities.

* Hortleder, Histor

† Hortleder the historian had in his possession the original of this answer. See k. 263.

ous situations; and the wisest advocates of Lutheranism did not see how the loss of either of them could be repaired. In fact, the powers of Antichrist were now roused, and become outrageous; and had shown symptoms of an intention to collect their strength, and to act in concert, with more system and decision than they had hitherto done from the commencement of the ecclesiastical dissensions.

The clouds, however, which seemed to thicken over the elector of Saxony, his subjects and his dominions, were soon dispersed, through the wise dispositions of that kind, overruling Providence, on which Luther entirely relied, and which in its secret counsels, had determined to break the rod of the oppressor*, and to bestow on the nations the blessings of a revival of Christian truth and Christian liberty. The emperor was so much involved in multiplied schemes of enterprise and ambition, that he found it impossible to give any serious and durable attention to the contests in Germany; and it soon appeared, that without his active co-operation, the rest of the confederates could effect nothing decisive. The apprehensions therefore of Frederic and his ministers respecting the safety of his electorate, or the necessity of a defensive war, were much relieved; and the patient industrious reformers had only to struggle with their usual difficulties, arising from the persecutions of such individuals as frequently happened to be the unfortunate victims of cruel bigots in possession of power.—Among the unrelenting tyrants of this class, is particularly distinguished the archduke Ferdinand, the brother of Charles V. who was so much inflamed with resentment against the Saxon Reformer and his cause, that he declared, he had much rather his sister the queen of Denmark, had been sunk in the depths of the sea, than that she should ever have conversed with Luther at Wittemberg.

The unfortunate Queen, whom we have just mentioned, was compelled to seek an asylum out of Denmark, with her exiled husband Christiern the Second, who in the year 1523 fled from Copenhagen with twenty ships, together with his queen and children, and all his private treasure. This unhappy prince, in his

* Isaiah, ix.

passage to the Continent, was overtaken by a violent tempest, which dispersed his fleet, and reduced him to the last extremity. At length he arrived with his family at Tervere in Zeeland,* despatched a letter to his brother-in-law Charles V. and entertained the most sanguine hopes that, through the assistance of so powerful an ally, he should soon be restored to his former dignity and possessions. His queen Elizabeth also came to Nuremberg, to implore the help of her brother Ferdinand and of the German princes. But unfortunately for this object, she had received many of Luther's books from Albert duke of Prussia, had made an open profession of the reformed religion, and in 1524 had publicly received the sacrament in both kinds. This last step so provoked Ferdinand, that he told her in plain terms, "he heartily wished she was not his sister." "Certainly," replied the queen, "we are descended from one and the same mother; nevertheless, I must adhere closely to the word of God, and to that ONLY, without the least respect to persons; in all other concerns, I am ready to obey my brother's pleasure; and if, on that account, he refuses to own me for his sister, I shall endeavour to bear the cross with patience." On the subject of her own calamitous situation, as well as that of her husband, she is said to have expressed herself so pathetically before the princes, as to have constrained every one present to shed tears. She obtained from them, however, no satisfactory promises of assistance; and this

Death of the queen of Denmark.

excellent queen soon after departed this life, her death being probably hastened by affliction and misfortune, and the unkind treatment of her nearest relations. She was buried at Ghent;* and her husband informed Luther, that, notwithstanding the very great pains which had been taken by persons of the greatest distinction to persuade her to return to popery, she had received the Lord's supper according to the just ordinance of Christ, and died in the exercise of sound and lively evangelical faith.

The two northern kingdoms of Denmark and Sweden were now uniting themselves to the cause of Protestant-

ism; and as the religious revolutions in those regions were brilliant and rapid, they must, no doubt, eventually have been productive of much

spiritual good. Our account of this happy change in the north must, however, be brief, because little, except the political and external circumstances, has found its way into authentic history.

In the year 1522, at the request of Christiern II. king of Denmark, a preacher named Martin was sent from Wittemberg; and his evangelical labours among the Danes received the royal approbation and encouragement.

But the enormous vices of this prince, which would have disgraced any religious system, proved an effectual bar to the progress of the Reformation. Expelled from his throne on account of his tyranny, profligacy, and cruelties, and forced to wander through a foreign country in want and disgrace, he discovered some symptoms of compunction and even of repentance. At least, during his intercourse among his religious friends, his external conduct indicated a grave and

decorous attention to spiritual concerns. We find him in the year 1523 visiting his uncle, the elector of Saxony, at Schweinitz, a town belonging to this prince; and, in the autumn of the same year, he sent for Luther from Wittemberg, and heard him preach at the same town, in the palace of Frederic, with so great satisfaction, that he declared in his whole life he had never before heard the Gospel so explained; and that while he lived, he should never forget that sermon; and moreover, that, with God's help, he should endure more patiently whatever might befall him. Still I fear, if the plan of this history admitted a circumstantial detail of the crimes committed by Christiern II. while he sat on his throne, the charity and candour of the reader would be put to a severe trial in admitting, without some further substantial evidence, the probability of the genuine conversion of so infamous a character. His public apology, or defence of his conduct, dispersed throughout Germany, though to the last degree affecting and lamentable, exhibits but little of the spirit of a truly humble penitent. The reflection, however, of

Progress of Protestantism in Denmark and Sweden.

Martin sent from Wittemberg to preach to the Danes: A. D. 1522.

Christiern II visits the elector of Saxony: A. D. 1523.

* Meursii Histor. Danica.

† In the beginning of 1525. Chrytræus.

Luther on his case may deserve to be transcribed. "Perhaps," said he, "God in his appointed time will call this king and queen to his heavenly kingdom, that he may appear marvellous in confounding the measures of human foresight; for most certainly he is a king of whose sound and thorough reformation our judgments could never reasonably have formed any favourable conjectures."

Frederic the duke of Holstein succeeded his nephew Christiern II. in the throne of Denmark; and under him, and still more under his successor Christiern III. the blessed change of the religious establishment was completed in that kingdom.—Of Christiern II. little more is known, than that on returning into Denmark, and making some attempts to recover his throne, he was taken prisoner, and ended his days in captivity.

The judicious student of ecclesiastical history, can scarcely fail to reflect how extremely palpable the wickedness and folly of the popish system must have been, when the opposition of a prince so notoriously cruel, and in every respect unprincipled, as Christiern II. was able so effectually to shake its foundations, that it could never after recover either credit or stability in Denmark.

I know no evidence that Elizabeth, the good queen of Christiern II. was in any degree a partner with her husband in his injustice and cruelty; and Luther justly observes, that, if she could but have been persuaded to deny the Gospel of Christ, she might, perhaps, have been restored to her kingdom, through the active interference of her powerful brothers, Charles the emperor, and Ferdinand the archduke.* Charles V. about this time was beginning to astonish all Europe with the blaze of secular glory, and was also cruelly persecuting the people of God throughout Flanders. The Christian reader, who finds no satisfaction in the contemplation of such scenes of ambition and iniquity, will willingly retire from them, and learn useful instruction from a serious review of the dealings of Providence with the near relative of the emperor, the exiled queen of Denmark. This extraordinary personage, after a severe discipline of humiliating afflictions, died in peace; and there is very solid ground to hope that the sister found rest in the application of

that Gospel to the relief of her spiritual necessities, which the brother denominated heresy, schism, and sedition.

The religious revolution of Holstein, a duchy bordering on Denmark, well deserve a place in this narrative. Several students of divinity from that country had visited the university of Wittemberg, induced by what they had heard of Luther's talents and learning. On their return, it soon appeared that they had caught the salutary flame which had already exhilarated the hearts of so many foreigners. Both in public and in private, among their countrymen, they most industriously spread the reformation they had obtained from their great Saxon master.

Herman Tast, in the year 1522, was the first, who, when he found the church at Husam shut against him by the popish clergy, preached boldly under

a tree in the churchyard, a Herman Tast preaches at Husam, A. D. 1522. course of most excellent sermons to a numerous audience: and this same pastor

also, two years after, preached at Gardingen the first public sermon which was ever composed according to the sound principles of the reformed religion, and delivered in a regular way from the pulpit in that country: for in 1524 Frederic I. king of Denmark and duke of Holstein, made it a capital offence for any person to take away the life, or injure the property or dignity of another, on account of his religion, whether Papal or Lutheran. This prince, in matters of religion, allowed all his subjects a most complete toleration. They were so to conduct themselves, as best to satisfy their own consciences before God. At the same time, however, he ordered the most solemn and explicit directions to be given, that the errors of the Romish church should be publicly reprobated, and the evangelical doctrines of the reformers recommended to the people. But the inhabitants of Ditmarsen, an intractable race of men, refused to obey the king's edict, and committed to the flames, in this same year, Henry Muller, a zealous preacher of

pure Christianity, who had formerly been prior of the monastery at Antwerp, had afterwards preached two years at Bremen, and lastly had been introduced among the savage Ditmarsians by their superintendent, a man of piety and religion. In other parts of Frederic's domi-

Martyrdom of Henry Muller; A. D. 1524.

* Comment. de Luth. XLII.

nions the royal edict was dutifully obeyed, and proved a great bulwark against the violence and cruelty of the papists. Under its protection the Lutheran ministers confronted and engaged their adversaries by the methods of fair argumentation; and were wonderfully successful in propagating divine truth. Even some of the Roman champions acknowledged their convictions, and bowed to the authority of reason and Scripture. Others, meanwhile, persevered in their inveterate prejudices, and continued to support a pertinacious opposition to the Lutheran doctrines. Very remarkable is the case of a certain monk of the isle of Fore.

Story of a monk of the isle of Fore.

This man, who had travelled from home for the express purpose of exhorting his neighbouring fraternity to remain faithful and constant to the papal superstitions, declared, that he wished he might never again reach his habitation alive and safe if the Romish creed was not true. In his return, he fell from his horse, and was killed on the spot. "And thus," says the author of this account, "the event corresponded with the imprecation; and a pile of stones, which was raised in memory of it, points out at this day to travellers the place where the thing happened."—Profane readers or writers, in a profane age, may treat with contempt the introduction of such a relation as this into sober, authentic history; but their taste does not seem a sufficient reason for omitting a brief but circumstantial narration of a fact which so judicious a person as Seekendorf thought worthy of notice, and which, moreover, as he particularly informs us, was transmitted to him by Dr. Kortholt, a man of most excellent character, and a very eminent divine of the university of Kiel in the duchy of Holstein.

In Sweden, the renowned Gustavus Vasa, having in his youth lived an exile at Lubec, and there gained some information concerning the grounds of Lutheranism, and having afterwards been further instructed by Laurentius and Olaus Petri, two disciples of Luther, no sooner saw himself in firm possession of the throne than he determined to reform the church. Under his auspices a public disputation was held at Upsal, between Olaus Petri* on one side, in support of

Luther's system, and Peter Galle on the other, as a defender of the papal dogmas; and the sum of their argumentation was afterwards published. Also, by the king's order, Andreas his chancellor was employed in translating the Scriptures into the Swedish language; and no means were omitted for enlightening the minds of the people. The effects were rapid and decisive, and Sweden from that day has ranked invariably among the Protestant nations.

A royal proclamation by Gustavus, in substance as follows, must have been extremely beneficial to the Reformers. "We do not deny that our care is for the true religion founded on the word of God. There can be no better religion than that which Christ and his apostles have delivered to us. Here there is no place for dispute. But, respecting certain ceremonies, questions are raised, and more especially respecting the privileges of the clergy. It is true, that we find learned men are desirous of abolishing several useless external rites, but there is not the least ground for calumniating us, as though we wished to introduce any other religion than that which is truly Christian. Our single aim is, to worship God in spirit and truth, and to become a partaker of the joys of heaven with all Christ's faithful servants. Let not our beloved subjects, therefore, listen to slanderous reports concerning their sovereign; but remain assured that our thoughts are employed how we may best promote the glory of God, and their eternal welfare. It is not long ago, since we learnt what fraudulent means the Roman pontiff has employed to drain this kingdom of large sums of money, through the institution of private masses and indulgences. And in regard to other countries, men of the best information have proved, beyond contradiction, by what variety of deceitful methods the bishops and other ecclesiastical dignitaries make a gain of the simple; and how they burden wretched consciences, and multiply acts of hypocrisy. The luxurious prelates now see that these evil practices are detected and exposed by persons of the greatest piety and knowledge; and therefore they set their faces against the truth with all their might, and cry out, Innovation and Heresy! But, believe them not.—We seriously exhort you to believe them not;

Gustavus Vasa promotes the Reformation.

* See Appendix, Olaus Petri.

for there is not one word of truth in their malicious accusations."*

Let no one, however, conclude that this glorious triumph of religious truth took place without much clamour and opposition from the established hierarchy. Antichrist was seriously alarmed, and exerted his utmost efforts to prevent the fall of his tottering pillars.—The preceding proclamation sufficiently intimates this.—

In fact, the dignified clergy, and their adherents in the convocation at Upsal, boldly maintained that no person, under pain of excommunication and eternal damnation, could on any account whatever deprive the prelates of their wealth and privileges.

To this the king and the friends of the Reformation coolly replied, "That true ministers of the church, especially those who diligently instructed the people, deserved more than a decent maintenance; they were worthy even 'of double honour;' but that the lazy and licentious drones, who neither served God nor man, ought to have no public stipend whatever: moreover, that there was not one syllable in the Scriptures to justify that immense political power and revenue which the clergy had usurped, and which had enabled them, for some centuries past, to withstand their lawful governors, and disturb kingdoms with endless wars and seditions."

The contest was now advancing fast to a crisis. The monks, and the rest of the papal clergy, observed no bounds in their resentment. Throughout Sweden, and also in foreign countries, they calumniated their excellent king as a heretic, and unworthy of the throne. In Dalecarlia they even excited the people to seditious and treasonable practices; and because the kingdom happened then to suffer grievously from a great scarcity of corn, they taught the vulgar to believe that the present famine was a judgment of Almighty God on the country, for receiving the new religion. By such artifices of the bishops and priests, the inhabitants of many provinces became so disaffected to the government, that they refused to pay their annual taxes.

Yet the Swedish monarch had already

done everything in the cause of Christian truth which could be expected from a pious, wise, and magnanimous prince. Like king David, he had begun with reforming his own court; and suffered none but religious characters to approach his person, or to fill the great offices of state. He had instituted a GENERAL VISITATION of the whole country BY HIMSELF, in which he was accompanied by evangelical preachers, and particularly by that excellent Lutheran theologian, Olaus Petri, whom he had previously appointed Secretary of Stockholm. In adopting this admirable measure, the king had proposed to instruct his ignorant subjects in the great principles of the Christian religion, and to guard them against erroneous notions concerning faith and works, and predestination; and also against the innumerable corruptions of the Romish Church. Moreover, in the execution of it, he had listened to the advice of the experienced German reformers; namely, not to hurt the tender consciences of the well-meaning but uninformed part of the people, by an overhasty abolition of such ceremonies and superstitions, as might be suffered to remain without manifest impiety. This moderation was become the more necessary, because in Sweden, as formerly in Germany, there had arisen, in the early part of the Reformation, fanatics of the Anabaptist class, who excited the people to the most outrageous acts of tumult and sedition. At Stockholm, they had entered the great church of St. John, and in the most audacious manner had removed, or broken to pieces, the organs, statues and images therein; and their riotous example was followed throughout almost every part of the kingdom.

At this moment the situation of Sweden seems to have been truly critical. On the one hand, an enthusiastic zeal for innovation, and on the other, a blind attachment to superstitious ceremonies, inflamed the minds of many, and divided them into parties; and there was constantly at hand an active, ambitious, and powerful clergy, ready to take every advantage of these internal dissensions. It soon appeared, however, that even in this perilous conjuncture, there existed in Gustavus a combination of qualities fully equal to the emergency.

This determined prince, in the summer of the year 1527, at the Convoca-

* Baazius Histor.

Convocation at Arosen: A. D. 1527.

tion of Arosen, summoned together all the constituted orders and authorities, ecclesiastical and civil, in his dominions, with the full purpose of bringing to speedy issue the important question concerning the regulation of the doctrines, the revenues, and the powers of the church. He directed the senators of the kingdom to be placed next to the throne, and the bishops next to the senators. The nobles occupied the third class, the parochial clergy the fourth, and the commons the fifth. This arrangement was an unpardonable offence in the eyes of the bishops; and the extraordinary measure which they instantly adopted in consequence, strongly marks the domineering spirit of the Roman catholic clergy, and shows also how entirely regardless they were of observing good faith with those who did not exhibit implicit obedience to the papal system. They met secretly in the church of St. Giles, to deliberate on their present situation. "What is to be done, my brethren?" said the bishop of Linköping: "It is plain enough the king means to degrade us: he means to take from us those castles and fortified places which pious kings have of old granted to the bishops of this country; and probably his next step will be to deprive us of our lands and revenues." Two of the junior and more moderate bishops answered, "Let us not contest the matter with his majesty: for if we have no secular possessions, we cannot be called upon to contribute to the defence of the state." "This is a most serious business," replied the bishop of Linköping: "If we make these concessions, we shall bring upon ourselves the indignation and eternal anathema of the Roman pontiff. Kings and emperors, in former times, have made similar attempts upon the property of the clergy, but were deterred from executing their designs, by the dread of pontifical excommunication. Make your choice, then, brethren, never to disobey the pope: he is the asylum of the church, and he will defend you." Every one present declared his firm resolution to defend the Roman pontiff and the established hierarchy; and they subscribed a solemn protest against any degradation of their dignity, or diminution of revenue. They then buried the writing under a sepulchre, covered it with stones, and took a solemn oath not to

reveal the secret. But it was dug up fifteen years afterwards, and shown to Gustavus, as a proof of the treachery of the papal bishops, at the commencement of the Reformation.

In this memorable convocation, Gustavus, through his chancellor, complained heavily of the indolence, luxury, and impiety of the superior clergy; and also of the excessive ill usage which he had personally received from the papal faction. They had every where represented him as a heretic, a teacher of novel doctrines, and as one who endeavoured to disseminate among the people a corrupt religion. He had reprimanded, he said, the archbishop of Upsal for neglect of duty, and, in particular, had ordered him to take care that the Bible should be translated into the Swedish language; but that that prelate, instead of obeying his directions, and reforming the abuses in the church, had maliciously excited tumults and seditions among his good subjects, afterwards plundered the inferior clergy, and at last fled with much wealth from his country. In brief, and agreeably to what he had stated in his proclamation, he wished the faithful, laborious clergy, to be well rewarded; at the same time that he would have the ignorant, the idle, and the useless, to be deprived of the revenues which they so undeservedly possessed, and which ought to be applied to the public service. If a speedy emendation to this effect was not agreed to by the bishops and senate, he would no longer undertake the government of the country. On this head, therefore, he required a clear and categorical answer.

Upon hearing the king's proposal, the convocation was almost in an uproar. The prelates, and other papal adherents, cried, No! No! with the utmost clamour, and called loudly on the leading men of the country to withstand such unjust innovations.

But the pious and disinterested Gustavus had formed a resolution, from which even the splendour of a crown could not induce him to depart. He came into the assembly, and there publicly resigned the government of the kingdom. With some warmth, but with great decency and firmness, he informed them, that he had made his choice, and that his conscience did not permit to support a superstitious and depraved system of religion. He added, that he had determined to leave the country, but expected them to

pay him the price of his hereditary possessions.

The great body of the Swedish representatives, namely, the commons in the convocation, were now so much enraged at the conduct of the refractory bishops, as to signify to them in terms by no means obscure, that, if they did not instantly comply with the pleasure of their beloved sovereign, they would soon feel the vengeance of the people inflicted on their obstinacy and disobedience. Moreover, that the reasonableness of the king's demand might be placed in the clearest light, it was agreed that Peter Galle and Olaus Petri should once more try their strength publicly, in dispute, on the question of ecclesiastical power and privilege, as they had formerly done on the controverted points of evangelical doctrine. The combatants met accordingly; and Olaus Petri, the Lutheran disciple, spoke in the Swedish language; but the papal advocate, P. Galle, persisted in the use of Latin, till the whole audience exclaimed aloud, "Say what you have to say in the Swedish language!"

This free discussion had a mighty influence on all the members of the convocation, except the most violent and determined partisans of popery, who on the third day of the session were completely overpowered with numbers. This memorable assembly concluded its proceedings, by humbly beseeching Gustavus to resume his government, and by precisely defining the ecclesiastical privileges and revenues. Among their several regulations and decrees, published with the king's signature, there is this clause: "No one shall be ordained a clergyman who is either unwilling to preach, or who does not know how to preach the pure word of God."*

This curious and instructive account of the beginning of the Reformation in Sweden may well deserve a place in these memoirs: and when it is considered that the disciples of Luther were the chief instruments of its success, it can scarcely be deemed a digression from the subject of this chapter. It may be said, indeed, and with great probability of truth, that under a prince of less pious disposition and less splendid talents than those of the renowned Swedish monarch, the pious efforts of two or three evange-

lical teachers could have availed but little against the whole weight and prevalence of the papal influence: but this is in fact no more than to affirm, what no believer of a Divine Providence will deny, that, whenever the great Disposer of all events purposes either to visit mankind with penal judgments, or bless them with merciful dispensations, he is INFALLIBLE in exactly proportioning his means to those ends, which, in the depth and wisdom of his counsels, he has previously designed shall surely come to pass.

The Reformation in Sweden continued to proceed with vigour and discretion, under the protection of Gustavus Vasa, and principally through the advice of his secretary Olaus Petri, who, in the year 1529, published a more distinct explanation of the great Christian doctrine of Justification by faith, and also a new ritual in the Swedish language, in which the official rules for marriage, baptism, burial of the dead, and the administration of the Lord's supper, were very much cleared from Romish superstitions and encumbrances.*

"How delightful a spectacle to a true Christian, to see distinctly, and, as it were, with his own eyes, a contest on the spot between Christ and Antichrist!" Such is the observation of a pious and excellent annalist, to whom we are indebted for much of the preceding information concerning the revival of evangelical doctrine throughout Europe in

* Appendix. Olaus Petri.

The resolutions of the states assembled at Arosen (or Westeraas, as it is otherwise called,) did not tend to fix or regulate many doctrinal articles, but rather to reduce the clergy to a more dependent condition. These, by repeated grants from a superstitious nobility, were become opulent, dissolute, and luxurious; and, moreover, they possessed so many castles and places of strength, that they were able, at any time, to excite dangerous commotions in the kingdom, and even to give laws to the sovereign himself. On the other hand, the men of rank and family were impoverished beyond example, through the rapacity of a devouring, insatiable hierarchy. It was in vain, therefore, until this enormous power of the numerous prelates, acting in concert with

* Baazius.

The Reformation proceeds in Sweden, protected by Gustavus Vasa: A. D. 1529.

this period.* "Whatever machinations," continues the same author, "either the pope or the emperor and his creatures devised for the purpose of obstructing the progress of CHRISTIAN TRUTH, Jesus Christ overruled them all to the advantage and furtherance of the same. The bull of the pope, the thunder of the emperor, did not frighten men, but, on the contrary, animated them to embrace the Gospel." In fact, the blessed Reformation was spreading itself far and wide; and almost all the European nations hailed the dawn of truth, and exulted in the prospect of spiritual freedom.

In Hungary, even in the year 1522, the fame of the deliverance of various states and provinces from papal chains had excited in the minds of the people a most prodigious desire not only to become

the Roman pontiff at their head, was restrained within moderate bounds, to expect any substantial reformation of the ecclesiastical establishment. When the edicts of Westeraas had settled this indispensable preliminary, and not before, Gustavus condescended to resume the sceptre, and bless his subjects with a purer religion.

The mixture of firmness and moderation displayed by this monarch, in all these transactions, is truly admirable. By imprisoning, and afterwards banishing, several of the disciples of Munzer, who had been convicted of committing riots at Stockholm, and by other instances of well-timed severity, he soon repressed the dangerous spirit both of fanaticism and sedition, which had disturbed the peace of the country. And further by directing translations of the Scriptures into the Swedish language to be every where dispersed among the people, he invited the more judicious part of his subjects to exercise their own judgments in religious concerns, and thus prepared their minds for the salutary emendations gradually introduced afterwards by Olaus into the formularies and confessions of the Swedish church. Lastly, though no specific system of doctrine was adopted at Westeraas, yet the mere provision of intelligent pastors to preach throughout the kingdom the pure word of God to the people, in their native language, must have been found extremely efficient in promoting the same excellent purposes. Add to all this, that the progress of evangelical light and truth, through the different districts and provinces, was become abundantly more rapid, since Olaus, in the public disputation at Upsal, had gained so very signal a victory over his opponent P. Galle, the zealous defender of the ancient Romish corruptions.

* Abraham Scultet. Annal. Evang.

partakers of the pure reformed religion, but also to see Luther himself, from whose instructions they expected to derive, in the easiest and happiest way, the best system of heavenly doctrine, and also the wisest method of cultivating sacred learning.—Among the young students who came from this country to Wittemberg, with the intention of consulting Luther and hearing his lectures, Martinus Cyriac is particularly mentioned as the first who appears from the academical registers to have been matriculated in this year when Philip Melancthon was rector or provost of the university.

Lewis, the king of Hungary and Bohemia, was a bitter enemy of the Reformers; but Divine Providence raised them up an excellent and powerful patron in George marquis of Brandenburg. This illustrious prince began about the same time to discover a relish for evangelical knowledge; and, as he was grand-master of the royal household, he had frequent opportunities of softening or entirely doing away the charges and complaints which were frequently laid before the king against the disciples of Luther. Under his auspices, and those of the dukes of Lignitz and Munsterberg, a considerable reformation took place among the churches in Silesia, and particularly at Breslaw, the capital city of that country; and it appears that in the succeeding year the inhabitants of these regions were blessed with an additional influx of the salutary and refreshing beams of the light of the Gospel.*

It would be inexcusable to omit in this history of the Church of Christ, a short but precious fragment of biography relative to John Thurzo, bishop of Breslaw, in Silesia. This good prelate was descended from a noble family in Hungary, and is said to have been the very first papal bishop who in his diocese was favourable to the revival of pure Christianity.

The very little that is known of Thurzo is to be collected from a concise epistle of Luther, and another still more concise of Melancthon, addressed to him so early as the

Also in
Hungary:
A. D. 1522.

And among
the churches
of Silesia:
A. D. 1523.

Thurzo the
good bishop
of Breslaw.

* Scultet. 1522.

year 1520. He did not live to receive either of them; and Luther, on the occasion of his decease, says in a letter to a friend, "In this faith died John Thurzo, bishop of Breslaw, of all the bishops of this age the very best."*

Luther, in his letter to the dying prelate, expressed his feelings thus: "Not only myself, but the church of God, very much sympathizes with you, Reverend father, in your present sickness. For it is a lamentable truth, both that there are now actually few such bishops, and, also, that there never existed a greater need of them. However, I have a good hope, that the hand which has inflicted your malady, will itself heal you; and that HE, who has furnished you, Reverend father, with such extraordinary gifts, will enable you to go through all the trials to which his holy will shall call you, with a firm Christian spirit, and like a faithful bishop. But if the church must be deprived of you, then may HE, who is all-powerful to promote the good of his faithful people, whether it be by your life or your death, be pleased to bless the event to their profit, according to the riches of his good will. I do not write this on the supposition of its being necessary to strengthen you in the Lord,—though indeed who is so strong as not to need sometimes the help even of his weakest brother?—but from a belief in that communion of saints ordained by Christ, which makes all the faithful partakers both of the blessings and of the burdens of each other. Thus, Reverend father, your sickness, or, if it so please God, your death, is to be considered as a common evil; yet on the other hand it is a delightful reflection, that we suffer or rejoice with you, and that Jesus Christ also, who is ever in the very centre of our hearts, rejoices with us all when we rejoice, and when we suffer, is touched with our infirmities. Your former letters afforded me great satisfaction; they are full of charity and humility."

Melancthon's letter to Thurzo does not advert to the bishop's ill state of health, but contains the following passage: "Who is there that does not think highly of the man, who, as far as I know, is the only person in Germany, that by his authority, learning, and piety, has exhibit-

ed an example of what a bishop ought to be? If the Christian world could but enumerate ten characters of this stamp, or, as it is in Homer, of this spirit and way of thinking, I should not doubt of seeing the kingdom of Christ again restored."

The pious Thurzo died in August, 1520; but the Reformation does not appear to have suffered materially from this loss. His successor, James of Saltza, trod in his steps. This bishop appointed, with the entire approbation of the inhabitants, John Hesse of Nuremberg, who was a learned doctor of divinity, and a dear friend of Luther, to preach the Gospel in the church of St. M. Magdalen at Breslaw. Hesse not only explained and enforced the great truths of Christianity from the pulpit, but for eight days together, in a public disputation, defended the same, and exposed the papal dogmas concerning the mass and the celibacy of the clergy.—The name of Ambrose Moiban is mentioned as his coadjutor in preaching, and that of Valentine Trocedorf in the disputation. The report of these proceedings was as agreeable to Luther as it proved vexatious to the pope. The latter was so much out of humour with the magistrates of Breslaw, on account of their late ecclesiastical appointments, and their protection of the novel doctrines, that he wrote a letter to them full of censures and menaces. This however had no other effect than to induce them to defend their conduct in a printed apology, which contains a most lively description of the corrupt manners of their former pastors, as well as of the wretched state of the ecclesiastical government in general. Thus happily proceeded the Reformation in Silesia. In defiance of the pope, the senate and the inhabitants of Breslaw retained and supported John Hesse in the pastoral office to which they had chosen him; and he died after having discharged the ministerial office in the same city during the space of twenty-five years.* Moreover, about the same time was established in the duchy of Lignitz a school of considerable reputation, the preceptors and governors of which had all been educated in the university of Wittemberg.*

Thurzo dies:
A. D. 1520.

J. Hesse of
Nuremberg.

Death of
Hesse.

* See Appendix, Hesse. See also Seck. 270—271. and Melancthon. Ep. III. 126.

* Scultet et Melchior Adam.

The cross, however—the constant attendant, in some shape or other, on true religion,—was now severely felt by Lutherans, in every place where papal enmity had an opportunity of exerting itself with effect. Lewis king of Hungary and Bohemia, not content with making formal complaints to the elector of Saxony of the patronage afforded by that prince to the arch-heretic Luther, inflicted great severities on such of his own subjects as received the protestant tenets. His principal agent in this business was the bishop of Olmutz. Then in Misnia and Thuringia the unrelenting George of Saxony laboured to extirpate evangelical truth by imprisonment, fines, banishment, and at length by capital punishments. Even his brother Henry, duke of Friberg, who had shown some symptoms of good-will to the reformers, overawed by this determined persecutor, ejected from his house and the company of his duchess three ladies of noble birth, merely because they had been guilty of reading Luther's books. Similar cruelties were practised in other parts, particularly at Miltenberg;* the protestants of which town are said to have been the first who were exposed to the violence of the military on account of their religion. John Draco,† their pastor, fled to save his life; and Luther wrote to his afflicted congregation an admirable consolatory letter, in which he declares, that it would soon appear that if in one place the doctrine of the word was oppressed, it would rise again in ten others. It grieved him, he said, exceedingly, that those who approved his sentiments should be called Lutherans rather than lovers of the Gospel; nevertheless the doctrine would stand whether he lived or died, or however the adversaries might rage; yet he owned that the progress of the true faith met with melancholy impediments from the want of practical godliness, and particularly of the spirit of prayer.‡

But the persecution of Flanders was

the most ferocious. There Aleander, armed with the authority of the pope, and supported by the united power of the inquisition and of the civil government, exercised the ^{Persecution} ^{in Flanders.} vengeance of the hierarchy without mercy. The writings of Luther had infected the Augustinian monks at Antwerp. Some of them were imprisoned, and recanted; but three, in spite of persuasion, threats, and long confinement, remained steady.* These were publicly stript of their holy orders, and declared heretics on a scaffold at Brussels, about the middle of the year 1523.

Two of the three, viz. Henry Voes and John Esch, cheerfully underwent the fiery trial on the same day, testifying a wonderful constancy. As they were led to the stake, they cried with a loud voice that they were Christians; and when they were fastened to it, and the fire was kindled, they rehearsed the Creed, and after that sang the verses alternately of *Te Denm laudamus* till the flames deprived them of voice and life.—Voes confessed before the inquisitors, that he had been brought to the knowledge of the Gospel by Luther's writings. "What," said they, "has Luther the Spirit of God?" No reply.—"You are seduced by Luther:" "I am seduced," answered Voes, "in the same manner as the apostles were by Christ."

This was the first blood that was shed in the Low Countries in the cause of religion, since the rise of Luther. The two martyrs exhibited throughout the conflict astonishing proofs of piety, patience, and constancy. The whole is finely described by a very learned person who was an eye-witness of their sufferings.†

The name of the third was Lambert, who, according to Luther, received the crown of martyrdom in like manner at the stake, four days after.‡ Erasmus says, he was taken back to prison, and there PRIVATELY despatched.§ This author, who certainly hated these abominable cruelties of the papists, observes upon this occasion, that Brussels had been most perfectly free from heretics

* Sometimes called Milteberg, Mildeberg, or even Milberg; but this last with less propriety. See p. 362, near the bottom. It is situated on the Maine, in the electorate of Mentz.

† Erasmus says of this Draco, "that he was a youth of so sweet a temper, and of such blameless morals, that no good man could fail to love him. Epistol.

‡ Ep. II. 185. See Appendix, Draco.

* Brandt. † See Appendix, Voes, &c.
‡ Luth. Ep. II. 148. Lambert succeeded James Spreng in the priory of Antwerp. See Note, page 322.
§ Erasm. Ep. Utenhovie, 1207.

till this event; but that many of the inhabitants, immediately after, began to favour Lutheranism.*

In fact, the modest deportment, together with the unshaken fortitude of the sufferers, made a great impression on the public mind. The martyrs were deemed innocent, and the judges, who had condemned them, unjust and cruel. The friars, to counteract the effect of such dangerous sentiments, circulated everywhere, in their sermons, and their conversation, a ridiculous story, that the souls of these holy men were saved through the intercession of the Virgin Mary; that one of them had appeared since his death, and revealed this important information; affirming, at the same time, that in their very last moments they had repented and abjured the heresies of Luther. Though some colour might be given to this fable from the circumstance of the bloody scene having taken place on the first of July, the day before the Visitation of the blessed Virgin, yet the people rejected the imposture with contempt. The persons who stood nearest to the martyrs denied the fact; and so did the executioner himself, when the question was put to him, whether, they had discovered any marks of penitence.†

Luther, in memory of these faithful servants of God, composed a Latin Hymn, which has been much used in the protestant churches.‡ He likewise dispersed a circular letter among the brethren in Holland, Brabant, and Flanders; in which he says, Blessed be God; we, who have hitherto been worshipping idols celebrated by men of a pretended sanctity, have seen and heard of real saints and martyrs in our own age. Those two precious souls, Henry Voes and John Esch, counted their lives as nothing worth, provided by their deaths the Gospel trumpet of Christ alone might be resounded more fully and clearly. What a slight matter is it to be ignominiously treated, and even put to death by men of this world!—a slight matter indeed to those who are persuaded that their blood is precious in the sight of the Lord. We of the Upper Germany have not yet been so far honoured as to suffer death for the name of Christ, though

some of us have lived and still live in a state of persecution. Now is the time that the kingdom of heaven should show itself, not in speech but in power. The Scripture abounds with glorious promises which are to support us in the present tribulation. Take courage. He, who cannot lie, hath declared that the very hairs of our heads are numbered. And though our enemies may call these holy martyrs Hussites, Wickliffites, and Lutherans, and boast of their bloody deeds, we are not to stand amazed, but to grow stronger in the faith. It cannot be, but the cross of Christ must have its bitter enemies, and impious calumniators. The judge however is at the door, and will soon pronounce a very different sentence.*

These fragments of the history of Luther are scarcely known; but they are inestimable, as it is from them that the most decisive arguments are to be drawn of the real spirit of the great Reformer and his disciples. His heart seems to have bounded with joy whenever his Lord and Master was duly honoured by the display of a right Christian temper in the midst of tribulations. The perusal of documents of this kind is highly gratifying; but the reader must often be content with short extracts, and such comprehensive translations as convey the substance of the materials in a little room.

Early in the year 1524, Luther encouraged a faithful disciple of Christ,† at that time in bonds for the sake of the Gospel, with such suggestions as these: “My excellent brother, you stand in no need of my consolation: Jesus, who hath given you that sacred knowledge which the world knows nothing of, is glorified in your sufferings. Moreover, he strengthens you by his spirit, and comforts you by the two instances of true Christian resignation which lately took place at Brussels. Such examples, to which I add that of yourself, are both my comfort and my support; as they are the great glory of the Gospel of Christ. Who can tell why the Lord did not choose that you should die with Voes and Esch? You seem reserved for another miraculous exhibition. With my whole heart I con-

* Eras. Ep. Kretzero, 1361.

† Id. 1207. Scultet. 182.

‡ Beausobre.

A. D. 1524.
Luther's letter to Lambert Thorn.

* Luth. Ep. II. 150.

† Lambert Thorn.

gratulate you, and give thanks to our faithful Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, that he hath not only granted me to know his word and his spirit, but also to see in you such a rich and magnificent increase of his grace. Wretched me!—who am said to have first taught these things,—that I should be the last, and perhaps never thought worthy to partake of the bonds and flames of martyrs. But in this will I console myself; your bonds are mine; your prisons and flames are mine. Indeed they are so, while I preach and profess the same great truths, and thus sympathize and congratulate with you. Pray for me, my brother; I will pray for you. Keep your mind steady on the numerous promises of help, protection, and deliverances, which are made in Scripture to the faithful when in tribulation. Be strong in the Lord, and acquit yourself like a man. In HIM peace is promised to you; in the world you are to have tribulation. ‘But be of good cheer,’ says he, ‘I have overcome the world.’ Never stop to dispute with Satan, but fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus; and in simple faith depending on him, be assured that it is by the blood of Christ alone that we shall be saved. All human performances can neither take away sin nor justify, because they are not the blood of Christ. We, under the government of the elector of Saxony, have peace; but the duke of Bavaria and the bishop of Treves persecute, proscribe, and put to death many. Some other bishops and princes threaten and use violence, but as yet have abstained from blood. Every where Jesus Christ ‘is the reproach of men, and despised of the people;’* and you are one of his members, by the holy vocation of our Father; which vocation may he be pleased to complete in you, to the glory of his name and of his word! All our friends and our whole church of Wittemberg salute you, and recommend themselves to your prayers, more especially James Spreng and the brethren from Antwerp.”

The same vigour of sentiment and true Christian fervour pervades many of the writings of Luther about this period.

“May the Lord who has called you to his work,” says he to the afore-mentioned John Hesse of Breslaw,† “strengthen and perfect you! This is the consolation

you must receive from me. For I scarcely comprehend what you can mean in requesting me to give you advice for your ministerial office. All I have to say on the subject is to be found in my publications. Then you have also St. Paul’s directions to Timothy and Titus, as well as those of our Lord to all his apostles. What can you wish for more? You have entered the ship with Christ; what do you look for? Fine weather! Rather expect winds, and tempests, and waves to cover the vessel till she begin to sink. This is the baptism with which you must be first baptized, and then the calm will follow, upon your awakening Christ and imploring his help;—for sometimes he will appear to sleep for a season.”

The beginnings of an evangelical revival in so important a kingdom as France deserve to be noticed. But as the Helvetic and Calvinistic denomination soon prevailed there above the Lutheran, our present narrative has no further concern with it, than to show the extensiveness of the Lutheran reformation, which doubtless had great influence in the production of Christian piety in that country.

In the city of Meux, Faber, Favel, and a few others, had begun to sow the seeds of pure Christianity, even during the year 1523; and they appear to have been favoured by their bishop, William Brissonet. But Francis I. king of France severely rebuked this prelate for having countenanced the novel teachers: upon which, William not only withdrew his protection from the reformers, but promised to banish them from the country. Faber fled to Nerac in Gascony, where he found support from Margaret the sister of the king, whose views of religion were extremely different from those of her brother Francis I. This persecuted heretic adhered steadily to the Lutheran system; but Favel, who found an asylum in Switzerland, immediately espoused the tenets of Zuingle, and afterwards assisted Calvin in his pastoral labours at Geneva.

The same city and year furnishes the memorable case of a mechanic named John Clark, who for fixing a paper on the door of the cathedral, in which he had written his sentiments against the pope’s indulgences, and called him Antichrist, was scourged unmerci-

* Psalm 22.

† Ante, p. 384.

fully, and burnt in the forehead with an ignominious mark. His mother no sooner saw him, than she bade him take courage, and exclaimed, "Live Jesus Christ, live the Cross!" And John, entirely regardless both of the pain he had endured, and the shame to which he was exposed, repaired to the city of Metz, where he spent his days in earning his subsistence at his trade, and his nights in teaching the doctrine of Luther.

John Clark
born:
A. D. 1554. In the year following, his zeal led him to break to pieces some images which the superstitious inhabitants intended to worship the next day; and for this fault, his hand was first cut off, and his nose plucked from his face by a pair of hard-grasping pinchers; then his breasts and his arms were by the same instrument torn to pieces and separated from his body. "Their idols," cried he, in the most excruciating torments, "are silver and gold, the work of men's hands!" Lastly, he was consumed by burning.*

As the terms Helvetic and Calvinistic denomination have been mentioned, and as even at this day the meaning of the words Calvinist and Calvinistic supplies matter for much dispute and even contention among religious persons, it may not be improper briefly to advertise the reader, that in the origin of these denominations, as distinguished from the Lutheran, there really existed no material difference of sentiment; at least this is true so far as the religious practice of fallen creatures, and their recovery of the lost image of God in this world, and their eternal salvation in the next, depend upon a just application of the salutary remedies of the Gospel.

Rise of the Sacramental Controversy. It is one of the most mournful events attending the Reformation, that historical truth and method should require us to mention at all the difference here alluded to. Such as it was, it had, as yet, hardly appeared with perspicuity; but in the year 1524, and the several succeeding years, it grew into a tedious and violent controversy concerning the manner in which the body and blood of Christ are present in the Eucharist. This dispute, which has been called the Sa-

cramentary contest, after producing the most deplorable animosities, terminated at length in the fatal division of those sincere friends of reformation, who had embarked in the same cause, and who equally professed the essentials of godliness. The differences of sentiment among the contending parties were frequently indistinct and almost entirely verbal; and if the Church of Christ could be viewed abstracted from every secular connexion, such niceties would scarcely deserve a moment's consideration. But Christians must class themselves with some communities, and are therefore compelled to give peculiar attention to the distinguishing features of that denomination to which they belong. Happy! did they but learn to do this in a spirit of candour and charity!—And still happier! did they employ their zeal, their firmness, and their perseverance in defending the foundations of religion,—in imitation of St. Paul, who would not give place to false brethren by subjection, no not for an hour, that the truth of the Gospel might continue with the Galatians.*

An example or two of the wisdom and diligence of the first Reformers, in stating distinctly and guarding carefully the fundamental articles of the Gospel, will be more instructive, and more consistent with the plan of this history, than many pages filled with the relation of vexatious dispute and controversy.

I. John Brisman, a Franciscan doctor of divinity, preached in 1523, at Cobus in Lusatia, a sermon which has justly been called a very excellent compendium of true

J. Brisman.
A. D. 1523.

evangelical doctrine. It seems to have been composed in reply to the old calumny, which never fails to attend the profession of genuine Christianity,—that the doctrine of justification by faith alone, is destructive of good works.—The author after having established that first great point concerning the justification of a sinner, proceeds thus: "Next to faith, it is my constant practice to inculcate the necessity of that love to our neighbour, which arises from faith, as fruit does from the tree. It is indeed impossible that there should exist a faith which is not productive of such a love. For as a lively faith produces a hearty love and confidence toward God, so from the same

* Scultet. 178 & 192. Varillas & Seck. 282.

* Chap. ii.

causes arises love to our neighbour, inso- much that we would serve him in every passible way, even to the loss of life; for this is Christ's command; 'A new commandment I give unto you, that as I have loved you, ye also love one another.' Oh, what a noble mark of distinction hath our Lord directed us to acquire! 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' It is a new commandment, which has nothing in it frightful or disquieting, but which points out what those who are new creatures in Christ Jesus, and are justified by faith without works, ought to do: namely, to love their neighbour from their very inmost soul, and without any compulsion from penal laws.

"For these reasons I treat of faith and charity as the two leading points, and inseparably connected together. In fact, they cannot be disjoined; nor is it possible that real faith should not continually operate to the honour and glory of God, and the good of our neighbour. For like as by faith you are introduced to Christ and become one with him, and through Christ have access to God, so ought you to come out of Christ through the love of your neighbour, and with the intention of benefiting him to the utmost of your powers and opportunities, as Christ himself for your good hath not spared himself. Agreeably to this he says in John x. 9: 'I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.'"

For propagating such evangelical doctrine as this, Brisman was banished from his own country, but was soon called by Divine Providence, to assist in spreading the glad tidings of salvation in Prussia. In the autumn of the same year this pious divine preached the first evangelical sermon that had been heard at Königsberg;* and afterwards laboured in that part of the country for many years to the great advantage of Christian truth and liberty.† In the discourse from which the above extract is taken, he owns, that during twelve years he had been immersed in the disputes of the scholastic theology, and constantly shown himself a violent enemy of the Gospel, till it pleased God in his compassion to take pity on his condition, and deliver

him from the filth of the prevailing sophistry.*

II. Luther had been informed by a French gentleman of great zeal in the cause of true religion, that Charles duke of Savoy was very favourably inclined to the ecclesiastical reformation. Such an opportunity was not to be lost; and accordingly he wrote to the duke a congratulatory letter, which is now a peculiarly valuable document, as it clearly manifests the spirit of the great Reformer, and the objects which he and his associates had in view.

He begins in the apostolic style: "Grace and peace in Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen. Your highness will pardon this liberty which the glorious cause of the Gospel induces me to take. Having heard that the duke of Savoy, through that gift of God which is certainly very rare among princes, is ardently desirous of promoting genuine piety, I have judged it to be my duty, however unworthy, at least to congratulate such a prince, and to do my utmost to encourage and animate him in the good cause. It is my prayer that this fine example of your majesty may be the means of winning many souls to Christ. And that you may not be deceived respecting our sentiments by the malignant misrepresentations of the papal advocate, I will put down some of the leading articles of our faith.

"1. Our first article is, that the origin, and indeed the whole efficacy of our salvation, are through faith in Christ alone, who does not blot out our sins on account of our works, but destroys the power of death, and, as the prophet says, leads captivity captive. So St. Paul, 'If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.' And again, 'We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the works of the law.'

"Now this faith we affirm is the gift of God; and moreover, that it is produced in the heart by the spirit of God. Faith is a thing that is alive; and makes a change in the whole man; and this without any antecedent merit, by the word of God alone. Thus in Romans; 'Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.'

"From this article it follows, that everything which the popes and the schools have disseminated throughout

* Chron. Hen. in Scult. 145.

† Chytr. 290 & 291.

the whole world, concerning satisfactions and works of merit and congruity, is most abominable doctrine; and all the ecclesiastical orders of the monasteries are precisely those bodies of men of whom Christ predicted, 'Many will come in my name, saying, Lo here, and lo there is Christ.' For if sin can be done away, and pardon obtained by our works, then it is not by the blood of Christ: and if it is by the blood of Christ, then it is not by our works. What shall we say then of all this mighty papistical zeal for works, but that it makes void the grace of God; especially as these men do not work purely for the sake of doing good, but that they may thereby obtain life everlasting; which can only be obtained by the blood of Christ. To trust in our own works, and to seek salvation by them, is in fact to deny the Lord that bought us.

"2. In our second article we maintain, that those who are justified by faith, incorporated into the society of Christ, and whose sins and sinful nature are subdued by him, must take care to bring forth good fruit in the course of their lives. Not that these fruits will make men good, or procure them remission of sins—that is to be done by faith only; but in the same manner as the tree is known by its fruits, so is the soundness of the Christian to be proved by his works. The tree is not made good by its fruits, but is assuredly good if it produces valuable fruit; and in this way we argue with St. Paul respecting faith; namely, we demonstrate that our faith worketh by love, when we prove by the good which we do to our neighbour, that we cannot possibly stand in need of good works as the ground of our justification, because we have already in our hearts, by faith, the very principle upon which justification depends. The works then which we inculcate, are such as are serviceable to mankind, and by no means such as are done in the intention of purchasing heaven for ourselves. This last is a ruinous idea belonging to the papal system, and is diametrically opposite to pure Christian charity."

"The world," continues Luther, "has been miserably seduced by popes, councils, and decrees of fathers, miserably entangled by the traditions of men, or rather by the snares of the devil, inasmuch that there has been a general persuasion that the salvation of men's souls

depended upon the observance of human ordinances. And thus by artful inventions and management, Jesus Christ and his Gospel, as well as faith, and charity, and real good works, and Christian liberty, have been kept out of sight. In the same way, the prize of salvation itself has been taken away from us, and we are compelled to run in vain."

The author afterwards, in his usual emphatical language, lays open a variety of papal abuses, and then concludes this admirable letter in the following strain:

"These, my illustrious prince, are the chief doctrines which I would wish you most strenuously to patronize in public, as indeed you have already begun to do. But let there be no compulsion: let there be no recourse to the sword: in that way nothing will prosper. All I request is, that under the government of your majesty, those who sincerely preach the Gospel may be protected and known to be in no danger. This is the way in which Christ will destroy Antichrist by the breath of his mouth; and thus, as it is in Daniel, he shall be broken without hand;* he whose coming is with lying wonders.† Satan will not cast out Satan. Devils must be cast out by the finger of God. Go on, my brave prince; and from the spark which already burns within you, kindle a holy Gospel flame, which, issuing from the house of Savoy, may spread throughout all France. May the Lord Jesus Christ pour his Spirit into your heart, that you may do everything to the glory of his sacred word!‡"

CHAPTER X.

FROM LUTHER'S LETTER TO THE DUKE OF SAVOY, TO THE PERSECUTIONS IN 1523 AND 1524.

NEW POPE, CLEMENT VII.
ANOTHER DIET AT NUREMBERG.
RECESS OF THE DIET.
CONFEDERACY AT RATISBON.
REFORMATION IN PRUSSIA.
PERSECUTIONS IN 1523 AND 1524.

IN November, 1523, Julius de Medicis, who had failed of success at the preced-

* Dan. viii. 25. † 2 Thes. ii. 9.
‡ Ep. II. 156.

ing election of Adrian, was placed in the papal chair by very uncanonical means; and this circumstance, besides the aversion which popes usually have for councils, made him dread the scrutiny of an assembly, which might terminate in the annihilation of his authority. He determined therefore to elude the demands of the Germans by every possible means. He was himself much superior to Adrian in the arts of government; and moreover, to effect his purposes the better, he made choice of cardinal Campeggio, an able and artful negotiator, as his nuncio to the diet of the empire assembled again at Nuremberg in the latter part of 1523.

The emperor was hindered by other concerns from being present at this diet. The elector Frederic appeared early in the sittings, but, on account of his infirmities, and also the violence, confusion, and turbulence of the proceedings, left Nuremberg before any material business was concluded, and even before the arrival of the pope's legate.

The arrival of Campeggio was announced about the beginning of March, 1524, when the princes, after mature deliberation, advised him by no means to enter Nuremberg with the accustomed pomp and ceremony,

nor to bestow upon the inhabitants of the city his benedictions as he passed along; for lately, in going through Augsburg, the people had treated his dignity and his spiritual favours with the utmost irreverence, and had pointed at the mule on which he rode in so ridiculous and insulting a manner, that even his own retinue could not abstain from laughter. The emperor's brother Ferdinand, on the arrival of the legate, reproached the senate of Nuremberg for their attachment to Lutheranism, and exhorted them to adhere to the ancient religious system: but they replied with firmness, that they must not desert the truth. One of the preachers was bold enough to affirm publicly in his sermon, that Antichrist entered Rome on the very day that the emperor Constantine left it;—an assertion which gave great offence to the legate, who however declared that he was more anxious on account of the Italians than the Germans. The latter, he said, were fickle in their dispositions, and

would as easily lay aside novel doctrines as they were apt to imbibe them hastily: but not so the Italians, who usually adhered with obstinacy to what they had once received. It caused him therefore much painful anxiety to hear that Luther's publications were then read at Venice by great numbers.

From these incidents we may infer the actual progress of Lutheranism, much better than from numerous assertions and conjectures of historians, which, however elegantly expressed, are often by no means the result of a patient examination of authentic documents, but rather have their origin in party spirit or a lively imagination.

The reception of Campeggio at Nuremberg was not calculated to put a cardinal legate of the pope into good humour. The elector palatine, under the pretence of being let blood that day, was not present among the princes who went to meet him; and the representative of his holiness was conducted to his lodging in the habit of a traveller, by a different road from what had been usual.

The new pontiff however had been no-wise deficient in paying due attentions to conciliate the German diet. Already he had despatched his trusty chamberlain, Jerome Rorarius, to announce his election to the popedom, and to signify his intention of sending to them soon after a dignified apostolic nuncio with full credentials. Rorarius was commissioned to deliver from the pope to the elector Frederic a letter full of complimentary expressions, in which not so much as the name of Luther was mentioned; the prince was only exhorted to preserve the honour of his illustrious family, which had supplied the church with so many sovereign pontiffs, and Germany also with so many emperors, faithful to the Roman See. Campeggio also brought another letter from the pope, of like import, in which he earnestly entreated the elector to confer with his legate for the public good. "The cardinal," said he, "is a man of uncommon virtue and discretion, and the case is urgent beyond example. If you have any gratitude to God, any regard for your own salvation or that of your country, use all your powers to compose the disturbances in Germany, and especially to restore the degraded dignities there to their former situation. Apply yourself with vigour to this most sacred work,

and we promise to be ever mindful of your great merits in this very important concern.”*

Frederic the wise was not to be imposed on by such language as this. Before he withdrew from Nuremberg, it is plain he had penetrated the designs of the pope and his advocates; because he left it in strict charge with his representative Feilitch, not only to have no conferences with Campeggio, but also to protest against any concessions which might be made by others to that artful legate.† Moreover this good prince probably concluded that, in the existing circumstances, more advantages would accrue to the cause of Christianity from his absence than his presence.‡

Campeggio himself, there is no doubt, considered the departure of Frederic as an event the most unfavourable to the object of his negotiations with the diet. In a letter to the prince he thus expresses his disappointment: “I have been much vexed and mortified to find your highness unexpectedly gone. My master’s letters to you are concise; but he has directed me to communicate in his name a great deal of matter, which had it been of such a nature as to admit either of delay, or of effectual discussion by letter, this my laborious and troublesome journey had better have been spared.

“There are frequent reports that your highness appears to favour the novel heresies of the present times: but neither the pope nor myself can give the least credit to them. As for my part, on the very day when I was first introduced into your highness’s presence, I was particularly struck, among your many excellent and princely endowments, with one which sparkled like a star of extraordinary brightness and magnitude; I mean, your extreme regard for Christian piety, and your affection towards the Apostolic See. The impression then made on my mind was such as absolutely forbids me to entertain the smallest suspicion of the soundness of the reli-

* Both these letters of Julius de Medicis were signed Clement VII., the name which he assumed upon being declared pope.

† Comm. de Luth. 289.

‡ The adversaries of the Reformation, well aware of the weight which the name of the elector of Saxony would give to any measure, forged his signature in the register of the RECESSES, in spite of the protest of Feilitch. —Weimar Arch.

gious principles of your highness,—whatever may be said to the contrary.

“The scandalous and impious innovations which I have observed in some parts of Germany, by no means affect my opinion of the princes, and persons of distinction.

“It is however notorious that the influence of your highness is great and extensive; and therefore his holiness conjures you to imitate the zeal and virtue of your ancestors in the present conjuncture. He calls upon you to exert yourself with a becoming religious spirit, and to restrain and punish the refractory and seditious. Many parts of your dominions are said to require speedy animadversions of this kind. The disease is spreading apace, and taking deep root. If the common people are permitted to take into their own hands the management of religion, what are the magistrates, what are sovereigns to expect, who, as such, are already very much the objects of their aversion? Let those who are so mightily pleased with these rebellions against the Church and its rulers, consider where these impieties and distractions are likely to terminate.

“The supreme pontiff, like a provident pilot, foresees the storm, and by me admonishes the German princes of their imminent danger, and would gladly animate them to restrain the madness of the populace. This is not the cause of the Roman See, it is your own, it is the cause of all Germany, and of Christendom. I can have no wish but to promote the peace of the country, the glory of its governors, and the dignity of the Church: and for the attainment of these objects, I would raise up the fallen, direct the mistaken into the right way, and retain the penitent in the bosom of Christian charity. I have no doubt of your highness’s attachment to the Apostolic See; nevertheless, feeling myself unequal to the task I have undertaken, I most ardently entreat you to favour the purpose of my negotiations, and to inform me in writing what you think best to be done.”

A man who could write such a letter as this, was well qualified to execute the private instructions of Clement VII. in the present juncture. What those instructions were, we learn from the grand papal advocate himself.* 1. They breathed nothing but severity and vio-

* Pallav. II. 10.

lence against Luther. The legate was directed to use his utmost endeavours to procure the execution of the edict of Worms: And, 2. He was to counteract every measure which tended to the appointment of a general council, and the redress of the *Centum gravamina*. This pope, even in Adrian's time, used to say, that councils were good when the subjects of which they treated were anything but the pope's authority.* Agreeably to his maxims, Clement instructed his legate to PRETEND, that, in consequence of the decease of the late pope, and the sudden departure of his nuncio from Nuremberg,† the catalogue of the German grievances had never been regularly received at Rome; and thus to decline making any definitive answer to such indecent and unreasonable demands.

Campeggio, both before and during his conferences with the diet, laboured incessantly in PRIVATE with the members of that assembly, to effectuate the purposes of his commission. In the public meetings he harangued in a most plausible strain concerning the paternal compassion of the pope for the present situation of the country, and his own inclinations to peace and moderation; at the same time he expressed astonishment that so many great princes could tolerate the late mischievous innovations in religion, and the abolition of those rites and ceremonies in which themselves and their ancestors had been educated.

The diet, after listening to a number of unmeaning promises and declarations, desired to know the pope's intentions respecting the methods which in the preceding year they had proposed to Cheregato for restoring the peace of the Church; and also, whether the legate was charged with any satisfactory answer to the MEMORIAL of grievances which they had sent to Rome?

Campeggio replied, that he knew of no plan devised by them for composing the religious differences, except the edict of Worms. That edict, though approved by the emperor, and sanctioned by the general consent, had not been obeyed; and the execution of it ought, in his judgment, to be the first object of their deliberations. As to the memorial of grievances, he allowed that three copies of it had found their way to private persons, and that one of them had fallen into his

own hands; but that the pope and cardinals considered it as the production of a private person, and by no means of the German princes. He had no instructions about it. There were articles in it which even bordered upon heresy; and the publication of them was highly disrespectful to the Roman See.

Charles V. was at that time very solicitous to gain the pope to his interests; and therefore both his own ambassador and his brother Ferdinand warmly seconded Campeggio in his complaints against the German princes for their lenity towards the disciples of Luther. Yet such was the complexion of this diet in general, Recess of the Diet. that their RECESS* was in

fact as favourable to the Reformation as the former. They promised to observe the edict of Worms AS FAR AS THEY COULD, renewed their demands of a general council, and appointed the eleventh of November next for a new assembly of the states of the empire, who should meet at Spire, and make temporary regulations of all matters in dispute, until the council could be summoned. The words, AS FAR AS THEY COULD, were highly displeasing to the papal party. "They were inserted," says Maimbourg, "that men might be at full liberty to do nothing in obedience to the edict of Worms; and so it actually turned out.

The proceedings of this diet were attended with many disputes and dissatisfactions. Ferdinand, with the consent of the pope, insisted on one-third of the annual income of the bishops in support of the war against the Turks; but several of them, who had possessions in Austria, protested against so enormous a contribution. The bishop of Gurk declared that the extirpation of the Lutherans was become more necessary than that of the Turks; and that he would contribute more cheerfully to effectuate the former than the latter. Ferdinand reminded the bishops, that the success of either would prove fatal both to the ecclesiastical dignities and revenues. There was much contest in the diet respecting the terms in which the decree should be expressed; but though the majority of votes were against the execution of the edict of Worms, yet such were the clamours of the prelates, and the menaces of the emperor's ambassador, that they carried

* Paul Sarpi.

† Page 369.

* Ap. 18. 1524. Goldast. ii. 152.

along with them the princes, and prevailed by authority where they had failed in numbers. The lower orders and states of the empire protested publicly against these irregularities; which were likewise withstood with great spirit by the envoy of the elector of Saxony, who was instructed to complain—that the edict of Worms was obtained by a manœuvre of the bishops against the sense of the diet, and that it had never yet been communicated to himself and his brother John; whereas that important resolution at Nuremberg, which enjoined the preaching of the Gospel in its purity, was the result of the most mature deliberation, and had been published every where. “His master,” he said, “could not approve of the present silence in regard to two points on which the former diet had distinctly explained themselves to Cheregato, namely, how dangerous it would be to the public peace to attempt to execute by force the edict of Worms, and how earnestly they wished for the free propagation of Christian truth.”

Planitz, who represented the elector of Saxony in the council of regency, expressed the elector’s sentiments on the subject of the war with the Turks, in the following terms:—“My most kind master is of opinion that all our enterprises will fail of success while we continue to be such characters as we now are: That, before all other things, we ought to beg for the grace of God and his divine help, that he would be pleased to bestow on us, miserable sinners, a sincere desire to promote, through a spirit of true Christian faith, his honour, and the salvation of our neighbour: that if we would fight the infidels with any prospect of a prosperous issue, we ought first to get the better of our own infidelity and want of dependence on God, also of our attachment to private interests, and our disposition to revenge, envy, and malice; and that then we might, with a good hope of victory, commit the contest to an overruling Providence.”

A declaration of this sort was enough to bring upon a man the reproach of Lutheranism.

Never perhaps were the resolutions of any assembly received with less approbation than those of this diet of Nuremberg. The emperor, in letters to his brother Ferdinand and the princes, expressed the utmost indignation at what had passed. Yet conscious of his in-

ability to enforce obedience to his commands, he sent all the letters to his brother, with secret instructions by no means to disperse them among those hard audacious German potentates, if he foresaw they were likely to treat them with contempt. Ferdinand, however, imprudently divulged the sentiments of the emperor, and thereby greatly weakened the sovereign authority. The independent spirit of the princes, not used to the imperious language of Charles V. began to mutiny against this encroachment on their liberties: the greater part of Germany opposed insuperable obstacles to the execution of the edict of Worms; and nothing was gained to the papal party by this offensive activity of the emperor, except the prevention of the assembly of the States at Spire in the succeeding November.

In writing on this subject,* even to the venerable elector of Saxony, Charles could not abstain from intemperate and acrimonious language. It belonged to himself and the pope, he said, to call councils, and to fix on the place where they should meet. He absolutely forbade the princes to assemble at Spire, and enjoined the strictest observance to the edict of Worms. He called Luther a **PROFANE SAVAGE**, who, like Mahomet, was aiming at great power by poisoning men’s minds with the contagion of his agreeable doctrines.

Frederick, by returning a modest and respectful answer, together with a copy of the protest made by his envoy, ward-ed the violence of Charles, who must have found it difficult to blame this prince for protesting against a decree which he himself so much disapproved, though for very different reasons.

At Rome, the news of the edict of Nuremberg produced both alarm and astonishment. Clement VII.

regarding the intended assembly at Spire as a new ecclesiastical tribunal erected in opposition to the legitimate authority of the pope, instantly summoned his cardinals to deliberate on the measures which should be judged most fit to prevent so dangerous an innovation. The conclave soon showed their capacity for the management of intrigues and secular politics. They directed Campeggio to collect together in Germany all the

*Effect of the
Edict at
Rome.*

* From Bruges. Seck. 290.

princes, bishops, and others who adhered to the cause of Rome; and to give them fair promises respecting a future council, but at the same time to represent to them the great difficulty of calling one in time of war.*

Their grievances, he might say, would be redressed at Rome; and he was to conjure them above all things to prevent, if possible, the discussion of any articles of religion in the assembly at Spire: and lastly, he would do well to endeavour, through the influence of the emperor, to retard the meeting of that assembly, or hinder it altogether if he could.

The pope, for the same purpose, resolved to apply to the kings of England and Portugal; and as the virtuous elector of Saxony was not to be gained either by Romish menace or Romish flattery, he appears to have meditated his degradation from the electoral dignity, by pronouncing him a heretic. This was the explicit advice of Alexander.

As no man that ever lived was a greater enemy than Martin Luther to sedition and riot, or contended more strenuously than he did for the duty of subjects to preserve the public peace, his friends at the diet of Nuremberg opposed with all their might the inserting of his name in the decree as one who had been the cause of tumults and disturbances on account of religion; and they carried their point; nevertheless, through the dishonest zeal of those who disliked Luther, his name, though not in the original decree, appeared in many of the copies of it which were dispersed throughout the German empire.

Luther himself was as little satisfied as the pope with the determinations of the diet; and his inimical historian† admits that he had very good reason for discontent. "For if the edict of Worms, which had pronounced him a heretic, was to be enforced, why had the diet directed the merits of his writings to be inquired into in the future assembly at Spire? Again, if an inquiry of this kind was in itself a proper measure, why was he to be condemned and punished previously to the trial which was to determine his guilt or innocence?"

Our undaunted Reformer had no sooner received a copy of the decree of the diet, than he caused it to be printed along

with the edict of Worms, and added many vehement and severe observations of his own. He treated those who thought of executing the edict of Worms, as men who had lost their senses, and were as outrageous and absurd as the giants who made war against heaven. He exhorted his Christian countrymen to pray for the infatuated unhappy princes, and not to think of undertaking any expedition against the Turks. "The Turks," said he, "exceed our great men both in council and moderation. With us, you see, a poor fragile body,* already on the very borders of putridity, which can never be sure of living till the evening, boasting itself to be the true, the great defender of the catholic faith. No success is to be expected under the auspices of men who tempt God in this manner. I call upon you, my beloved princes and masters, in the name of that God who governs the world and judges your secret thoughts, to review and to amend your conduct. I have no doubt but some dreadful storm of the divine indignation threatens Germany, and will most assuredly burst upon you, if you thus continue to provoke Almighty God. These two decrees, promulged nearly at the same time, are impudent and disgraceful instances of fraud, falsehood, and contradiction. Alas! that princes of the Christian name should have recourse to such detestable measures! Unhappy Germans, who have endured for so many years the abominable haughty yoke of insulting pontiffs, and yet take no pains to shake it from your necks! What! after having been pillaged so often, and exhausted of the very marrow of your bones, will no prayers, admonitions, or remonstrances move you to take care of yourselves, but you must employ all your vengeance upon such a poor wretch as Luther! Go on, if it must be so: here am I; I shall not run away. I shall resign my life most willingly, and migrate to my eternal inheritance whenever it shall please God to pronounce my hour to be come. However, the same Omnipotent Being who, against hope, has preserved my life, during the space of almost three years, from the cruelty of my enemies, can still preserve it; though indeed I have no great desire to live.

"Through the divine goodness I am less alarmed at the thought of death than

* Pallav.

† Maimbourg.

* Meaning that of the emperor.

I used to be; but let those who would destroy me, reflect, whether my blood may not leave a stain, which neither they nor their children shall be able to wash away. God will not be mocked; and ye know not but he may be pleased to ordain that the murder of Luther should be followed by the heaviest national calamities."*

In a letter to Spalatinus, then at the diet of Nuremberg, Luther writes: "I am not very anxious concerning this Imperial diet, for I am well aware of Satan's devices. May Christ preserve his Church, and triumph over the enemy! Amen. . . . I wish our simple princes and bishops would at length open their eyes, and see that the present revolution in religion is not brought about by Luther,—who is really nobody,—but by the omnipotence of Christ himself; and may they have grace afforded them to see also that they have hitherto done their utmost to oppose and resist HIS WILL!"†

In another letter, written to his friend N. Hausman after the elector had left the diet, he says, "Our prince is returned, and nothing as yet is decreed against me. But the Lord has been pleased to remove from this world, by means of a most lamentable apoplexy, the chancellor of Treves, who only two days before his death had boasted, in a convivial meeting, that before the feast of St. Martin the sword would put an end to all this business of reformation in religion."

Cardinal Campeggio, for the purpose of eluding the remonstrances of the Germans and their demands of redress of grievances, brought forward, during the conferences at Nuremberg, certain constitutions for the amendment of some disorders and abuses which prevailed among the inferior clergy; but they were rejected by the diet, as tending on the whole to effect no substantial reform, and rather to increase the ecclesiastical dominion, and pave the way for greater extortions of money. This active legate, however, did not abandon the cause he had to support. Having failed to influence the votes of the diet as he had hoped, his next object was to secure, if possible, a determined confederacy of the

friends of the pope. With this view he collected together, in July, 1524, at Ratisbon, the emperor's brother

Confederacy at Ratisbon, A. D. 1524.

Ferdinand and the two dukes of Bavaria, the archbishop of Saltzburg, and several other prelates or their representatives. These, at the instance of the cardinal, bound themselves by a new declaration to execute rigorously the edict of Worms against Luther and his followers; to adhere to the ancient usages in administering the sacraments; to punish the apostate monks and married priests; to recall from Wittemberg, under heavy penalties for disobedience, all such students as were their own subjects; and lastly, among other resolutions, they determined to afford no asylum to banished Lutherans; and in case of rebellion, to protect and assist one another with all their force. At the same time the confederates agreed to receive and publish the legate's constitutions before mentioned for the reformation of the clergy. They consisted of thirty-five articles, two of which were levelled against clergymen who should use enchantments and divinations. This partial reform was intended to amuse and soothe the people, but produced little effect. The Germans were oppressed, and could be satisfied only by the removal of their burdens.

The confederacy at Ratisbon, considered as a political manœuvre of the papal government, was managed by Campeggio, no doubt, with much ability and address. It was, however, an event of which neither that artful legate, nor his more artful master in the Romish conclave, seems to have foreseen the consequences. In fact, while they were flattering themselves with having cemented a league of the most powerful supporters of the ancient ecclesiastical system, they forgot that they were giving the signal for an avowed and permanent disunion among the various potentates and orders of Germany. The seceders comprehended but a small part of the Imperial states; and their proceedings were altogether irregular. The few had not only unjustly assumed the right of making general orders for the many, but had neglected matters of the greatest importance to the community; they had done nothing to remove the real and principal grievances so long complained of, neither had they applied to the lesser abuses their true remedies.

* Maimbourg observes, that Luther knew very well that the harsh expressions which he made use of in this publication, would be applied to his Roman catholic adversaries EXCLUSIVELY. † Ep. II. 183.

It was this view of the proceedings at Ratisbon which roused the much more numerous Imperial deputies who favoured Lutheranism, and who had dissented from Campeggio in the late diet, to form soon after a similar convention at Spire. There, in the same month of July, they assembled, and, in concert with one another, and in opposition to their papal adversaries, explained the decrees of Nuremberg in favour of growing Protestantism.

The Ratisbon party, it is well known, were far from being influenced by what are sometimes called motives of pure and honest bigotry. For example, the dignity and authority of the popedom were manifestly at stake. The ambitious schemes of Charles V. required him to purchase the concurrence of the pope, as a temporal price, at ANY PRICE. Ferdinand was then secretly using every art to secure his election as king of the Romans. The two dukes of Bavaria, who had hitherto permitted the public sale of Luther's books in their dominions, were now bribed to proscribe them, and to obstruct the further progress of his doctrine, by a subsidy from their higher clergy of one-fifth of all their revenues during the space of five years: and in return for this ample contribution, the rich ecclesiastical dignitaries were further gratified by not only being allowed to escape all reformation themselves, but also by the enacting of Campeggio's new and rigorous laws against the inferior parochial preachers,—a shameful partiality this, by which the domineering authority of the hierarchy was augmented, and the condition of the indigent laborious ministers was rendered more humiliating and dependent!

Though the motives which produced the opposite convention at Spire, it is to be feared, were in some instances not altogether Christian and disinterested, yet were they in general truly laudable and patriotic, and favourable to national liberty; and, in regard to many of the states of the empire, proceeded from a desire of establishing a pure and reformed religion.

This division of Germany into two parties, though it certainly weakened the force of the empire, and laid the foundation of many incurable suspicions and jealousies, was nevertheless, under Providence, extremely favourable to the pro-

gress of the Reformation. The same reflection is suggested by the history of the contentions between the emperor and the French king, which prevented that union of the Romish princes which was necessary to consolidate a system of universal persecution.

The pious and modest student of history often discovers such a comfortable and satisfactory evidence of a divine hand in the direction of human affairs, as entirely escapes both the profane sceptic and the conceited philosopher.

Luther had now reason to consider his personal security at Wittemberg as abundantly meliorated. Both the Roman pontiff and the emperor had made two vain attempts at Nuremberg to effectuate the execution of the edict of Worms. The evasive decree of the last diet, "that they should observe that edict, AS FAR AS THEY COULD,"* was soon interpreted to mean THAT THEY COULD NOT; and this answer, in explicit terms, was returned to the archduke Ferdinand by the princes who favoured the Lutheran reformation, after that they had received the indignant letters of Charles V.†

However, as our great Reformer never counted even his life dear to him, so that he might finish his course with joy and the ministry which he had received,‡ any satisfaction afforded to him from considerations of the safety of his person, was very little compared with that which he derived from hearing multiplied delightful accounts of the success of the Gospel in various parts, during the disputes and divisions in Germany.

It was about the middle of this same year that the landgrave of Hesse began to profess a decided approbation of the reformed religion. Enlightened by Luther's writings, he enjoined his preachers, in a public proclamation, to confine themselves to the clear simple doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles; upon which, a Franciscan monk, named Nicolaus Ferber, undertook to reclaim him to the catholic faith, by putting into his hands what he called an approved treatise on religion, and by exhorting him to imitate

A. D. 1534.
The Landgrave of Hesse favours the Reformation.

* Maimb. in Seck. p. 287. See also page 393 of this Volume.

† Page 394. ‡ Acts xx.

the kings and princes in Italy, France, and Spain, who had agreed to inflict exemplary punishment on the Lutherans. The Landgrave replied, That he had read the book, but found little in it that accorded with the charitable spirit of a true Christian; That he had no design to leave ancient customs which were founded in Scripture; that he could not agree with the monk in denying the doctrine of justification by faith alone, because the words of Scripture were expressed on that head: Moreover, that he highly disapproved of his representing the Virgin Mary as a Mediator between God and man, and the Gospel as a thing that ought not to be preached to the common people; both which points, he said, were directly contrary to the written word.

Albert, Marquis of Brandenburg, brother of the Marquis George, whom we have before mentioned* as a zealous promoter of the Reformation in Silesia, was at the late diet at Nuremberg, where, in the right of Grand-master of the Teutonic Order, he ranked next to the German archbishops.—Political emergencies were the immediate cause of his presence. During his stay, however, he took the advantage of often hearing Osiander† preach; and as he had already conversed with Luther, and read his books with attention, he now became an open and avowed defender of the Reformation; more especially after Luther, in an elaborate epistle, had resolved certain doubts which the marquis had proposed to him respecting the pontifical jurisdiction. Prussia soon felt the happiest effects from the operation of Albert's religious sentiments. Long ago the pagans of that country had been compelled by the sanguinary Teutonic knights to become at least NOMINAL Christians, but, under the protection and encouragement of Albert, a SUBSTANTIAL change, both in doctrine and practice, commenced among them, and gained ground with vast rapidity. Lutheran divines laboured in the Prussian territories with great success; and George de Polentz, bishop of Samland, so much distinguished himself by his evangelical exertions, that he may truly be called the father of the Reformation in that country. George seems to have been the first prelate who ventured

to recommend to his clergy the study of Luther's writings. "Read," says he, "with a pious and diligent spirit, the translation of the Old and New Testament by that most famous divine Dr. Martin Luther. Read his tracts on Christian liberty, and on good works, also his explanations of the Epistles and Gospels, and of the Magnificat and the Psalms."

In the same public advice to his clergy, he laments the excessive ignorance of the people, that many were grown old and decrepit, who knew not a particle of their baptismal obligations, nor anything of Christianity in general, beyond the mere name. He then exhorts them to perform the baptismal service no longer in Latin, but in the language of the country: "It was the will of God that the promises of the Gospel should be explained in intelligible language."

Maurice, bishop of Ermland, a province of Prussia, published in the same month a most violent and abusive declaration against Luther and his disciples. With the most horrid imprecations he devotes to the divine vengeance all those who shall continue to divide the Church of Christ by adhering to what he calls the cause of those pernicious schismatics.

During this turbulent season, and amidst many private afflictions, Luther appears to have stood constantly at the helm of the infant protestant churches, and to have directed their course with a most watchful eye. In 1523

he sent into Prussia the excellent Brisman aforementioned;* and also, in less than a year after, Paul Sperat, who, for preaching the Gospel in Moravia, had been condemned to a noisome dungeon at Olmutz, by the persecuting bishop of that city. Paul providentially escaped, and came to Wittemberg,—his evangelical zeal not the least impaired. Recommended by Luther to Albert and Brisman, he repaired to Prussia, was made bishop of Pomesane, and continued a zealous labourer in the vineyard of Christ for about twenty-six years. John Poliander, who had been the amanuensis of Eckius in the disputation at Leipsic, became an useful coadjutor of Brisman and Sperat; and it was through the instructions of these three evangelical instruments of the Divine will, that

Brisman
sent into
Prussia,
A. D. 1523.

* Page 388. † See Appendix, Osiander.

* Page 389.

the good bishop of Samland was enabled to effect so wonderful a change in religion in a very short time. Luther, in his letters, speaks of the Reformation in Prussia with a sort of triumphant satisfaction and delight. "At length," says he to Spalatinus, "one bishop is come forward, and, with a single eye, given himself up to the cause of Christ and his Gospel in Prussia. I mean the bishop of Samland, who listens to the fostering instruction of Brisman, whom we sent there after that he had cast off the monkish habit. The kingdom of Satan declines fast in that country."

It would lengthen our narrative too much to give the whole of an excellent letter, which Luther wrote in the following year to the bishop of Samland himself. A summary of it cannot fail to be both pleasant and instructive. After addressing this prelate as his most reverend father, and respected master in Christ, he proceeds to say :

"At the request of my brethren, I have determined to publish my familiar exposition of the book of Deuteronomy, and to dedicate it to you as a dignified ecclesiastic. The majestic authority indeed of Moses might well have deterred me or any one from such an undertaking, —agreeably to that divine declaration, 'Unto the ungodly, said God, Why dost thou preach my laws, whereas thou hatest to be reformed?*'—but that the circumstances of the times, and the salvation of men's souls require every effort to be made which may promote religious instruction. My feeble attempts to explain the most excellent of the sacred writers cannot be worthy the notice of so great a personage; nevertheless they afford me an opportunity, which I gladly embrace, of publicly testifying my affectionate regard for you, on account of your sincere faith in Christ, and your labour of love towards his disciples. Thus we think, that if it do but please God, by your new and extraordinary example, to inflame the minds of some other princes and prelates with the same holy zeal, they would soon spread the pure word of God, and make the true Church rejoice in a most astonishing manner. We do not flatter you, when we speak highly of the divine gifts bestowed upon you; no, we only

extol the miraculous grace of God, and rejoice to hear that it reigns triumphant in your soul. In fact, from among all the bishops of the world, God hath selected you alone, and delivered you out of the jaws of Satan, which have opened wide as hell, and are devouring all around. As to other bishops, I say,—though I hope there may be some Nicodemus's,—we can discover nothing but an insane outrageous conspiracy with kings and princes, against the rising light of the Gospel; and thus do they fulfil the second Psalm, 'The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his Anointed.' Truly wonderful is the grace of God in your case; so that you not only receive and believe in the word, but publicly confess it, and teach it with episcopal authority throughout your diocese, and also defend and liberally provide for those who labour in the same; and all this to the great grief and mortification of the enemies of the Gospel. These are things not to be passed by in silence, but made as public as possible, to the glory of God, the furtherance of the doctrine of Christ, the increase of faith, the comfort of the weak and the persecuted, and, lastly, to the terror and disgrace of the adversaries, and of those tyrannical idols, who sit in the pontifical chair, and do no good to the miserable people. Neither am I to be deterred from making this public declaration through any apprehension lest I should thereby excite against you the odium of priests, kings, and princes, or even bring your life into danger. It is very true, indeed, that at this day a man can commit no crime which is deemed so flagitious a sacrilege as to confess the Gospel of God. Several have already shed their blood in this cause with the greatest constancy. Neither can we foresee what trials await us. If, however, we shall be thought worthy to suffer, we must patiently submit to every disgrace for the name of the Lord; and I am most assuredly persuaded, that he who has already honoured you with the Word of his cross, will strengthen you in the spirit of the same, and through your sufferings in the flesh, will ultimately cause you to triumph over the blasphemous opposition of the great and powerful in this world, and also over the violent attacks of Satan and his whole kingdom.

* Psalm 1. 16 & 17.

“Moreover, that the Divine beneficence might appear the more conspicuous and abundant, your country is blessed with a truly Christian governor, viz. the famous Albert, Marquis of Brandenburg, whom God, by his spirit, is pleased so to influence, that he does his utmost to promote the Gospel, and in all things judges and determines as becomes a good prince. And thus, by the united efforts and support of the prince and the bishop, and through the wonderful and inexpressible goodness of God, the pure Gospel moves in full sail through Prussia, where it was neither sought nor called for: and on the contrary, in Germany, where it has been pressed on the inhabitants with much zealous invitation and intreaty, it is by them repelled and blasphemed with the most outrageous insanity. Here again is fulfilled, ‘I was feund of them that sought me not: I was made manifest to them that asked not after me: But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.’

“Be pleased, then, good bishop, to accept this little comment on the book of Deuteronomy, with this declaration of your own character prefixed to it. May it prove an occasion to you of glorifying your Redeemer! and may it, through your patronage, prove useful to those who perhaps may not have seen so much into the meaning of this book of Moses as it has pleased God to give me to see! For there are many characters, and those teachers too, who are much disposed to set aside Moses, and indeed all the Old Testament, and affect to be content with the Gospels; but I am convinced this is far from a right Christian way of thinking: for as learned men call Homer the father of the poets, and the fountain of eloquence and erudition, so Moses is the father of all the prophets, and the true source of heavenly wisdom and heavenly language. It is a very pleasant employment, and it is moreover very improving both to the understanding and the memory, to trace in Moses the vestiges of the later prophets, and to observe how they read his writings, how they learnt them, how they taught them, how they studied them day and night; in a word, how from his fulness they all collected their riches! He himself seems to have foreseen and predicted this, when he says, ‘My doctrine shall

drop as the rain; my speech shall distil as the dew.’*

“In explaining this book of Moses, I have aimed at simplicity throughout, and have avoided mystical expositions. Piety and faith are the first points with Moses; and these he teaches at considerable length. He then passes on to the regulation of civil polity, and the preservation of mutual charity; and here you find nothing that is not directly to the purpose, and in the strictest sense useful and necessary. Even in regard to the ceremonies, peculiar care is constantly taken to render them grave and interesting, through the divine injunctions accompanying them, which gave to them a weight and a substance. It is the want of these injunctions that renders the popish ceremonial devices so trifling and ridiculous.

“Toward the end of each chapter I have generally subjoined a short allegory; not that I have any great liking for such things, but rather for the purpose of improving the bad taste of some persons in the management of allegories. Jerome and Origen did not succeed in this part of their writings, because they had only mere morals in view, whereas the great stress should always be laid on the operation of FAITH and the WRITTEN WORD. I have therefore endeavoured to show, that, in the use of allegories, the progress of the Gospel should always be the principal object. All the figures and types to be found in the writings of Moses have this tendency. May our Lord, who has begun his own good work in your soul, and without whose operation nothing can be done, preserve you, and increase your usefulness! May you in this life become a prelate truly powerful in the word of God! And when the Prince of prelates shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. To HIS protection, I beg you to recommend me with your holy prayers.†

“MARTIN LUTHER.”

What a contrast is the conduct of Luther to that of his papal antagonist Campeggio! The decision of this legate, while he remained at Nuremberg, upon a case which was brought before him from Strasburg, deserves to be recorded, as it

* Deut. xxxii. 2.

† Ep. II. 235.

demonstrates at once the licentiousness of the Romish clergy of those times, as well as the corrupt maxims which influenced the ecclesiastical judges.—The unscriptural doctrine of the celibacy of the clergy was giving way in various places to the enlightened principles of the reformers; and accordingly at Strasburg it happened that several of the sacerdotal order had lately married wives, and had thereby exposed themselves to the censures of their indignant superiors in the Church. The bishop of that city had issued his citation to the culprits, by which they were summoned to appear before him at Saverne, and to hear his sentence against them for having contracted matrimony, not only in defiance of the laws of the Church, holy fathers, popes, and the emperor, but also in traitorous disobedience to the Divine Majesty and their own sacred order. Upon the receipt of the bishop's citation, the married clergy entreated the senate of Strasburg to interfere on their behalf, and to procure them a fair hearing. They were willing, they said, even to suffer death, if they should be found to have broken the commands of God in this matter. The senate complied with the request of the clergy; and informed the bishop, that the accused did by no means decline an equitable inquiry into their conduct, but that any attempt to punish them in the summary way now proposed, could not be carried into execution without the utmost danger of a tumult, especially as many others of the clergy were known to live openly with harlots, and yet had incurred no ecclesiastical censures. It was in this state of the contest that the bishop complained to the legate of being hindered by the senate of Strasburg from exercising his just authority, in punishing those clergy who, in contempt of the sacred laws, had lately become husbands. The deputies of the city replied, that it was not the senate, but the bishop himself that obstructed the course of justice, in not adhering to the compact made with them; namely, that all causes of this sort should be heard by his official in the city, and that a sentence should not be pronounced against a clergyman in a private way, at a distance from Strasburg, and without examination into the merits of the case. The deputies concluded with warning the legate, as they had before warned the bishop, of the imminent danger or

rather certainty there would be of tumults among the populace, if the senate, to whose justice the married clergy had appealed, should permit them to be delivered up to punishment, without previous benefit of trial. The legate, however, declared, that the bishop had not exceeded his authority, and that the senate ought to assist him in carrying his sentence into execution: upon which a warm and memorable altercation ensued between Camepeggio and the Strasburg deputies. "A great part of the Strasburg clergy," said the latter, "cohabit with harlots in their own houses in the most shameful manner. In so doing, they give great offence to the people, and also set the very worst examples; yet they proceed in this manner with the most entire impunity. There is not a single instance of any one of them being punished by the bishop on this account. If therefore the senate should enforce severe sentences against those who have only broken certain regulations of the popes, and at the same time should take no notice of others who have, by many shameful practices, and particularly by their habitual intercourse with strumpets, violated the precepts of God, who, continued the deputies, can answer for the safety of such partial magistrates?"—To this very just representation Camepeggio only replied, that the guilt of the married clergy was beyond dispute, and that their crimes were not the less because others did wrong: neither was the bishop who connived at the irregularities of the clergy to be defended. He admitted that it was an usual thing for the German bishops to receive money from the ecclesiastics of their diocess as the price of being allowed to keep harlots, and they would, he said, at some time be called to an account for this practice; but it did not thence follow that it was lawful for a priest to marry. Nay, it was a much greater fault in a priest to become a husband of a woman, than to keep many concubines in his house; for the married priest defends his conduct as right, whereas the other, who lives with a concubine, knows and admits that he is doing wrong: moreover, continued the legate, it is not every one that has the gift of continency, like John the Baptist.—The deputies of the senate dryly answered this unexampled effrontery in the following manner: "When the bishop shall begin to punish

the whoremongers, then the senate may be able to support him with more advantage in his lawful animadversions upon others.*

Such infatuated conduct of the Roman hierarchy could not fail to promote the progress of the Reformation. The senate of Strasburg soon after this transaction completed the Protestant system in that large and populous city, where Hedio. Bucer, Capito, and other godly pastors, were labouring with great success; and such was the reputation of the Strasburg theologians, that James Faber, who has been mentioned before, and Gerard Roassel, were sent privately from France by Margaret of Navarre, the sister of the French king, for the express purpose of conversing on the grand points of divinity with Bucer and Capito. The issue of the conference was, that these pious divines gave to one another the right hand of fellowship: and thus, says an excellent annalist,† some shoots of the evangelical vine were transmitted from the city of Strasburg, and took root among the churches of France. Doctor Sebastian Meyer, who was a celebrated preacher in the Franciscan Church at Strasburg, made a public retraction of his papistical tenets in the year 1524; and this event very much strengthened the faith of the converts to the new system of sound doctrine. Meyer enumerated ten articles of the Romish corruptions, renounced them all, and boldly published, at Berne, in Switzerland, his confutation of them from Scripture.‡

Dr. Meyer of Strasburg, renounces popery, A. D. 1524.

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To relate the particulars of the triumphs of evangelical doctrine in Westphalia, in the duchy of Mecklenburg, in Pomerania and Livonia, and at Magdeburg and Bremen, would carry us beyond the limits of this history. The Reformation gained ground even at Brunswick, and Leipsic, notwithstanding the persevering enmity of their respective sovereigns.

But this blessed revolution was not brought about without much persecution. In places, however, where the enmity of the rulers of the people, whether ecclesiastical or civil, was overawed by numbers of converts to the new system, the sufferings of the godly were slight, com-

pared with what took place where the friends of Reformation were few and had little authority, and were exposed to the merciless rage either of a blind, prejudiced populace, or of domineering bishops and bigoted magistrates.

Luther has recorded the martyrdom of Henry of Zutphen, with much Christian feeling. This man had been one of his disciples, and was prior of the Augustine friars at Antwerp, where, on account of his zeal in the cause of religion, he was cast into prison. Some spirited, pious women effected his release; and when he was purposing to visit his religious friends at Wittenberg, he received so pressing an invitation from the senate and inhabitants of Bremen, that he complied with it, and preached the Gospel there for the space of two years.* Luther describes the hearts of the people of this city as being in a most astonishing state of preparation for the reception of the Gospel, notwithstanding the opposition of their bishop.† His account of this pious and patient sufferer well deserves a place in the Appendix.‡ Our Reformer sent it to his evangelical friends at Bremen, along with an animated comment on the tenth Psalm, composed on the occasion, and also an epistle full of consolatory and encouraging reflections. "Such," says he, "is the energy of the Divine Spirit, that there is now almost everywhere a numerous communion of holy men, both preachers and hearers. It is true some of them are killed, others imprisoned, or driven into banishment, and, to be short, all are afflicted and suffer disgrace for the cross of Christ. But what is this but a revival of the true Christian life; of which the dreadful persecutions and sufferings appear to the world intolerable? Nevertheless, according to the Psalmist, the blood of his saints is dear in the sight of the Lord.— Without doubt Henry of Zutphen, lately murdered by the Ditmarsians, was eminently one of these. He hath freely sealed with his blood his testimony to the Christian truth. Before him John Voes and Henry Esch obtained the crown

Martyrdom of Henry of Zutphen.

* This is the same man called Henry Muller, p. 378.

† Miro desiderio et voto populus afficitur. Ep. II. 98.

‡ See Appen. Henry of Zutphen: also Luth. Ep. II. 253.

* Sleidan. lib. iv.

† Abraham Scultetus.

‡ Scultet. 216.

of martyrdom at Brussels.* Henry of Zutphen is a third beautiful and bright example. I may add to the catalogue Caspar Tauber, who was lately burnt at Vienna, and a bookseller named George, whom the Hungarians put to death; and lastly, I am informed that at Prague, in Bohemia, a person has been deprived of life for no other fault, than having forsaken the licentious pretensions to celibacy, and contracted a truly honourable Christian marriage. These and similar instances are the sacrifices, which in a short time will extinguish with their blood every remaining spark of the papacy. Thus it was that the holy martyrs of old proved the truth of their doctrines by shedding their blood in the glorious cause of the Gospel.

“To boast of such instances as these is not in the power of men who have seduced the world with an hypocritical dependence on free will, good works, and human righteousness. Satan persecutes unto death no one for these doctrines. They rather lead to dignity, and power, and wealth, and a luxurious life. Wherefore, my good people of Bremen, I have judged it expedient to write and publish a circumstantial narrative of the martyrdom of Henry, and to exhort you neither to be overwhelmed with sorrow, nor exasperated with anger; but rather that you should praise and thank God for having discovered to you the wonderful ways of his gracious providence. In his great mercy he has sent his Gospel among you, and most manifestly bestowed a large portion of his spirit upon your teacher, the deceased Henry, so that you ought to have no doubt of his good will toward you. Lament not the death of this excellent man, but pity his murderers, and pray for them; and not only for them, but their countrymen, who I hope by this sad event will be led to the knowledge of the truth. Many of them are said to have a love for the Gospel; and God will, I doubt not, overrule the loss of their preacher to their everlasting benefit, as he will severely punish those among them who remain impenitent.

“I entreat you to read and sing the tenth Psalm: it is peculiarly suitable to your circumstances. Afflict not yourselves for the loss of the martyrs who

suffer for the glory of Christ; but rather give praise to God for his inestimable mercy in causing so much good to be brought out of evil.”

How little of the real spirit of Luther appears in our ordinary histories of these times! By many this pious reformer is thought not only to have been bold and enterprising, but also headstrong, seditious, and revengeful. Whereas this letter to the inhabitants of Bremen, as well as a former one to his Christian converts of Miltenberg,* are no more than fair specimens of his profound humility, sober confidence in the providence of God, and unfeigned resignation to his will. Fervent prayer, faith and hope in the divine promises, with a forgiving of injuries and a contemplation of select passages of Scripture, were the constant materials recommended by Luther for the consolation of his Christian friends in their afflictions.

All the accounts agree that in the years 1523 and 1524 the persecutions were excessively severe. A single well-authenticated instance will often demonstrate both the temper of the rulers, and the prevailing sentiments of the people. For example, at Antwerp, a certain person had been in the habit of explaining the Gospel, on Sundays, to a vast concourse of people. An express order was issued to forbid the practice. The people however met in the dock-yards; and, as their usual preacher or expositor did not make his appearance, a zealous youth, named Nicolaus, placed himself in a boat near the shore, and addressed the audience in a very pious manner from the chapter concerning the five loaves and two fishes: but the very next day he was ordered to be seized, and put into a sack lest he should be known by the people; and in that state he was suddenly thrown into the river. †

In Bavaria, Luther informs us, that though the good seed could scarcely be said to be yet sown, the cross and persecution of the word prevailed: “The wild beasts rage,” says he, “but the blood which they shed will soon stifle their fury.” ‡

Severe persecution,
A. D. 1523.
and 1524.

* Page 385.

† Scultet. 193.

‡ Ep. II. 236.

* Page 385.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM THE PERSECUTIONS IN 1523 AND 1524, TO
THE DEATH OF THE ELECTOR OF SAXONY.

SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY.—CAROLSTADT.
WAR WITH THE PEASANTS.—MUNZER.
LUTHER AND CAROLSTADT.
DEATH OF THE ELECTOR OF SAXONY.

WE have already observed, p. 388, that in the year 1524, there arose among the friends of the Reformation a tedious and fatal controversy respecting the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. Luther had rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation, but maintained, nevertheless, that along with the elements of bread and wine the real body and blood of Christ were received by the partakers of the Lord's Supper. It is a memorable instance of human imbecility, that a man who had risen superior to the habits and prejudices of education in so many other respects, and who, through the grace of God and the instruction of the written word, had been more completely emancipated from vulgar and fashionable absurdities than any mere philosopher in any age had ever been, should in this single point remain so unreasonably attached to the opinion which he had imbibed in his youth. Our astonishment is increased by this circumstance, that he could allow the scriptural expressions to be consistent with the admission of the REALITY of the elements according to the plain testimony of our senses, and yet should think those same expressions do still imply that the partaker of the real bread and wine does also partake at the same time of the material substance of Christ's human body. Thus, however, the advocates for the doctrine of CONSUBSTANTIATION must argue. And the case before us shows, that great men are not so in all things; and that it is never wise to adhere implicitly to the authority of mere fallible men as teachers.

Carolstadt was, in this point, the open antagonist of Luther. I have spent much time in endeavouring to develop the true history of the origin of the Sacramental controversy, not so much on account of the merits of the argumentation which took place in the course of it, as of the contrary representations of the ecclesias-

tical writers respecting the motives of these two early reformers. After much reflection, I am convinced that what is certain in this matter is in very little room.

The previous intemperate conduct of Carolstadt had so lowered his reputation at Wittemberg, that he found it expedient, if not absolutely necessary, to leave a situation where all friendly and confidential intercourse with his former religious connexions was almost at an end. Accordingly, he retired to Orlamund, a little town of Thuringia in the electorate of Saxony, where, without legitimate appointment, though with the consent of the inhabitants, he became their spiritual pastor. Here Carolstadt not only soon broached his opinion of the Eucharist, but raised new disturbances by his furious discourses concerning the abolition of images. He appears also to have boasted of having been favoured with supernatural communications; and was represented as a partizan of the turbulent fanatic Thomas Munzer.* The university of Wittemberg summoned him to return back and discharge in person the ordinary duties enjoined him by the statutes in their school and Church. Carolstadt promised to obey, provided he could obtain the leave of his parishioners, the Orlamundians, whom however at the same time he is said to have excited to arrogate to themselves the divine right of appointing their own pastor. The elector of Saxony was so disgusted with the insolent letters which they wrote on this occasion, treating the academical claim as a papistical encroachment, that he peremptorily commanded both them and their teacher to submit to the legal authority of the university and the chapter.† He likewise ordered Luther to visit Orlamund, and inquire into the truth of the various reports, and endeavour to appease the people. Accordingly, as he passed through Jene, he preached with great zeal against the enthusiastic spirit of Munzer; and in making a vehement and laboured attack upon the turbulent image-breakers, he was understood to represent Carolstadt and his party as actuated by the same spirit as

Carolstadt
retires to
Orlamund.

* Seck. 302. Du Pin, c. xviii. Melch. Adam. 83. Maimbourg, sect. 2. Comment. de Luth. II. 11.

† Arch. Vin. S. II. 28.

that of the seditious leader of the Anabaptists. Carolstadt, who was present at Luther's discourse, was so enraged with the invective, which he conceived to be directed principally at himself, that he followed Luther in great heat to his inn, where there soon commenced a long and acrimonious disputation between these two divines; in which Carolstadt disavowed all connexion with Munzer; and Luther appears to have admitted his apology, at least so far as concerned the charge of any preconcerted association with that enthusiastic incendiary. But he expressed the utmost dislike both of Carolstadt's opinion on the Sacrament, and of his practice in the demolition of images; and then challenged him to support in writing what he had asserted on the former subject, and engaged to refute his arguments. After this, Luther proceeded to Orlamund; but having previously received from the inhabitants certain fanatical and abusive letters, which he supposed to have been dictated by their teacher, he would gladly have conferred with them ALONE on the subject of the removal of the images; but their pastor Carolstadt took care to be present, ready to assist his flock.* Instantly all prospect of an amicable issue to the conference vanished. Luther grew warm, and the Orlamundians quite furious and abusive. "I saw very clearly," says he, "what sort of seed this fine teacher had been sowing at Orlamund; and I had good reason to congratulate myself that I had fortunately slipped away from among them with my life, and was not covered over with stones and dirt. Some of them, as I was going away, uttered the most horrid imprecations against me, and prayed God that I might break my neck before I should be out of the town."

Carolstadt still continued at Orlamund, and wrote letters to the elector full of bitter accusations against Luther; and not content with this, he instigated his hearers to do the same, and likewise taught them in their letters to defend, from the Decalogue, their late conduct in pulling down images. Such violent proceedings appear to have at last exhausted the patience both of the elector and his brother. These princes peremptorily expelled Carolstadt from their territories, and abso-

lutely rejected the intercession of the Orlamundians in his behalf. Carolstadt, after his departure, wrote letters to his people, which were read in full congregation upon the toll of the bell, and were subscribed thus, "Andreas Bodenstenius Carolstadt, UNHEARD, UNCONVICTED, BANISHED, by Martin Luther."†

"Thus," says Luther, in a letter to Amsdorf, "matters are so changed, that I, who should have been a martyr myself, am making martyrs of others."‡

Expelled from Thuringia, Carolstadt repaired to Strasburg, and thence to Basle; where, without the privity of any persons, except the Anabaptists of the place, he procured the printing of several of his pamphlets on the Sacrament.

In regard to his banishment, Luther constantly denies himself to have been the cause of it; at the same time he acknowledges that he could wish the charge to be true, for that he should not doubt being able to give good reasons for his conduct. "Moreover," says he, in a letter to the Strasburgians, "I really rejoice that he has been banished from

Luther writes to the Strasburgians.

our part of the country; and I most earnestly wish that he had no opportunity of showing his wild and seditious spirit among you However, I own, that if I had been duke of Saxony, Carolstadt would never have been banished, unless, indeed, I had been compelled to yield to the importunate petitions of the people. But, my dear friends, do not ye be influenced by my indiscreet, nay foolish good-nature; do ye ACT LIKE WISE MEN. Perhaps I may be imprudent enough to write on the points in dispute, though I am entirely convinced that the devil contrives to sow these seeds of controversy among men, for the express purpose of making them talk and write, and say, What excellent, holy men are these! What wicked, bad characters are those! and thus he takes up or deduces the minds of all sides by such novelties, and makes them forget the great articles of faith and practice. Let every one of you for himself sedulously study the true nature of the Law, of the Gospel, of Faith, of Christ's kingdom, of Christian liberty, of charity, and patience; also the nature of human consti-

* Du Pin. Seck.

* Ep. II. 236.

† Ibid. 237.

tutions, and many things of this kind which are found necessary throughout the whole Christian life;—and then you will not be found blameable or deficient, though you should have thrown down no images. . . . I would that, my brethren, your preachers would endeavour to draw men as much as possible from Luther, and from Carolstadt, that is, from MEN; and lead them to Christ, the gift of God, who is freely made to us wisdom, righteousness, redemption, and sanctification. These mad prophets have never understood, have never experienced this matter. They boast of hearing distinct voices from heaven, and of leading lives most extraordinarily pure; they use pompous and even marvellous expressions, which they themselves do not comprehend; and in this way they disturb restless consciences, and compass their purpose, which is, to be looked up unto, and to excite astonishment; but in the mean time Christ is forgotten or treated with contempt. . . . My good brethren, entreat Almighty God the Father to preserve you from temptation; and of his inexhaustible mercy, to carry on his own work in your souls. This, through our Saviour Christ, is my own most fervent prayer, and it is the prayer that comforts me. These prophets, I am persuaded, do not pray for the success of their plans. A man cannot pray without some degree of a good conscience; but the system of these men originated in impiety and presumption; and they are still carried away with ambition and enthusiasm, and are not aware of the disgraceful and ignominious end that awaits them.”*

After Carolstadt had been exiled about the space of five months, he appears to have been desirous of a reconciliation with Luther; and for that purpose he wrote a sort of penitential letter to Spalatinus, requesting his interference and good offices. As Luther was of a most placable temper, he did not hesitate to intercede with the elector, and to petition his highness “that he would be pleased to permit Carolstadt to re-enter his dominions, and to have a friendly conference with Luther.” Nevertheless, judging from the insolence of his letters, he said he could have very little hope of him. In fact, Luther’s principal motive for acceding to this measure seems to

have been, that he might thereby do away the slanderous reports of having been the cause of Carolstadt’s banishment.* The prince rejected the petition; and caused Luther to be informed, that he did not choose to grant safe conducts for such purposes; they might if they pleased confer together out of his dominions; and in so doing he thought they were perhaps more likely to be reconciled.

Carolstadt now wandered from place to place through the higher Germany, and at length made a pause at Rotenburg; where, as usual, he soon raised tumults, and incited the people to pull down the statues and paintings. Luther heard of his proceedings, and, in a letter to a friend, said, “I have not been able to obtain a safe conduct for Carolstadt; and therefore he will continue to vent his furious declamations against me.”† However, when the seditious faction of the peasants, with Munzer their ringleader, was effectually suppressed, we find him in the greatest difficulties, and even in danger of his life from his supposed connexion with the enthusiastic rebels who had spread such devastation through Germany. Many persons in various places were seized, and among them even some of the evangelical clergy of Rotenburg, and were dragged to punishment. Carolstadt narrowly escaped, through being let down by the wall of the town in a basket. Thus reduced to the last extremities, he and his wife incessantly entreated both the elector and Luther, that they might be allowed to return into their own country. He said, he could clear himself of having had any concern in the late rebellion; and if not, he would cheerfully undergo any punishment that could be inflicted upon him. With this view he wrote a little TRACT, in which he takes much pains to justify himself from the charge of sedition; and he sent A LETTER likewise to Luther, in which he earnestly begs his assistance in the publishing of the tract as well as in the more general design of establishing his innocence. Luther’s judgment was so impressed with a sense of the reasonableness of affording an accused person every opportunity of defence, and his generous feelings so touched with the submissive application of an adversary

* Epist. II. 251.

* Arch. Vin. II. 28. Ep. II. 279. b.

† Epist. II. 280. b.

in distress, that he immediately published Carolstadt's letter, and declared, that though he differed very materially from him in sentiment, yet he would not disappoint the expectations of a man who in confidence had cast himself on his mercy at once, rather than fly for refuge and protection to those who had instigated him to hostilities.* He therefore called on the magistrates, and on the people, to give a fair hearing to an unfortunate fugitive, who pleaded not guilty, and challenged inquiry.† "Attention to such a requisition," he said, "was no more than what common justice claimed, and the peculiar duties of Christianity enjoined."

Besides the little tract here mentioned, Carolstadt sent another to Luther, in which he professes, that in what he had hitherto published on the Supper of our Lord, he never pretended to have settled the point, but to have written merely for the purpose of argument and investigation. Luther accepted this apology; but at the same time he admonished the people, that as the author himself had openly declared he was in doubt on the subject, they ought to be most particularly on their guards not to embrace uncertainties.

Moreover, after much importunate entreaty, he succeeded in procuring from the elector JOHN † A SAFE CONDUCT for the return of Carolstadt into the territories from which he had been exiled. "By earnest and constant prayers," says he, "I have at last obtained leave from the prince, contrary to the sentiments of his whole court, that Carolstadt be allowed to live in a little country village about a mile from Wittemberg. May God be

* Sleidan, 139.

† It is painful to find this part of Luther's conduct, so very moderate and truly Christian, invidiously represented by Maclaine, as though it had proceeded from a conviction of having treated Carolstadt previously in an unworthy manner. Mosheim, p. 166, the note. Beausobre also, without the least ceremony, asserts that Luther had treated Carolstadt in a merciless way, p. 228.—The best answer to all such harsh and inconsiderate censures is the simple production of the transactions themselves, as reported in the ancient authentic documents, and not as they have been variously coloured in their transfer from one party-writer to another.

† Frederic the Wise died in 1525, and his brother John succeeded him.

pleased to bring this man at length to a right state of mind!" . . . "Yesterday we baptized one of his children, or rather re-baptized him. The sponsors were Jonas, Melancthon, and my Ketha. Who would have suspected last year, that those who reviled baptism, calling it a bath, fit only for dogs, would now have petitioned to have it administered to themselves by their adversaries? Whether they are sincere or not is only known to God! Very astonishing things however do happen; and God's ways are not our ways."*

These and many other circumstances make it sufficiently evident that there was no great cordiality in this reconciliation of parties, nor in the minds of Carolstadt's former associates any high idea of his sincerity, nor, lastly, much hope of his future discretion. In fact, Luther urged with the elector, as the opinion both of Melancthon and himself, that it was much better that Carolstadt should remain in some obscure part of the electorate, and not be allowed either to write or to preach, than that he should travel from one place to another, and spread his erroneous notions.

Carolstadt appears to have been recalled about the Autumn of 1525, and to have then made a public recantation of what he had advanced on the Sacrament; and in the succeeding November we find him transmitting to the elector a written formula for the same purpose, which, he says, was prescribed to him by the faithful and celebrated divines of Wittemberg.†

Concerning these transactions an excellent annalist, and one by no means partial to Luther, observes, that mankind reasoned in the following manner. "When Carolstadt sent his little tracts to Luther, he was either serious or not. If serious, we must condemn the vehemence with which he had formerly defended a doctrine respecting which he was absolutely in doubt. If not serious, then such levity of spirit is utterly indefensible." The same author tells us that there were some who positively maintained, that before the elector had agreed to the recall of Carolstadt, Luther had ventured to receive him back again,

* Amsdorf 312. Ad Hausman, 317.

† Vin. Arch. II. 25.

and had shut him up privately in the monastery of Wittenberg.*

Whatever doubts may be entertained of the sincerity of Carolstadt in the Sacramental controversy, every careful student of ecclesiastical history must acquit Luther of using the smallest degree of duplicity or artifice in that unhappy contest. We may lament his obstinacy, his violence, and his want of candour, of which the proofs are too numerous in the course of his opposition to his antagonists; further, we may also admit that the turbulence, the precipitation, and the vanity of Carolstadt, were in a great measure the occasion both of calling forth and of exasperating these unchristian dispositions in Luther; but still we must take care to discriminate between passion and hypocrisy, between firm conviction and political manœuvre, between that contempt for an ostentatious and intemperate adversary which is apt to unfit the mind for deliberate investigation, and that intolerable pride of heart which wilfully persists in error, can bear no contradiction, but rather than not appear to dictate to others, is ready to sacrifice the strongest impressions of reason and religion.—It seemed the more necessary to insist on these distinctions, for the sake of guarding the Reader against the misrepresentations of historians, who have never seen, or certainly not digested, the authentic original documents upon which the true character of the great Saxon Reformer depends.†

It appears to me that nothing but motives the most strictly conscientious could have prevented Luther from adopting the tenet of his Sacramentarian opponents. It would have been a new, and, in his hands, a most powerful weapon against his grand enemies the papists. Let us hear himself on this point. "I neither can," says he, "nor will deny, that if Carolstadt or any one else could have persuaded me, during the last five years, that in the Sacrament there was nothing but mere bread and wine, he would have conferred on me a great obligation. I have examined this matter with the utmost anxiety, and with persevering diligence; I have stretched every nerve with a view to unravel the

mystery; for I most clearly saw that the new tenet would give me a great advantage in my contests with the papacy. Moreover, I have had a correspondence on this subject with two persons much more acute than Carolstadt, and not at all disposed to twist words from their natural meaning. But the text in the Gospel is so strong and unequivocal, that I have found myself compelled to submit to its decision. Its force can be eluded in no way whatever, much less by the fictitious glosses of a giddy brain.

"Nay, after all, at this very time, if any one could prove to me, by good Scriptural testimony, that there is only bread and wine in the Sacrament, he would have no occasion to attack me with any degree of bitterness or animosity. Alas! if I know myself, I am sufficiently inclined by nature to take that side. But while Carolstadt, instead of producing Scriptural testimony, only rages at me like a madman, such conduct makes me the more positive in the support of my sentiments. If I had not already known that the ground he has taken is untenable, the futile arguments suggested by his wild imagination would have convinced me that the opinion was altogether weak and frivolous. Indeed I am inclined to think Carolstadt himself is not in earnest; for if he be serious, and yet can write in so absurd and trifling a manner, I must conclude him to be under a judicial infatuation of Almighty God. Carolstadt, had he been really in earnest, knows too much of Greek and Hebrew to have produced such a ridiculous mixture of observations dependent on those two languages.

"Further, in the affair of pulling down images, I could easily pass by his excesses, provided the matter ended there: for I suppose that I have already done more by my writings towards the destruction of image-worship, than his intemperate proceedings will ever be able to effect. But the mischief consists in this; he teaches the people, **THAT UNLESS THEY DO THESE THINGS, THEY ARE NOT CHRISTIANS.** This is a language not to be borne. St. Paul says, 'We know that an idol is nothing in the world;'—of course it is nothing whether it stand or fall; why then are the consciences of Christians to be tortured by things in which Christianity does not consist? . . . I fear my answer to his publications

* Scult. 254.

† Maclaine in Moshcim in various places, particularly p. 641; and Deausobre, Liv. IV. & V. &c.

must contain heavy accusations against him, for his rash and tumultuary spirit. Let every man avoid this malignant, delusive spirit. When I met him at Jene in Thuringia, he almost persuaded me, by quoting a particular Scripture, not to confound his spirit with that deadly, bloody spirit of the Anabaptists: but as soon as I arrived among his flock at Orlamund, I was not at a loss to comprehend what sort of seed this fine teacher had been sowing.*

THE WAR OF THE PEASANTS.

The more scrupulously we examine the principles of Martin Luther, the more opposite we always find them to a spirit both of enthusiasm and sedition.—The name of Thomas Munzer has already been mentioned,† as well as the fanatical practices of him and his connexions. The absurd and wicked proceedings of such men would find no place in a History of the Church of Christ, were it not, that, by their delusive arguments, and turbulent actions, they frequently become an occasion for trying the wisdom and the soundness of professing Christians: and so, in the event, they prove a snare to the proud, the ignorant, and unstable; while they exercise the patience of the humble, and increase the understanding of the wise. God bringeth good out of evil: “let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall!”

Never did the solidity of our Reformer's judgment and the purity of his motives appear more striking than in the case before us.—Soon after the first appearance of the Celestial Prophets, as they were called, when not only the elector and his court, but also the whole university of Wittemberg, with Melancthon at their head, were absolutely puzzled and almost confounded by the pretensions of these extraordinary men, the sound sense and almost instinctive discernment of Luther pointed out to him at once the just treatment to which they were entitled. We have seen the wise advice which he gave to Melancthon.‡ He also exhorted his friend Amsdorf not to be anxious about them. Scripture, he said, would be his infallible guide, provided he and his associates were not too much in a

hurry, and would but try the Spirits whether they were from God. The prophets boasted of having conversations with the Almighty.—“A circumstance,” said Luther, “to my mind, on the very face of it, exceedingly suspicious.”*

Of Thomas Munzer he speaks in the following terms: “I cannot endure his spirit. He affects to commend my doctrines, and yet Munzer treats them with contempt, and is constantly aiming at something far beyond them. Then the man uses such absurd, unusual, and unscriptural expressions, that you would conclude him to be either crazy or drunk. He avoids all conference with us. I am endeavouring to procure an interview with him, for the purpose of hearing him explain his tenets: but I do not know that I shall succeed. We have no fears of hearing or of being heard, or of conferring with any persons, whatever be THEIR dispositions.”†

Munzer could not be induced to come to Wittemberg, but remained at Alsted, a town on the confines of Thuringia, in the electorate of Saxony. There he inveighed against both the pope and Luther. “The doctrine of the latter,” he said, “was not sufficiently spiritual; it was indeed altogether carnal. Divines should exert their utmost endeavours to acquire a spirit of prophecy, otherwise their knowledge of divinity would not be worth one halfpenny. They should consider their God as at hand, and not far off.”‡ Moreover, if men would be saved, they must fast, look grave, talk little, and wear plain clothes, and let their beards grow. This is the cross of Christ, and the true mortification. Then, thus prepared, they should leave the crowd, and think continually of God, and demand a sign from him by which they may know certainly that he has a regard for them, and that Christ died for them. If the sign does not appear at the moment, they should persevere, and be instant in prayer; and even expostulate with God as though he did not keep his promises made in Scripture. An angry expostulation of this sort, he said, demonstrated the fervour of the soul, and was highly pleasing to God; and would not fail in the end to produce some very

* See above, p. 405. It was with difficulty Luther escaped with his life. Also Ep. II. 251.

† Page 341.

‡ Page 342.

* Ep. II. 46.

† Ep. II. 152.

‡ Munzer's letter to Melancthon, Scult. 238.

conspicuous and satisfactory declaration of the Divine will. Dreams, he maintained, were a method in which God revealed his will to men, and it was through the means of them that, in general, answers to prayers were to be expected. Then, if any person had had a dream which admitted of an interpretation, instead of preaching to the people, Munzer made a laboured eulogium on the dreamer:—and, in this manner, he by degrees conciliated to himself a number of the inhabitants of Alsted, who entered into a conspiracy with him, subscribed their names, and took a solemn oath, for the express purpose of murdering all wicked persons, appointing new princes and magistrates, and organizing the world afresh; and upon such a plan, that pious and good people only should have the upper hand.—The enthusiast declared, that for all this, he had the positive command of God.

Mildness and moderation were essential parts of the character of Frederic the wise; and therefore we are not to wonder that, so long as the proceedings of this wicked incendiary were confined to the interpretation of dreams and supposed revelations from God, he should have so far tolerated his extravagant pretensions, as not to drive him into exile. But as soon as his seditious designs became sufficiently plain, he judged it necessary to give directions for his removal from the electorate.* Munzer then retired to Nuremberg, but was not able to form a party there. He was quickly expelled by the inhabitants. Thence he proceeded to Mulhausen, where he had more success. He became the minister of the common people, and stimulated them to degrade the old magistrates and elect new ones; and to turn the monks out of doors, and seize their houses and property. The very best and richest house fell to the share of Munzer himself, who was now become both the first ecclesiastic and first magistrate of the place. He decided all points in a summary way by the Bible or by inspiration, and taught the doctrine of perfect equality, and of a community of goods. The poor ceased to labour, and supplied their wants from the rich by force. The number of this deluded rabble increased in a most astonishing manner; their infatuated leader became every day more insolent, and

persuaded himself that the time for carrying his detestable designs into execution was fast advancing.

Luther, it should seem, by his letters to the elector of Saxony, certainly at first promoted that good prince's spirit of patient forbearance toward Munzer. "Your highness," says he, "had better bear with him till he be more ripe. There is a great deal in him which has not shown itself as yet."† In this same letter however he calls Munzer, Satan, and intimates with sufficient plainness that he expected nothing but mischief from him in future. Moreover, afterwards, he became dissatisfied with the elector's dilatory indecision respecting the whole business of the prophets; and at length, when Munzer had unfolded his wicked purposes so as to leave no room for doubt, he presented to the prince Frederic, and to the Duke his brother, a very spirited and elaborate address on the danger with which the country was threatened from this fanatical rebel and his deluded associates.

He begins like an apostle. "Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ;" and then proceeds to observe, that "it is Satan's method to attempt to crush every revival of the Divine word, first by force, and, if that does not succeed, then by false spirits, by artful and mischievous teachers. It was so in the first ages of the propagation of the Gospel: He deluged Christendom with the blood of the Martyrs. But this did not answer his purpose; he therefore sent forth a tribe of false prophets, and filled every corner of the world with heresies, till at length the papacy, that most powerful of all the antichrists, fully completed his designs. It is so at this very time.—The pope, the emperor, kings, and princes, and wicked bishops, like madmen, rage against the Gospel, and do their utmost to oppress it. Satan however is sufficiently acute to see that they will not prevail, but will bring down the Divine wrath upon themselves; and in the mean time he produces lying spirits and abandoned sectaries to do his business.

"The same Satanic Spirit,—continued Luther—after wandering through dry places for almost three years, seeking rest and finding none, has at length taken

* Arch. Vin. S. 305.

* Reg. N. III. 194. S. Sleidan. V. 118.

advantage of the protection afforded by your highness's mild and peaceful government, and hath built his nest in your territories at Alsted, with a view to commence war against us who preach the Gospel.

"Nevertheless, it is my singular satisfaction to find that these madmen openly boast that they do not belong to us; and that they have neither learnt nor received anything from us, but have been conversing with God for the space of three years. They reckon little of our teaching faith, charity, and the cross, at Wittemberg. 'You must hear,' say they, 'the Voice of God itself.' And if Scripture be appealed to, they instantly cry Babel, Babel, Babel!—moreover, these miserable men have such a degree of pride and positiveness as I never heard or read of in my life.

"My reason for addressing your highness at present is this: These enthusiasts hold it right to propagate their doctrines by force. They made no secret of this at Wittemberg: and their declaration sunk deep into my mind. I saw plainly that they intended to overturn the existing governments, though Christ expressly told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world.

"I do therefore, most seriously entreat your highnesses, to employ that authority which God has given you, in preventing the schemes of these seditious persons, who would turn everything upside down.

"They say they are moved by the Spirit; but I must observe that it is a mark of a very bad spirit, when it exerts itself ONLY in pulling down temples and monasteries, and burning images. The greatest villains can do such things as these.

"They absolutely decline all inquiry into their principles. They talk pompously in private corners, and inflame the minds of the deluded mob, but will not open their mouths before any persons whom they think disposed to examine the grounds of their pretensions.

"I must tell them, I have augured no good of them since they refused to open their sentiments before our evangelical friends at Wittemberg. They look on me as a lifeless Christian, and as one who never was favoured with hearing a voice from heaven. But, in the name of everything that is good, suppose I had acted in this manner when I was called

before the papists,—What triumphs should I have offered them?

"With how much humility I proceeded, how gently, and step by step, in the first attacks upon the papacy, my writings are a testimony. Yet this same lowly spirit has produced effects such as these fanatics have never ventured to aim at or expect. And,—not to boast,—I stood forward, in a very critical and dangerous moment, as a public disputant at Leipsic, before a numerous audience. At Augsburg I appeared before my enemies without a safe-conduct: and at Worms I looked both the emperor and the whole German nobility in the face, though I knew the public faith had been violated on a former not very dissimilar occasion. Yet I made no pretence of hearing voices from heaven, or of being possessed of supernatural talents, or of having any thing of that spirit which has appeared at Alsted.

"It is not my wish that any persons, no not even these fanatics, should be hindered from preaching. Let them have free liberty to exhibit the best specimens they can of their erudition. Let them teach, but keep their hands from violence: or, if they will persist in their ferocious, seditious practices, it will then be your duty to restrain them, and, without hesitation, to banish them from your dominions.

"The warfare of an evangelist is of a spiritual nature. He is to preach and to bear the cross. We nowhere read that either Christ or his apostles pulled down churches or images; but that, when the Divine Word had penetrated the hearts of men, the heathen churches and images of themselves came to nothing. We are to act in the same manner. Deliver enslaved consciences from the doctrines of the monasteries, and the buildings will soon be empty; and then it will be the province of the civil governors to determine what is to be done with them. But what harm can a heap of stones or wood do to us? Not a particle of any building was ever thrown down or set on fire by me: yet by my tongue and my pen the monasteries almost every where have been desolated. Now if I had attempted to bring about this revolution by violence, as these prophets do, I might have had to boast of levelling a few buildings, but the minds of men would have been still enchained in darkness and captivity as before, and

the salvation of souls by no means promoted.

“It is allowed, that the Roman pontiff has suffered more from me than what any monarch, with the whole force of his kingdom, could have made him to suffer. Yet have I not used the least violence in this contest. On the other hand, I ask what signal exploits have these prophets to boast of?—Memorable victories indeed, over wood, stones, statues, and pictures!—Decisive proofs of the nature of the spirit that influences them!

“These insane wretches as yet have performed no miracle in attestation of their commission, except that of collecting mobs, despising the magistrates ordained by divine authority, throwing down statues, and requiring an implicit belief that they are the people of God.

“A just application of the Divine word, in the production of TRUE faith, is the only way to correct all bad practices. The removal of external evils, while the heart is devoid of this principle, is of little service. Such a heart soon invents new ones. The true method of expelling Satan and ruining his devices, is that of the New Testament; namely, the exercise of preaching the word of God. This lays hold of the heart, and cures the evil radically.

“I conclude with humbly imploring your highnesses to resist these madmen effectually. Let the sacred Scriptures have the pre-eminence; and let us, like true Christians have recourse to no other arms. Let every door and window be shut against sedition, and the occasions of it. The common people are by nature sufficiently prone thereunto. But let it ever be remembered, that, though these enthusiasts boast of being influenced by six hundred spirits, this their constant disposition to fighting, as well as their other acts of violence, is a proof that they are not Christians.*

“May the right hand of Almighty God strengthen and preserve your highnesses!

“MARTIN LUTHER.”

Here let the learned reader for a moment reflect on the situation of Germany about the end of 1521, and the beginning of 1525.—The several princes and states at variance respecting the grand tenets of the whole papal

system—Intestine divisions among the reformers themselves, concerning the nature of the Eucharist—The almost certain prospect of an immediate civil war, from immense crowds of ignorant and seditious peasants and vassals, associated with multitudes of licentious and dissolute enthusiasts, rendered outrageous and cruel by the harangues of Munzer and other incendiaries of his description.

The conduct of Luther about the period of this memorable conjuncture, has fixed the character of this Reformer beyond dispute.

We have already given ample proof of his wisdom in the affair of the prophets; and we have before observed, that he never did things by halves.

It was not enough therefore that Munzer had been driven out of the elector's dominions. As soon as Luther heard of his approach to Mulhausen, where he was known to have partisans, he gravely admonished the magistrates of the town not to receive him among them; “for he meditated nothing but robbery and murder, and other acts of violence. He was well known at Alsted. He had also emissaries, forming parties in various other places; but would never fully explain his designs. It could not be long before he would be better understood, and they would do well to profit by this friendly warning.”*

Luther likewise published, in the beginning of 1525, what he called A TREATISE AGAINST THE CELESTIAL PROPHETS AND CAROLSTADT.† That unruly reformer had certainly been familiar with the leaders of the fanatical tribe, and had favoured their sentiments:‡ he had moreover, in his publications, spoken of Luther in the most offensive terms, had represented him as akin to Antichrist, and twice as bad as a papist; and in general had attacked him in every way with so much fury as to displease even his own party.§ Our author, in his answer, positively denies that it was through his means that Carolstadt had been banished; though at all times he was neither afraid nor ashamed to own that he had delivered an explicit opinion of the pernicious tendency of the Alstedine Spirit, as he called it, and had instigated princes

* Sleiden, V. S. clxxvi.

† Alt. III. in S. lib. II. p. 3.

‡ Melch. Adam. 83 et 129. Scult. 242.

§ S. Lib. II. IX. Ep. II. 247.

* Tom. VIII. Wittemb. Ep. II. 223.

and governors to be watchful and active in suppressing it. "Although," says he, "it may be true, and candour may require me to believe that Carolstadt does not INTEND* to promote sedition and murder, yet I must say, that so long as he persists in raising headstrong mobs, and exciting them to demolish statues with unauthorized violence, he possesses the same seditious, sanguinary spirit that has shown itself at Alsted. But, you say, he will not PERSIST in these practices.—My answer is, I cannot credit his fine speeches. How often has Melancthon in vain admonished him not to raise tumults respecting ceremonies, and yet has he continued to defend the breakers of the peace to the very last!

"Moreover, I own it weighs very much with me that he is known to keep company with these prophets, who are the very source of this Alstedine spirit. From these he hears lessons, and with these he is closely connected."†

Luther, in the former part of his treatise, most earnestly entreats the magis-

* On what grounds could Beausobre affirm that Luther's treatise against the Prophets seemed to be written only for the purpose of oppressing Carolstadt? This is one of the most uncandid assertions which I ever remember to have seen. What! were there no laudable motives to which the conduct of Luther might fairly be ascribed in thus warning and exhorting his countrymen, at so critical a juncture, against the seditious and enthusiastic practices of the Anabaptists and their associates? The observations of this historian, III. 228-230, on Luther's sentiments, as also his harsh judgment of the excellent Seekendorf, in p. 123, appear to me uncommonly partial and unwarranted. Some even of the most brilliant parts of Luther's conduct are not relished by Beausobre; witness his remarks on that memorable letter of our Reformer which he wrote to Frederic from Borna, p. 343 of this volume. In that letter Beausobre sees more of pride and presumption than extraordinary piety. On the other hand, he skims dexterously over the excesses of Carolstadt, shelters him as well as he can under the shield of Melancthon, endeavours to excite pity on account of his misfortunes, and says not one word of his seizing the pulpit at Orlanund in contempt of the elector, and of the university also in which rested the right of patronage.—It is not easy to account for all this manifest partiality. See Beausobre, II. 214-224, and 207, also III. 228. Comm. Luth. Ep. II. IX.

† Luth. contra proph. p. 99 in Coe.

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trates to animadvert severely upon all preachers who should exhort their congregations without warrant to pull down images and churches. The danger, he said, was, lest the common people, actuated by this tumultuary spirit of Carolstadt, should imagine that they had the authority of their Bibles to do the same things which the Israelites were commanded to do. From destroying images, they would easily proceed to destroy men. In regard to the mass and the elevation of the host, he said, if the papists would but give up the idea of the Eucharist being a sacrifice, he should have no dispute with them either about a harmless word or a harmless practice. The latter part* of the work is extremely interesting and instructive; firstly, as it lays open the way in which Carolstadt appears to have been led into his enthusiastic proceedings; and secondly, as it describes the argumentation by which the author himself was deluded into a belief of the doctrine of consubstantiation.

1. "God," says he, "deals with his creatures both by external means, as preaching and the outward signs of the Sacraments, and also by internal, as the operation of his Spirit and faith in the heart. Now in the ordinary course of his providence the external means precede the internal: but Carolstadt perverts this order; he derides the water in baptism, and the bread and wine in the Sacrament; and would begin at once with the spirit of the ordinances. Then if you ask him what he understands by the Spirit, he instantly whirls you away into Utopian regions, tells you to remain perfectly calm and unoccupied, and in that state to expect a celestial voice. In a word, he rejects entirely the use of external means, and has invented a number of strange, barbarous, uncouth words, to express that obscure state of ADMIRATION, MORTIFICATION, SUSPENSION, FREEDOM FROM IMPURITY, and such like, in which the soul must be to favour the reception of the Spirit."

2. Luther makes excellent observations on the practical use of the Lord's supper, and on the meaning of eating spiritually the body of Christ. He then proceeds to defend his unfortunate notion of the real presence. "We do not say that

* Published 12 Feb. 1525. S. II. 27. Beausobre is mistaken in saying it did not appear till Feb. 2, 1526. II. 230.

Christ is called down from heaven by the word of the officiating priest: for though he be present in the Sacrament, he does not leave heaven any more than he left it when he was in his mother's womb. We are not commanded to scrutinize in what manner Christ is in the bread; it is sufficient that he himself has said that it is so. Men may exclaim and contend for a thousand years, but they will never be able to take away the expressions, which are as clear as words can make them."

Thus Luther, in defending even an erroneous and obscure proposition, constrains us to recognize the usual vigour of his conceptions, and the precision of his language.

The causes of the RUSTIC WAR, or the WAR OF THE PEASANTS, as it has been called, were purely secular, and are to be sought for in the writings of the proper historians. This rebellion, however, in its consequences, was so far connected with religion, that (1) it certainly retarded the progress of the blessed Reformation; (2) it also gave occasion to the papists to accuse the protestants unjustly of holding seditious principles; and (3) lastly, it afforded the sound protestants themselves an illustrious opportunity of exhibiting in their conduct the practical excellence of Christian doctrines.

In the former part of 1525, a prodigious multitude, composed chiefly of furious and enthusiastic peasants and vassals, arose suddenly in different parts of Germany, who took arms against their lawful governors, and were guilty of the most horrid and barbarous actions. Many of these rioters, it is true, had long groaned under heavy oppressive taxes and burthens; and, in their public manifestoes they declare that they intend nothing further than to obtain a relaxation of the severity of their chiefs, and a greater portion of civil liberty. But the enthusiast Munzer availed himself of this troubled state of the empire, put himself at the head of the numerous and discontented rabble, inflamed their passions by his violent and delusive harangues, and, by his relation of visions and inspirations, and a pretended foresight of certain success, rendered them altogether desperate and outrageous.

In this turbulent and extensive agitation of the lower orders of the people, it

was probable enough that some, who professed themselves favourers of Lutheranism, would ignorantly or perversely misconstrue the Reformer's doctrines of Christian liberty, and in that dangerous persuasion flock to the standard of the rebels: but the papal adversaries of the Reformation have by no means been content with this concession, or even with exaggerating the effects of this abuse of the Protestant faith; they have constantly laid the whole mischief of this intestine dissension at the door of Luther and his disciples, and, in spite of the clearest and most positive contrary evidences, continued to represent the licentious and detestable faction of Munzer as originating in that Reformer's tenets and instructions, and deriving its strength and numbers from the prevalence of the novel ecclesiastical system.*

On this account it becomes the more necessary to examine the facts with a scrupulous and even jealous attention. Melancthon has extolled Luther as a strenuous supporter of good government, and a decided enemy to every species of sedition;† nevertheless let the student of this history carefully observe, whether, as often as opportunities arise, the conduct of this eminent theologian does in all respects confirm the report of his pious friend and biographer.

As soon as Luther found that all his labours in warning and instructing the princes, magistrates, and people, did not avail to repress the rising spirit of tumult and rebellion, but rather that the tempest appeared to thicken and portend a dreadful crisis, he determined, without loss of one moment of time, to address his countrymen of all ranks and orders in language still more explicit and decisive than any which he had hitherto used.

The style of his publication addressed to the COMMON PEOPLE is of this kind:

"Let every one beware of sedition, as a very heinous crime; and this not only in what relates to external actions, but even to words and secret thoughts. I might augur well of your professing your-

* Du Pin.—The papal advocates have not hesitated to ascribe this rebellion of the fanatics to Luther himself; exclaiming, "This is the fruit of the new doctrine! this is the fruit of Luther's Gospel!"—Gerdes, II. 136. Scult. 230.

† See the Appendix to Vol. IV. of Luther's life.

selves ready to yield to the precepts of Scripture, but that I observe your boasts of a regard for pure evangelical faith and practice are absolutely without foundation. Not one of your propositions has the least relation to any part of the Gospel; they all tend to promote a merely secular freedom: whereas the Gospel does not treat of these subjects, but describes our passage through this world as attended with afflictions, and as calling for patience, contempt of riches, and even of life itself. What then have ye to do with the Gospel, except that ye use it as a pretext to cover your unchristian purposes?"

Such was the reputation of the Saxon divine, that the rustic insurgents would gladly have obtained his countenance to their proceedings; and for this end they had both requested his advice and appealed to his impartiality respecting the justice of their cause: moreover, that they might the more effectually secure his patronage, they stated their primary requisition to be,—the entire privilege of choosing or removing their ministers, in order that they might have the pure Gospel preached to them without human mixtures and traditions. These artful rioters imagined, that no topic, more than that which concerned the free election of preachers, was likely to interest and rouse the spirit of Luther, who himself had long been struggling for the maintenance of Christian liberty at the hazard of his life.

Nothing but downright plain dealing could have extricated our Reformer and his cause from the snares and dangers of the present critical moment.—Deeply sensible of this, Luther proceeds thus:

"I allow that those rulers who oppress their subjects in various ways, and particularly in excluding the preaching of the Gospel from among them, are without excuse; nevertheless it is at the peril of the loss of both your souls and bodies, if ye do not preserve a good conscience in this matter. Satan at this time has raised up a number of seditious, sanguinary teachers; therefore I entreat you not to believe everything you hear. Ye call yourselves Christians, and profess to be obedient to the laws of God. In the first place, it is extremely improbable that true Christians would be so numerous as to furnish such large bodies of men as ye pretend to have on your

side. A true Christian is a scarce bird in the world. I would that the major part of men were but sober, and honest moralists! Secondly, Take care, and do not abuse the name of God; for as easily as he drowned the whole world, and rained fire upon Sodom, he can destroy you. Your actions make it very plain to me that your profession of obedience to the law of God is a pretence. St. Paul orders all men, without exception, to obey the magistrate; whereas ye would snatch the sword from him, and resist the power which is ordained of God. Moreover, the duty of the Christian in general is to suffer, to bear the cross, and not to revenge or have recourse to arms. What appearance is there of this humble spirit in your conduct? Our Lord forbade Peter to resist; and when nailed to the cross, he patiently committed his cause to God the Father, and prayed for his murderers. Do ye imitate his example, or pretend not to the character of a Christian. Ye intend to carry your points by force of arms; but ye will not succeed.

"Permit me to say a word concerning my own conduct. The pope, the emperor, and all the world were in a rage against me; and the more they raged, the greater was the progress of my doctrine. Yet I did not take a single violent step,—never said or wrote a syllable of an inflammatory tendency; much less did I draw the sword.—Ever in my writings I defended all legal authority, even that of persecuting princes. I trusted solely in God; and he has not only prospered my labours abundantly, but, to the great astonishment of many, I myself am alive at this day, very much against the wish of the Roman pontiff and many other enemies. Your warlike modes of proceeding are calculated to produce quite different effects. I pray God to prevent the execution of your designs. I see Satan's meaning, and my own danger; he is aiming to take away my life; he is aiming to effect by a sanguinary faction, what he has hitherto attempted in vain by the papal agents; but God will continue to preserve me. I say further, Satan, the enemy of mankind, would gladly bring into disgrace the late revival of pure doctrine among the people, by insinuating as though it could not be of God, because the profession of it had caused so much sedition and tumult; and thus your unchristian

conduct affords a great handle to the adversary.

“Compel me not, I beseech you, to pray against you; for I doubt not but God will hear my prayers: whereas ye can have no heart for prayer. Scripture and your own consciences tell you, your attempts are profane and impious. In fact, ye do not pray; your hope is in your numbers and your arms.

“In regard to your first requisition, the privilege of choosing your ministers, it is utterly inadmissible in all cases where the right of patronage belongs to your governors.

“I admit that magistrates do many unreasonable and many wicked things. Some of your requisitions also are extremely unreasonable and unscriptural; but were they in all respects perfectly unexceptionable, yet this wicked endeavour to extort them by force of arms will, I tell you, if persevered in, bring down upon you the heavy wrath of God both in this world and the next.—The divine rule is express: you must never go beyond PETITION and REPRESENTATION; and if you are persecuted, you must fly from one place to another.”*

Our author then turns to the princes and nobility, and addresses them with the zeal and authority of an apostle.—“It is to you, rulers, and you only, especially the rulers of the church, that the present disturbances are to be ascribed. The bishops, to this very moment, even against their better knowledge, persecute the Gospel; and the civil magistrates think of nothing but draining the wretched poor, to satisfy their own pride and luxury. I have repeatedly warned you of the dreadful evils that threaten you, but to no purpose. The wrath of God is accumulating over you, and will burst on your heads if ye repent not. These false prophets, and this rebellion of the common people, are proofs of the Divine displeasure. To be plain, such is the state of things, that men neither can, nor will, nor indeed should they, bear your government any longer. Listen to the Scriptures, and amend your ways. The insurgents may not succeed at present, and you may kill the greater part of them; but God will raise up others after them. For it is HE himself who, for your wickedness, brings these troubles upon you. Some of you have boasted,

that you were ready to sacrifice your rank and fortune, if you could but abolish Lutheranism, root and branch: and others, to fill up the measure of their crimes, and bring fresh disgrace upon the Gospel, represent these seditious tumults as the consequence of my doctrine. Thus do you harden your hearts; thus do you calumniate and persecute the word of God.

“Yourselves are my witnesses that I have always detested sedition, and exhorted the people to obedience, and even to patient submission under your tyrannical government. It is not I, therefore, it is these bloody prophets, who are quite as inimical to me as they are to you, who have been the cause of this rebellion, and who have been seducing the people for more than three years, without any one, except myself, endeavouring to counteract them. Now if, for your wickedness, it should please God to permit Satan, through the instrumentality of these preachers, to raise this impending storm to such a pitch as is beyond my power of allaying it, what blame, I pray, can you lay to the charge of the Gospel, or of Luther, who has constantly honoured your authority, exhorted the people to respect you, poured out his prayers to God for you, and himself hitherto patiently endured your cruel persecution? Were I actuated by a spirit of revenge, I might smile in private at these tragical scenes: or I might stimulate the enraged populace, and add fuel to the flames.

“Let me entreat ye then, O ye princes, not to despise my advice. Do not fear the rebels, but fear God. Our crimes are such as ought to alarm us; and if God should purpose to deal with us according to our deserts, we cannot escape HIS vengeance, however small the number of the rebels should prove. Great moderation is the line of conduct which ye ought to pursue at the present crisis. Lenity and clemency can do no harm, and may prevent matters from being pushed to extremities,—in one word, may prevent a conflagration, which might consume all Germany.

“It is very true that the demands of the malecontents originate in interested motives; nevertheless some of them are so reasonable, that you ought to be ashamed of having reduced your subjects to the necessity of making them. Their first requisition, which respects the legal appointment of evangelical preachers, is

* Matt. x.

so far just in its principles that no ruler has a right to withhold the Gospel from his subjects: and though I grant, that in the application of this principle they manifest a selfish spirit, and set up claims which under the pretence of liberality would annihilate the power of their masters, yet their iniquitous demands will not justify you in refusing them substantial justice. It is the duty of governors not to vex and distress their subjects, but to be the guardians of their fortunes and their comforts; whereas, in truth, the oppression of the poor peasants of this country is become intolerable, the numerous and heavy imposts cramp their industry, and there is but one way left of meliorating their condition,—the higher orders must restrain their excessive luxury and extravagance, which is the true cause of the evil.”

Lastly, when Luther had finished these distinct harangues both to the higher and lower orders of the people, he thought proper to conclude with a few words of serious advice to the parties in common. He exhorted them not to think of deciding their disputes by arms, for both sides had a bad cause to defend. It was hard to say whether tyranny or sedition produced worse consequences; no man could fight for either with a good conscience; and those who perished in such a contest would die in their sins. “My advice,” says he, “is, that all the disputable points be settled by impartial arbiters chosen on both sides. Let the rulers and nobles concede something of their strict rights, and let the common people in their turn be more moderate in their demands, and listen to the voice of reason; otherwise this civil war will assuredly be the ruin of the country. But if this advice is despised, if the people will wage war against their rulers as so many tyrants and oppressors, and the rulers will treat their subjects as banditti and barbarians, I humbly pray God either to confound the designs of both parties, or in some way to overrule this ferocious obstinacy of men to the re-establishment of peace and harmony.”

But these Christian exhortations proved ineffectual. The civil war not only continued, but soon became bloody and destructive. In Suabia, Franconia, and Alsace, the fanatical insurgents pulled down monasteries, castles, and houses, and murdered the nobles and dignitaries, and were guilty of multiplied acts of

treason and barbarity. The moment Luther became acquainted with these abominable excesses, he deemed it the duty of a sound Christian to support the lawful government of his country with all his might in an emergency which threatened universal anarchy and devastation. Accordingly he changed his language, wrote a short tract AGAINST THE ROBBERS AND MURDERERS, and exhorted all ranks and orders to come forward and help, as they would to extinguish a general conflagration. “The wicked parricides,” said he, “must be crushed. They had scandalously broken their oaths, plundered the right owners of their possessions, and committed treason in various ways; and, what very much increased their guilt, they endeavoured to cloak their shameful practices under the name and character of pure Christianity. There could not be greater pests of society. Those indeed among them who had been compelled to join the faction by threats were to be treated with lenity, but those only who repented and surrendered themselves ought to be pardoned. The rest merited the utmost rigour; and whosoever should fall in opposing them, and defending their lawful rulers, ought to be esteemed as martyrs in an excellent cause.”*

This publication of Luther was blamed by many as too harsh and violent. But the author, in reply, defended his positions with great spirit and ability. He complained, that whatever he did or said was sure to afford matter for censure to haughty critics. He contended, that those who could excuse the present offenders, must be considered as partakers in their crimes. Lastly, he alleged St. Paul’s, peremptory judgment of those who resist lawful magistrates;† and strenuously insisted on this rebellion of the rustics as being marked with peculiar circumstances of cruelty and impiety.

To relate all the particulars of the rebellion in 1525 would be foreign to our purpose; it may be sufficient to add, that the princes of the empire found it absolutely necessary to unite their forces and their efforts for the suppression and punishment of the insurgents. The carnage in various parts of Germany was dreadful. A vast multitude of the faction in Thuringia were met by the

Battle of
Muhlhausen,
A. D. 1525.

* Steidan. Gnodalius. Maimbourg. Com-
ment de Luth. † Romans, xiii.

Saxon and other confederate princes near Mulhausen, where they were defeated in a pitched battle, and Munzer their ring-leader was also taken and put to death.

This unfortunate war is supposed to have cost Germany the lives of more than fifty thousand men;* but the papal advocates are not to be credited when they assert that one hundred and thirty thousand Lutherans perished from this cause. The fact is, by far the greatest tragedies were exhibited in the *popish* part of Germany: moreover, the Lutherans abounded most in the electorate of Saxony, where matters were certainly carried on with greater mildness and moderation, as well by the rebels themselves during the commotions, as by the government in their measures to suppress them. It well deserves notice, that the tumults were the greatest in those districts where the free course of the Gospel had been most completely obstructed. The good elector Frederic adverted to this circumstance in a memorable letter written to his brother and successor on the very day before he died.

“The princes,” says he, “have applied to us for our assistance against the peasants; and I could wish to open my mind to them, but I am too ill. Perhaps the principal cause of these commotions is, that these poor creatures have not been allowed to have the word of God preached freely among them.”

LUTHER AND CAROLSTADT.

With this detail of circumstances in view, the student of the History of the Church of Christ will be much better enabled to trace and to appreciate the motives of the conduct of the great German Reformer, both in the rustic war and in the Sacramental contest with Carolstadt.

He will be convinced how truly Christian were his notions of submission to magistrates, and how complete his aversion to sedition of every kind.

He will understand also how almost impossible it must have been for Luther to separate entirely the spirit of Carolstadt from that of those rustic insurgents who were headed by Munzer. These appear to have been fanatics of the very worst class; and there is no denying that Carolstadt was connected with them, and strongly tinctured with their enthu-

siastic notions; and though nothing could be more unjust than to represent the outrages of the peasants as the genuine fruit of Lutheranism, when before Luther's time there had already been several alarming seditions in Germany, and when many even of the rebels in 1525 made not the least pretensions to religion, yet certainly it became our Reformer, at so critical a conjuncture, to be scrupulously explicit in his advice and his exhortations. He was well aware of the malignity of his adversaries, who were insidiously watching his conduct, and were ready, whatever part he should take, to misrepresent his motives: he saw the handle afforded by the riotous enthusiasts for disgracing the late revival of religion; and he was not a little vexed and irritated to see his old associate Carolstadt give so much countenance to men of romantic and dangerous principles. Further; how Luther, in the former part of the RUSTIC REBELLION, could have conducted himself with greater moderation, or have given better advice to the parties concerned, it may not be easy to conceive: and the same may be said of the wisdom and firmness with which, toward the conclusion of that melancholy scene, he supported the legitimate institutions and government of his country.

But, in regard to the Sacramentarian contest, we have seen that the best friends of this great man must in some parts of that unhappy dissension be compelled entirely to withhold, and in others very much qualify, their commendations. The sentiment of his antagonists in this dispute he very unbecomingly denominates, more than once, the poison of Carolstadt; says it was spreading at a great rate; and expresses much concern, that the people of Strasburg, that Zuingle, Leo Judæ, and all the Protestant part of Switzerland, were receiving the new Sacramentarian tenet. Now if Luther had contented himself with retaining his own opinion, which he might have done without the least prejudice to his religious affections,—and if he had cheerfully given the right hand of fellowship to men no less sound in the faith than himself, and who revered his character most sincerely,—the rent of the Protestant churches might have been entirely avoided, and even the difference of judgment itself might have gradually vanished.

* Beausobre.

Those who would profit by the instructions which history furnishes, will not forget this lamentable instance of heat, error, and obstinacy in Martin Luther.

From what has been said, the intelligent Reader will however be careful not to confound the case of the more solid and judicious Sacramentarians with that of Carolstadt, or any of his fanatical associates among the deluded Anabaptists of those times. By far the greater part of Luther's severe animadversions on the behaviour of Carolstadt appear to have originated in his rooted aversion to the enthusiastic and disorderly spirit of that Reformer, which had produced so much tumult and irregularity among the people.—Several of the ecclesiastical historians seem not to have sufficiently adverted to this circumstance. They would represent Luther as having been excessively jealous of the reputation of Carolstadt as a reformer; and their observations have been repeatedly copied from one another.—In this, as in like cases, the FACTS are our surest guides.

1. So early as even the year 1515, the troublesome, contentious temper of this man had begun to show itself; in—
 so much that the rector of the university of Wittemberg complained to the elector, That every body avoided the conversation of so quarrelsome a person; that the chapter of Wittemberg had decided against him in a question respecting a petty debt of twelve florins, and he had loaded his judges with abuse, and appealed to the pope;—and lastly, that without leave or providing a deputy, he had gone away, and deserted his academical duties.

2. When by the express command of the elector, he had returned to Wittemberg, he made himself minister of the parish of Orlamuud, without any regular appointment.*

3. In 1521, Luther writes thus to his friend: "There is much genius and learning in the writings of Carolstadt, but I wish they contained clearer arguments. I would have him confute the papistical notion of celibacy by such scriptures as are apt and decisive, and not by such as the adversary can easily answer. His cause

is excellent, and his attempts laudable; but he should rely on proofs that are unanswerable. To persuade numbers of unmarried persons, by quoting doubtful passages of Scripture, to enter into the married state, must be very dangerous work, and likely to produce afterwards much uneasiness of conscience. I endeavour to impress these things on his mind, but all to no purpose."*

4. How injurious to the infant Reformation had been the turbulence and precipitation of Carolstadt, and with how much wisdom and moderation was peace and good order restored by Luther to the university and inhabitants of Wittemberg, has already appeared in the course of this narrative.† But there are not wanting further proofs of the exercise of a truly humble and Christian spirit in Luther, during his controversies with this rash and impetuous sectarian.

Luther was so much afraid of the mischiefs which would arise to the Gospel from a publication of the internal discords existing among the Protestants, that soon after his return to Wittemberg from his Patmos, when he had put a stop to Carolstadt's innovations, he says, "This very day I entreated Carolstadt in the most suppliant manner not to make any public attack upon me; otherwise I should be compelled, much against my will, to enter the lists with him in good earnest. The man almost called heaven to witness that he had no such intention; yet I learn from other quarters that there are a number of his tracts at this very moment in the hands of the rector of the academy and the other judges. They are endeavouring to make him recant, or at least to suppress his intended publication. This is a point which I do not press, for I neither fear Satan himself, nor an angel from heaven—much less Carolstadt. - - - Pray that the Gospel may be glorified—and may Christ preserve our prince a little longer! This is my daily petition."‡

5. The very candid and accurate Seckendorf observes, that the account of Luther's conference with Carolstadt at Jene and Orlamuud§ is penned with a malignant artifice, to the great disadvantage of

* Ep. 240 and 241.

† Pages 336 and 352 of this volume.

‡ Ep. II. 63. This letter to Spalatinus is not given by Seckendorf.

§ Page 302.

the former. The Orlamundians are there represented as having defended Carolstadt's practice of pulling down images, with so much ability, that Luther went away almost confounded by their arguments.* Carolstadt, on the contrary, in the same narrative, is said to have treated Luther with kindness and respect: and to have earnestly requested, that, if mistaken, he might be better informed, and set right on the points in dispute. Those who dislike Luther, and are fond of Carolstadt, lay great stress on this statement.† But Luther's friends will not be sorry to find that he did not always take fire, even when very ill treated. "Martin Reinhard," says he to Amsdorf, "has edited a most iniquitous representation of my conduct at Orlamund, with a view to enhance the credit of Carolstadt, and to disgrace me. Now as the great cause will be in no way benefited by my answering him, I shall remain silent, lest I should endeavour to increase my own reputation, and lessen that of Carolstadt."‡

In another letter on the same subject, he says, "This little account of my transactions at Jene and Orlamund diverts me exceedingly;—and with good reason, because I see that men, who pay no regard to truth, and are without conscience, are full of fears for themselves, and choose to be beforehand with the public, so as to secure their first hearing, and make an impression favourable to themselves, and injurious to me. An anonymous publication in which there is such a mixture of lies with truth, calls for patience, and forbearance, and not for any answer, lest I should seem either to be influenced by a thirst of glory or revenge; or to have given up the grand cause of contention, and to be only anxious for the defence of my own private character."§

One cannot but be astonished, that, with these testimonies before the public, such a writer as Rodolph Hospinian should affirm, that though Luther himself

did not write that account of his conference with Carolstadt, which is published in the German editions of his works, the truth of it nevertheless is not to be doubted. "For," continues he, "on the same principle you may doubt the truth of the Old and New Testament, and of other public records. Moreover, the narrative was inserted in Luther's works while he was alive, and HE NEVER OBJECTED TO IT."*

Also the learned translator of Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History appears to me to have imbibed, from the same Hospinian, most unwarrantable prejudices against Luther in regard to his unfortunate rupture with Carolstadt. He makes Luther say, "As in red-hot iron two distinct substances, viz. iron and fire, are united, so is the body of Christ joined with the bread in the Eucharist."† Maclaime calls this a miserable comparison; and is so fond of finding fault with Luther for using it, that in p. 165, he again ridicules him for explaining the "nonsensical doctrine of consubstantiation" by the similitude of a red-hot iron, &c. But he does not refer us to the passage in Luther's voluminous writings. However, at length, in the tract called the Babylonish Captivity, I found the following sentence: "Why may not Christ comprehend his own body within the substance of the bread, as is the case with accidents? Behold, the two substances, iron and fire, are so mingled in ignited iron, that every part is iron and fire. Why then, much more, may not the glorious body of Christ exist in every part of the substance of the bread?" Thus Luther puts the question interrogatively and modestly, according to my judgment, and in a manner much less positive and much less exceptionable than it is stated in Maclaime's translation.—Whenever authors find fault with one another, they ought to be very exact in their quotations.

In Luther's little treatise against Henry VIII. king of England, I observe the author again alludes to the similitude of ignited iron. "I may," says he, "be allowed to say, the body of Christ is in the Sacrament, as fire is in the iron, without destroying the substance of that metal; and as God is in the man Jesus Christ without destroying the properties

* Scultet.

† Martin Reinhard, a preacher at Jene, and of Carolstadt's party, first edited this report of what passed at Jene and Orlamund: afterwards the substance of his little work seems to have found its way into the German folios of Luther's works.—Reinhard was ordered to leave the place.

‡ Ep. II. 237.

§ Ib. 234.

* Hist. Sacram. II. p. 32.

† P. 34, 4to Ed.

of a man. In both these mixtures each substance retains its peculiar nature, and yet do they constitute but ONE THING. I may be allowed, I say, to speak in this way, till the papists shall confute me by weighty arguments, and not by contemptuously quoting 'Thomas Aquinas.'—However, unprejudiced persons will probably deem this to be quite as intelligible as Beausobre's objections to it, grounded on the abstruse metaphysical doctrine of the penetration of bodies.* Moreover, they will do well to recollect that this passage of Luther was written in 1522, and the former in 1520; and lastly, that even in much more modern times there is frequently to be observed among the controversial disputations respecting both Con- and Tran- substantiation, a profusion of rash assertion and inconclusive argument on the Protestant, as well as on the opposite side of those questions.

It may not be amiss to conclude this curious and instructive portion of the history of the Reformation with a Character of Carolstadt, drawn by the impartial pen of the mild and cautious Melancthon.

"Carolstadt," says he, "first raised the tumult respecting the Sacrament. He was a man of a savage disposition, and of no genius or learning, or even of common sense; a man who was so far from having any marks of

being influenced by the Holy Spirit, that I could never observe him either to understand or practise even the ordinary duties of humanity. Nay, he has discovered manifest marks of an unholy turn of mind: all his notions savour of sedition and of Judaism. He rejected every law made by the Gentiles, and contended, that forensic questions ought to be decided by the law of Moses; so little did he comprehend the force and nature of Christian liberty. From the very first, he embraced with his whole might the fanatical doctrine of the Anabaptists, when Nicholas Storek attempted to sow the seeds of it in Germany; and he made a stir respecting the Sacrament, entirely from a dislike to Luther, and not in the least from any pious conviction that he himself was in the right. For when Luther had expressed his disapprobation of Carolstadt's indiscreet zeal in breaking and pulling down the

the images and statues,* he was so inflamed with a monstrous spirit of revenge, that he began to look out for some plausible plan for ruining the reputation of Luther. A great part of Germany can testify that I speak nothing but the truth. And if there was need of proof, his own publications would be my most decisive witnesses against their author. There is not in them even the specious appearance of a probable argument, that should have induced the man to take up his pen. With how jocose and trifling a spirit does he treat of the Greek word *ταῦτα*?† Then, has he thrown any light whatever on a point of so much importance in the history of the ancient Church? or what testimony has he produced from any celebrated author? or, lastly, what single expression is there in his whole disputation that indicates a pious way of thinking?—He only vociferates, as do the lowest mechanics, who, in their cups, are pleased with nothing but profane tales. Moreover, a great part of his writings are taken up with railing; and yet the stupid author would pass for a man of wit and humour."

Melancthon concludes this picture with saying,—“I have written this for the sake of my neighbours, that, if they have the least regard for my testimony, they may beware of such a character. For though it is not in his power to disguise his real disposition for a long time together, yet he has a surprisingly fair outside, and possesses the arts of insinuation to a wonderful degree. But his temper is violent and restless, and soon

* If this be so, what are we to think of Maclaine, who would represent the removal of the images out of the churches as effected by Carolstadt, in conjunction with Melancthon himself and others? See his note, p. 163, Vol. II. 4to. All this contradiction is set right at once, by considering, that Carolstadt, besides his legal endeavours to reform the Church from popery, in which endeavours Melancthon, Bugenhagius, Jonas, and others certainly concurred, excited the people to sedition and tumult, encouraged them to remove the images by force, and did many other acts of violence. This was the blameable part of his conduct, and seems entirely forgotten by those who would favour him, to the disparagement of Luther. See p. 338 of this Vol.

† This is my body.

breaks out into acts of ambition, passion, and envy.”*

The learned reader, who knows how to appreciate the testimony of Melancthon, and who remembers that that Reformer was an eye-witness of the practices of Carolstadt, will not hesitate to pronounce this evidence as entirely conclusive. He may, however, very much wonder that Maclaine should positively assert, † in contradiction to Mosheim himself, that the true cause of the violent rupture between Luther and Carolstadt was their difference of opinion concerning the Eucharist; whereas Melancthon's account of the origin of the Sacramentarian controversy tallies exactly with the facts. Carolstadt, before that unhappy contest commenced, had shown his proneness to turbulence and fanaticism. He may wonder, likewise, that Beausobre should warn his reader not to confound Carolstadt with the fanatics, and assert, that “Luther from pure prejudice, ‡ reckons him among that class.” Nothing can be more unjust than this charge. For if the writer only means that Carolstadt is not to be confounded with the rebel fanatics who were headed by Munzer, Luther, as we have seen, makes the very distinction himself; § but if he would have us believe that Carolstadt was not an enthusiast, he contradicts the universal voice of the contemporary historians. It was with great difficulty that I obtained from the Continent a copy of Beausobre's History of the Reformation, and I confess I have been greatly disappointed in the perusal of it. In many instances the author appears to me by no means to have been directed by the original documents.

There runs through all those writers on the Reformation who would mitigate the irregularities of Carolstadt, and blame the severity of Luther, this palpable inadvertency: they forget that Luther's chief complaints against his coadjutor were not so much on account of his innovations at Wittenberg, as the precipitate, turbulent, and seditious MANNER in which he effected them. The observations of Luther on this subject || are as distinct and rational, as those of Maclaine and Beausobre are frequently irrelevant,

and unfounded. Where, one may ask, does Luther find fault with Carolstadt for making any changes which were approved and authorized by the elector and the regular government of the country? * And, in regard to the invidious charge, so repeatedly insinuated by these and other writers, of JEALOUSY in Luther, lest any other person besides himself should seem to be the principal reformer, no more need be said, than that those who can think Carolstadt to have been an object capable of exciting Luther's envy, or robbing him of his glory, must be little acquainted with the authentic memoirs of those times. The Leipsic disputation alone, one would think, might have settled this point, even though Melancthon had not recorded in such decisive terms his opinion of the talents and disposition of Carolstadt.

If after this full discussion of the grounds of the dissent between these two early reformers, the inquisitive student should still be perplexed or dissatisfied with the many seemingly contradictory assertions, which he may meet with on this subject, in the writings of some excellent men and useful memorialists, I would briefly suggest several considerations, which may assist in relieving this unpleasant state of mental suspense and uncertainty. 1. The obstinacy of Luther, respecting the Sacramental tenet of Con-substantiation, produced a permanent and lamentable rent among the Protestants. Carolstadt had broached the true doctrine of the Sacrament, but had defended it in the absurd and ridiculous manner represented by Melancthon. By and by, men of great talents, as Zuingle, Bucer, Ecolampadius, and others, appeared on the same side, and supported their system with a rational, perspicuous, and well-digested argumentation. This circumstance laid the foundation of a close connexion between Carolstadt and the Zuinglians. Nothing could be more natural than that Carolstadt should be pleased to have found such able defenders of the tenet which he himself had first advanced, or that the Helvetian divines should gladly receive into their communion an unfortunate sectarian of the same principles with themselves, who was disliked, and almost abandoned by his old associates.

* Epist. ad Fred. Mycon. in Hospin.

† P. 165, 4to. † Par pure prevention.

§ Page 412.

|| P. 350 of this Vol.

* Maclaine in Mosheim, p. 165.

In a word, party spirit, absolutely exclusive of what is right or what is wrong, will, in this case, as in many others of a similar kind, account for mild and kind expressions on the one hand, and also for harsh and severe judgments on the other, according to the wishes, prejudices, and connexions of the writers.

2. There is good reason to hope that Carolstadt profited by adversity, and became more truly Christian in his temper, during the latter part of his life.* This single hint will assist us in reconciling some of the most opposite representations of the character of this Reformer. "Carolstadt," says his friend Bucer,

Bucer's account of Carolstadt, A. D. 1530.

writing to Zuingle in the year 1530, "was formerly inclined to be somewhat savage; but daily persecutions and heavy misfortunes have so broken his spirit, and the man has now such worthy notions of Christ, that I feel confident you will admire him."† —At the same time, I cannot but observe a striking instance of party-spirit in this very kind letter itself of Bucer to Zuingle. At the moment when he would represent the savage temper of Carolstadt as then much softened and corrected by adversity, he speaks of his former defect as a habit that was the natural consequence of having lived so much in the company of the most SAVAGE Luther, and of the incredible successes of the first reformers, which might, he thinks, have rendered insolent any modest man whatsoever.

3. Luther also himself, surely, should be allowed, and that without reproach, to have several points of doctrine, and some also of practice, in a different light, as he became older, and had had more experience. There is a mass of evidence to prove that this was really so: and some things which have been deemed his greatest and most inexcusable inconsistencies, are instantly and satisfactorily solved by this consideration.

There is a confused story respecting

* Carolstadt was certainly a man of reading, and of a lively imagination; and, as certainly, violent, void of solidity, and prone to enthusiasm. His recantation does no honour to his memory; yet, on the whole, I am very unwilling to withdraw the appellation of "Honest Carolstadt." See p. 336 of this Vol.

† Hotting, *Eccl. Hist.* Vol. VIII. p. 253.

Luther, which states, that a very little time before his death, he owned to Melancthon that they had gone too far in the Sacramentarian controversy. Melancthon also, from prudential motives, it is said, suppressed this concession during his own lifetime, and intended to have recorded it in his last will; but deferred the doing so, till, from weakness, he was incapable of directing his pen. It is a part of the same story, that when Melancthon proposed to Luther to explain in writing their sentiments on the Sacrament in temperate language, the latter answered, "he should thereby render all his doctrines suspected."*

This whole account is, in my judgment, supported by very suspicious and insufficient evidence; and the declarations which are said to have taken place in the conversation, must, in every view of them, be deemed altogether too indefinite and obscure to be the foundation of any solid conclusion whatsoever.

Still it MAY be true, that expressions, not very unlike those just mentioned, were used; and I think it very probable, and hope IT IS TRUE, that Luther, a man of so vehement a temper, and so much harassed with controversies, did not only ONCE, but OFTEN, in his cooler moments, acknowledge, "that he had gone too far on various occasions."

It may even be true, that at a time so very near his death, he might allude particularly to some parts of his conduct in the Sacramentarian controversy, which, on a review, he disapproved; and yet, in his present feeble state, he might not think himself capable of furnishing the public with such a full and satisfactory explanation as would sufficiently guard against all dangerous conclusion or misconstruction. But these positions, to whatever height of probability they may rise in the minds of some, will, in the apprehension of others, dwindle into mere conjectures; and ought, therefore, never to be insisted on as grounds of argument. It is well known, that slight alterations of words have often very important effects on the meaning of sentences. Let us be careful how we credit posthumous narratives, especially when brought forward by heated and interested partisans.

As I revere the memory of Luther, I sincerely lament that his strong understanding should have failed to grasp the

* *Histor. Sac. pars altera*, 202.

true Scriptural idea of the Eucharist in all its parts; but I am not disposed to admit, on slight testimony, that he discovered his error of consubstantiation, but was too proud to own it.—A native courage and ingenuousness of temper ever urging him, regardless of consequences, to a conscientious avowal of whatever he firmly believed, is an ingredient so thoroughly established in the composition of Luther, that even plausible suppositions and representations, if inconsistent with his general character, and not well substantiated by the unbending rules of historical evidence, will always be rejected by men of dispassionate judgments.

It is astonishing, however, with how much alacrity the story which we have just related has been repeatedly insisted on, to the disparagement of Luther's reputation. Melchior Adam just mentions the thing,* in a very proper manner, without laying any stress on it; thus, "There are who affirm," &c. &c. But Beausobre, with a most unwarrantable positiveness, treats the relation not only as a settled and an allowed truth, but also as altogether conclusive against the candour and ingenuousness of Luther. This author goes even further, and affirms, that Leo Judæ† has proved, in an unanswerable little treatise, that, before the disputes had arisen concerning the Sacrament, both Luther and Erasmus leaned to the sentiments of the Zuinglians. This rash and unfounded assertion is introduced in such a way as very much to mislead even a cautious reader.‡ The fact is, both Luther and Erasmus had maintained, that the faithful communicant in the Lord's Supper, is, IN A SPIRITUAL SENSE, a partaker of the body and blood of Christ; and on this practical doctrine are to be found very excellent observations in Luther's writings.§

To press home this fact upon Luther and Erasmus, and to show how nearly they agreed with their adversaries, was the express design of Leo Judæ's publication; and the author in regard to the spiritual communion of the body and blood of Christ, fully proved his point: and for this reason, namely, because the fact was true: but it was impossible he should do more. It was impossible he

could prove, because it was not true, that BESIDES the doctrine of spiritually eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, Luther and Erasmus did not also hold the gross and unscriptural tenet of the real presence of the human body of Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Erasmus was so much enraged at this charge of heresy, that he calls God to witness, in the most solemn manner, "if ever, even secretly in his heart, he had held any opinion on the Lord's Supper contrary to the judgment of the Roman catholic church." He says, he is willing to be esteemed the prince of heretics, if a single passage to that effect can be produced from any of his publications; and he accuses the writer of having quoted and misrepresented some of his expressions, in a most unfair and most impudent manner.*

Leo Judæ, and also Conrad Pellican, another Swiss divine, had certainly concluded too hastily, that, because Luther and Erasmus had maintained the necessity of partaking of the body and blood of Christ in a SPIRITUAL SENSE, they had therefore abandoned the more common and literal interpretation of the words of Scripture.†

In a letter of Luther's to Spalatinus,‡ I find he acknowledges that he had been extremely TEMPTED to embrace what he calls THE ERROR of his adversaries the Sacramentarians; and this entirely agrees with what he wrote to the Strasburgians, p. 408. Excessive veneration for the word of God, taken according to its literal meaning, "This is my body," was indisputably the chief cause which prevented Luther from successfully exercising his judgment to obtain a rational interpretation of the meaning of Scripture in this instance. This great man, however, seems but ill requited for making such candid concessions respecting the secret struggles of his mind, when these are produced against him, and represent-

* Ep. Erasm. p. 935.

† See Erasmus's Expostulations with Conrad Pellican, Ep. p. 963, Pellican's answer in Seult. pp. 57 and 61.—It must be owned that Pellican in this controversy was reduced to the necessity of saying, "That in the matter of the Lord's Supper, Erasmus had laid the CHIEF, if not the ONLY stress on the SPIRITUAL meaning." Jortin Er. p. 405.

‡ Ep. 269.

* Vita Luth. † A Swiss divine.

‡ Beausobre, p. 125. Note.

§ Comment. Luth. II. ix.

ed as the effects of pride, obstinacy, and worldly policy.*

This collection and arrangement of facts, respecting, 1stly, The Civil War of the peasants of Germany; and 2dly, The Dissensions of Luther and Carolstadt, cannot fail to prove useful to the diligent student of the history of the Reformation. And in regard to the observations which accompany the facts, these are entirely the result of the writer's reflection, during the exercise of that care and patience which he found necessary for the exhibition of them in a clear and comprehensive manner. Before he entered on the task, he had neither any strong nor very distinct opinion on the merits of the leading characters in these transactions; or rather, he perhaps leaned to that common notion, which would represent Luther as proud, wilful, and domineering. In the course of his inquiry, he could not but take notice, that almost always where Carolstadt is either commanded by authors, or spoken of with a sort of candid propensity to mitigate his faults, it is but too apparent that this is done with an indirect design to injure Luther's reputation. This circumstance certainly very much excited both the writer's attention and his suspicion. His observations, however, it is scarcely necessary to add, are of no further value than as they are found to agree with the facts; and these being now fairly before the reader, he will himself be able to appreciate the justice and propriety of the observations. This he could not so easily have done before, on account of the partial, scattered, and indigested manner in which the historical materials have been transmitted to posterity.†

THE DEATH OF THE ELECTOR OF SAXONY.

The good elector of Saxony departed this life on the fifth of May 1525,‡ about ten days before the defeat of Munzer, the leader of the rustic insurgents. He was too feeble in body, and too deeply concerned in mind, to make any attempt to

* Beausobre, 125.

† I had once intended to have placed this account of Carolstadt in a different part of the History:—See note, p. 351.—but further reflection convinced me, that the perspicuity of the Lutheran transactions would be best consulted by the arrangement here adopted.

‡ Comment. de Luth. lib. II. § II.—4.

join the confederate princes. Only three days before his death, he exhorted, by letter, his brother John, who succeeded him in the electorate, to do his utmost to compose the disturbances, by choosing arbitrators who were good men and favourites of the people,—to avoid the spilling of blood, to pardon the multitude, and to punish only the ringleaders of the rebellion.* The delusion, he said, would not last long. God, who had hitherto protected their country, would continue to protect it. This was the last time he should be able to write to him, but he trusted they should meet again in a better world.—The mind of this conscientious prince appears to have been strongly impressed with a belief that the primary cause of the rebellion of the peasants was the just judgment of God, on account of the obstruction which the preaching of the pure Gospel had met with; and, as a secondary cause, he lamented, that not only the ruling clergy, but also the civil governors, oppressed their poor subjects in a variety of ways. Unable now to direct his pen, he dictated, on the day before his death, to his brother John, the letter alluded to in page 418, in which these pious and compassionate feelings are depicted in the most lively colours. In particular, he tells him he would do well to repeal a late heavy impost on beer and wine.† Such a lenient measure would tend to tranquillize the public mind, and induce the malecontents to return to their duty; and a kind Providence would, no doubt, abundantly requite him in some other way. Spalatinus informs us, that, a short time before he expired, he addressed his servants and domestics in the following terms: “I entreat you, my dearest children, in the name of God, and for HIS sake, to forgive me, if I have offended any of you in word or deed; and I further entreat you to make in my name this same request for me to others. We princes are apt to treat our poor distressed subjects in a vexatious and unjustifiable manner.” The devout and affectionate expressions of the elector

* Seck. II. pp. 4, 5, 11. Beausobre, III. 186.

† So early as the year 1519 we find Luther exhorting the elector of Saxony to avoid taxing the beer. Such a measure, he said, would alienate the minds of his subjects.—Archiv, Weimar,

drew tears from Spalatinus and all his domestics who were present.—His last words were, “I cannot say any more.” “Does anything,” said Spalatinus, “lie heavy on your mind?” He answered, “No; but I have much bodily pain.”—He expired, however, like one falling asleep.

Frederic the Wise died of an obstruction in the bladder, in the sixty-third year of his age. Before the Lutheran controversies, he had been a most industrious collector of reliques, and had augmented the number of masses in his Church of All Saints to ten thousand annually.

Frederic was a zealous a Roman Catholic even in 1517.

How zealous a Roman Catholic he was, even in the year 1517, may be collected from certain articles in his will made at that time. He joins with the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin, St. Bartholomew the apostle, and then his tutelar angel and all the saints of God, to whose intercession he commits his soul. He particularly enjoins, that, for a month after his death, there be said no less than fifty masses every day, with a small allowance for each. Lastly, he requests his brother John to examine very carefully whether his ministers might not, for the sake of increasing his revenues, have defrauded his subjects in some instances; and if so, to rectify what was wrong, without delay.* The Christian reader will be pleased to see how, in the LAST will and testament of this prince, the pure doctrine of the Gospel triumphs over the ancient superstition. Not a word in it of the Virgin Mary, of saints, or apostles, or masses. “I beseech,” says he, “Almighty God, through the sacred and unexampled merits of his Son, to pardon all my sins and transgressions; neither do I doubt but that, by the precious death of my dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I shall obtain forgiveness; and therefore into his all-powerful hands, and to his eternal, immeasurable, unsearchable kindness and compassion, I commit my soul, to be preserved for the

enjoyment of a happy immortality. I freely forgive all who have done me any wrong; and I beseech them, in the name of God, and for His sake, to pardon, from the heart and with a true Christian charity, me, in whatever I may have offended them, agreeably to what we every day pray for, the mutual forgiveness of trespasses from God, the Father of compassion.” - - - By the advice of Luther and Melancthon, he was buried without pomp, and without superstition. The latter made an oration in Latin; and the former preached in German, from the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, verses 13—18. His discourse was short, and his praises of the deceased few, modest, and perfectly consistent with truth. On his monument was inscribed an epitaph in Latin, from the elegant pen of Melancthon.

The history of this elector's conduct affords the best interpretation of his principles; and from this it has sufficiently appeared, that for a long time he had in SECRET favoured the progress of Lutheranism. His cautious temper, his superstitious habits, the novel and decisive measures of Luther, and, lastly, the intrigues of the pope, the emperor, and the confederate anti-protestant princes, all these contributed to make him less active in the support of the reformers than might have been expected from his good understanding and respect for the word of God. He had, however, been long convinced how vain it was to look for any efficient accommodation of the ecclesiastical dissensions. The archbishop of Mentz, in the year 1523, had conceived a plan of this sort; in which it was proposed, that himself, the bishop of Mersburgh, Luther, and the two dukes of Saxony, or two other princes, should meet at Zerbst, or Naumburg, for the purpose of an amicable adjustment. But this, like many other similar projects, came to nothing; and the elector cautioned his brother John against the consequences of undertaking the direction of such heterogeneous assemblies.* Moreover, though we have seen that this good prince, in the course of the same year, had reason to apprehend considerable danger both to himself and his electorate, on account of his known attachment to Luther and his disciples,† yet

A plan of the archbishop of Mentz, A. D. 1523.

* The pious Seckendorf takes notice here, that this is a very common article in the last testament of such kings and princes as have had some regard for their salvation; and adds, with great reason, how much better it would be if they took care either to prevent such frauds, or to correct them in their lifetime. P. 23, and 33.

* Comment. de Luth. cxlviii.

† Besides the just grounds for apprehen-

the wicked machinations of his interested, unprincipled neighbours were quick-

sion of danger to the elector of Saxony, related in pages 375 and 376, it may not be improper to add another not yet mentioned, as it marks, in a very striking manner, the excessive bitterness and animosity of the papal party, and to what lengths of injustice and oppression their hatred of the Reformation could carry them. Francis Sickingen, one of the most powerful noblemen in all the German empire, was a steady patron of Luther and his doctrine; and he, as well as some others,—see Chap. V. Cent. XVI.—had offered the Reformer a safe asylum in the moment of extreme danger: afterwards, Sickingen, who is allowed to have been more actuated by a factious, warlike and enterprising spirit, than is consistent with the meekness and humility of a Christian, was involved in an unhappy contest with the elector of Treves, in which the parties were joined respectively by allies of great distinction. Whatever was the true cause of this war, whether it arose from the ambitious projects of Sickingen, his hatred of the episcopal tyranny, or from mere points of honour carried by this chief to an improper extreme, it is certain that religion had no concern in it; and, moreover, that Luther constantly, and openly, expressed his entire disapprobation of using force for the purpose of making converts. The courageous efforts of Sickingen terminated in the capture of his castle, the flight of his allies, and the loss of his life by the bursting of a bomb. And now the attentive reader is to mark the consequences. The victorious confederates would probably have been contented with their triumph over Sickingen and his friends, if he had not been a Lutheran; but to be a Lutheran was a crime never to be forgiven. They remained therefore under arms, on the pretence of keeping the public peace. The chiefs of the Suabian league, particularly the princes of the House of Austria and Bavaria, acted in concert with them, to oppress the Lutherans in every quarter. They vowed vengeance against the remains of Sickingen's party, wherever they should find them; and incessantly menaced even the elector of Saxony, whom, without the least proof, they accused of harbouring refugee noblemen in his provinces. All this was levelled against the reformation in religion; and we have seen,—page 396,—that, in the opinion of the chancellor of Treves, matters were ripening so fast for its destruction, that Lutheranism would quickly receive its death-stroke. Comment. Luth. pp. 111, 130, 223, 224, 259, 261, 269, 289, 290, 291; also, Beausobre, I. p. 307. II. p. 270, and 315. III. pp. 20, 21, and 110.

ly confounded; the blessed Reformation proceeded most rapidly, and even the temporal affairs of the elector of Saxony suffered no injury whatever. These lessons were not thrown away on Frederic: he became at last convinced, that he had carried his system of connivance and toleration quite far enough; that a Divine hand had directed the late revival of pure Christianity; and that it was now his duty to be actively instrumental in promoting the same glorious cause among his own subjects.—While meditating deeply, in his last sickness, on these things, and despairing of any useful interference of popes and bishops, he gave directions for an interview with Luther, in the intention of consulting how he should in future more openly support and establish the reformed religion in Saxony. But our Reformer was at that time in Thuringia, preaching to the peasants, and endeavouring to appease their rebellious spirit; which prevented him returning to see the prince, till he was on the point of death. Thus was the elector providentially debarred from holding intercourse with a man whom he certainly revered, but whose company, from motives of policy, he had hitherto shunned during a number of years.* There is however great reason to believe, that he died in the faith, hope, and humility of the Gospel; though it be difficult, or rather impossible, to apologize for his deficiency in the great duty of confessing Christ before all the world.†

CHAPTER XII.

FROM THE DEATH OF THE ELECTOR OF SAXONY,
TO THE CONCLUSION OF LUTHER'S CONTROVERSY WITH ERASMUS.

THE MARRIAGE OF LUTHER.
CONTROVERSY WITH ERASMUS.
CONTINUATION OF THE CONTROVERSY.

ABOUT the latter part of the year 1524, the monastery of Wittemberg was reduced to almost perfect insignificance, by

* Comment. de Luth. II. vii.

† The elector of Saxony never spoke once to Luther, and never saw him but twice in his life. Seck. Præloq. Also p. 28.

the death or desertion of the monks, which had taken place in the course of a few years. In the month of October there were left in it only the Prior, and Luther; and the latter availed himself of that opportunity to resign the title and habit of an Augustine monk, and in future was called merely Doctor or Professor Martin Luther. He had long been desirous of taking this step, but, well knowing the elector's aversion to innovation, he had delayed to press the point. At last he expressed a wish to Spalatinus that he might have the prince's final answer, and he promised never more to importune him on the subject. Frederic with some humour and much good nature, sent him a piece of cloth, and told him he was at liberty to wear it in whatever shape he pleased.*

The character of the Saxon Reformer seems greatly misunderstood. Many persons conceive him, in general, to have been rash and hasty in his conduct; mistaking, I think, a few vehement and impetuous expressions in his language, for random, indigested decisions of his understanding. On a close examination of his practice, we shall find that few men have been more patient in investigation, or more deliberate in resolution. He was remarkably so in the very delicate and interesting questions which occurred in the earlier part of the Reformation,

First marriage of a clergyman in Saxony, A. D. 1521.

respecting the celibacy of the clergy. The first clergyman who married a wife in Saxony, was the curate of Kemberg, named Bartholomew Bernard, in the year 1521. Cardinal Albert, archbishop of Magdeburg, summoned him to appear at Halle, and requested the elector to enjoin episcopal obedience to his subject. But the cautious Frederic, by a dexterous civility, protracted the affair; and in the mean time Melancthon composed for the man a learned defence, addressed to the officials of the ecclesiastical court. The tender conscience of Luther appears to have hesitated longer than even Melancthon himself, respecting the obligation of voluntary monastic vows. At length from his Patmos issued his admirable tract on this subject, which gave a fatal blow to the whole papal system:† He had sent the manuscript to Spalatinus, for the in-

spection of the elector and his court, and soon after it was not to be found. The author suspected it was purposely detained, to prevent the publication of it. "You could not have vexed me worse," says he to Spalatinus, "if indeed the papers are secreted by you. The circumstances press for their publication; and if either they are lost, or you will not restore them, my mind will be so irritated, that in future I shall plead the same cause with more force and vehemence. You may burn my papers to a cinder, but you cannot extinguish the spirit of the writer."* I find they were not published till January, 1522.†

Luther's treatise on Monastic Vows, A. D. 1522.

Through the labours of Luther and his Wittenberg coadjutors, the understandings of men were become so much enlightened, and their prejudices abated, that even Spalatinus himself entered into the married state in the latter part of the year 1525.‡ However, he

Spalatinus marries in A. D. 1525.

self is known to have set a high value on this treatise, and to have considered it as the most unanswerable of all that he had ever written.

In our days there is no need to insist much on arguments against celibacy; but it may be worth while to take notice how this acute Reformer keeps his eye constantly on the popish doctrine of the MERIT of works. "There can be no doubt," says he, "but that to break a vow is contrary to the laws of God. We must observe, however, that ONLY such vows can be meant, as are lawful. Now there is neither in Scripture, nor in the history of the primitive church, any precept or example in favour of monastic vows: they are restraints of mere human invention.

"In regard to works, evangelical faith does not set them aside, but directs us not to put our trust in them: It enlightens the conscience, and teaches men the principle on which they are to perform good works; namely, from a real love of doing good to our neighbour, and for the sake of keeping the body in subjection; not from servile fear, or a view to justification. Such works, strictly speaking, are not wrought under the covenant of the law, but of grace; they are the effect of Christ himself working in us by faith, and are therefore as necessary and indispensable as faith itself." Luth de Vot. Monast. III.

* Ep. I. 253.

† Luth. Op. Jen. II. 477.

‡ Amen. Lit. IV. 427.

* Comment. de Luth. clxxviii.

† See page 325 of this Vol. Luther him-

did not venture on this bold step till Luther himself had set him the example a few months before.

Luther was about forty years old when he married Catharine Bore, a virtuous nun of noble parentage. It is astonishing how his enemies exulted upon this occasion. They not only condemned the conduct of them both, with as much confidence as if they could allege that Scripture authority for the monastic state, which Protestants can do for the matrimonial, but represented Luther as an infamous, hardened sensualist, who had neither command of his passions, nor regard for his reputation; and his wife as an abandoned strumpet, who had lived in the most licentious manner for more than two years among the young academies.—These foolish and wicked accusations are effectually refuted by history, which does abundant justice to the moral character of both the parties.

But several of the very best friends of Luther did not think his marriage well timed.* Justus Jonas was so affected with the idea that the Reformation would suffer materially by this event, that he burst into tears the first time he saw his friend in the character of a husband. So he writes to Spalatinus, and adds, “I pray God to bless him abundantly; he is the best and sincerest of men, and our most inestimable father in the Lord.”† Melancthon also was aware that the Reformer’s conduct, in this instance, would probably give rise to much profane and ill-natured criticism; and that he would be represented as a man of no feeling, now that Saxony was in tears for the loss of Frederic the Wise, and all Germany covered with the slain in the Rustic war.—“But the taunts and revilings of irreligious men,” he said, “were to be disregarded.—The man had done nothing that was reprehensible. He was of a lively, social, generous turn of mind, and by nature itself formed for the married state; no wonder, therefore, that he had given way to his innocent inclinations: for as to certain slanderous reports which were in circulation, it was well known that the whole was unfounded calumny.” Melancthon then adds, “that though even an opinion of some degree of indiscretion in Luther should prevail, it might

have its uses, because an exceedingly high reputation was always a very dangerous thing.” However, upon observing that his friend’s change of situation had produced in him some unusual marks of gloom and discomposure, he said he omitted no endeavour to console him. Moreover, granting him to have fallen into an error, that circumstance ought not in the least to affect his doctrine. But, he repeated, there was no room for accusation; for he was in possession of the most decisive proofs of his piety and love of God.*

Compare these judicious and Christian reflections with the malignant, sarcastic credulity of Erasmus, who acquainted the president of the court of Holland, that “the Lutheran tragedy would end, like the quarrels of princes, in matrimony. A monk has married a nun; and that you may know this marriage was contracted under happy auspices, the lady was brought to bed about fourteen days after the bridal song had been chanted. Now Luther begins to be more mild, and not to write with his accustomed violence. There is nothing which a wife cannot tame.” To another person he owned afterwards, that this scandalous report was without foundation; and added, in his usual jocosé and sarcastic style, that Luther’s wife was now said to be pregnant; but that, in regard to the vulgar notion concerning the birth of Antichrist from the connexion of a monk and a nun, if that were true, the world had at this present time many thousand Antichrists.

After all, Luther’s own observations on his marriage are the most satisfactory.

In November 1524, he declares he had then no intention to marry; not that he was either a stone or a log of wood, but because, on account of the reproach of heresy under which he laboured, he expected every day might be his last.† In the May succeeding, for the first time, as far as is known, he expressed his resolution to marry Catharine Bore.‡ On the seventeenth of June he writes thus to his friend Stifelius, a clergyman: “Pray for me, that God may bless and sanctify to me this new mode of life. Some of our wise ones are exceedingly irritated.

* Scult. 275.

† Amœnitat. IV. 424.

* July 21, 1525, to Joach. Gæmer. IV. 24.

† Ep. II. 245.

‡ Scck. II. 17.

Luther’s account of his marriage.

They are however compelled to own that marriage is a divine ordinance; but the character* of me and my Catharine is the bug-bear that frightens them out of their senses, and makes them both think and talk profanely. But the Lord lives, and is on my side. He is my helper, and I will not fear what man can do."† The marriage had taken place four days before the date of this letter, and he gives several reasons for the hastiness of the measure.‡

1. I have now, says he, stopped the mouths of the calumniators of me and Catharine Bore. You, my Spalatinus, must not only be present at the wedding-dinner, but also endeavour to procure us some venison. Pray that God may bless us. In the opinion of some, I have made myself contemptible; but nevertheless, I trust, angels smile, and demons weep, at what I have done. How inconsistent are these over-wise men, to call that impious and diabolical in me, which in every one else they allow to be a pious and sacred action!—Wittemb. June 16, 1525.

2. Providence, in a wonderful manner, and when I was thinking of other things, has suddenly joined me in marriage to C. Bore.—June 20.

3. I could not deny my father's earnest request. He is anxious that I should have children. Besides, I judged it right to confirm, by my own example, the doctrine I have taught; for I observe many are still pusillanimous, notwithstanding this great light of the Gospel. I do not pretend to be violently in love, but I have a sincere affection and esteem for my wife. On Tuesday next my parents will be present at the wedding-dinner, and I do entreat you by all means to come. The poor peasants are cut to pieces in every quarter. It is reported that the duke George is so inflated with the successes against them, that he intends to demand my person to be given up, conceiving me of the same stamp with Munzer. Christ will defend me.§

4. On the twenty-ninth of the succeeding September, he writes thus to the same Stifelius: "If it was really agreeable to the will of God that I should marry, what wonder is it that my con-

duct should not harmonize with carnal views and sentiments? If the world were not offended with me, I should have reason to suspect I had not supported the Christian character. Worldly men were offended even with God manifested in the flesh. Our two princes confess and support the Gospel openly.* We have resigned the revenues of the monastery to the elector: I live in it as a private master of a family, while God permits. I conjecture my life will be short, now that I see not only the princes in general, but the people also are enraged against me.† It was therefore by no means in the expectation of a long life that I entered into the married state; but, on the contrary, as I may be taken off suddenly, and as my doctrine respecting the lawfulness of the marriage of the clergy may possibly be treated with contempt after my death, I was desirous of showing my weaker brethren that I acted up to my principles."‡

5. Lastly, in the latter part of the succeeding year he writes thus: "God of his great goodness hath blessed me with a fine healthy little Luther; and my rib Kate is also in excellent plight, and is in all things courteous and obliging to me, much beyond what I could have ventured to hope. I am thankful to God, and would not change my poverty for the riches of Croesus."§

There are but two points respecting the marriage of Luther, which can at all interest the Protestant reader. Firstly, What were his own reflections near the time of that event, both before and after? and 2dly, What effects did it produce on the minds of his most sincere friends? for, in regard to his enemies, their slander and misrepresentations were to be expected, and no further notice needs be taken of them. It was with a view to satisfy these two points, that we have been so minute in this part of the narrative, and marked the dates of the letters with so much precision. Beausobre represents Luther, when he came to reflect coolly on the step he had taken, as repentant, afflicted, excessively low spirited, and even deeply melancholic.¶ But

* The new elector John, and his son.

† He means the rustic malecontents, who were highly displeas'd because he declared himself so strongly against their rebellious spirit.

‡ Ep. II. p. 300.

§ To Stifel. p. 318.

|| Vol. II.

* One a Monk, and the other a Nun.

† Ep. II. 294. ‡ June 13, Amœn. Lit.

§ To Amsdorf, June 21, p. 295.

the attentive student, having now before him sufficient materials to form his own judgment, will consider whether this colouring is not a great deal too high and unwarranted. Scultetus's statement appears to me both much more candid, and much more agreeable to the facts, when he says; "Luther, on account of his unexpected change of situation, and the various sentiments of mankind, was in some degree discomposed; however, as soon as he had collected himself he wrote to Stifelius, 'Pray for me,'" &c. See above, page 430. Now this letter, as I have observed, was written only four days after the day of his marriage, so that he was not very long in collecting himself. Further, not one syllable appears to have dropped from Luther himself, to excite a suspicion that he repented of his marriage, or was low spirited afterwards.* On the contrary, a good conscience, confidence in Providence, and resignation to the Divine will, characterize all his letters written upon this subject, without a single exception; and moreover, they are all expressed with his accustomed vigour and precision: yet who sees not that all this may have been perfectly consistent with an unusual degree of thoughtfulness for some time, and even of uneasiness and discomposure in his general deportment, upon so important a change of life? And this, we have seen, is allowed by Melancthon, and also by Scultetus, resting on his authority.

That several of Luther's good friends were exceedingly alarmed for the consequences, is, however, not to be denied. Justus Jonas, we have seen, wept upon the occasion; and Doctor Scurfius is said to have declared, that if this monk married, he would thereby undo all he had done, and that the WORLD and the DEVIL would be pleased. Luther, on hearing this speech, concluded directly otherwise, namely, that as the action was lawful and right, his marriage would infallibly vex BOTH.† Melancthon, also, there is no doubt, is to be reckoned among those who were deeply affected on this occasion;‡ and Beausobre thinks, it was because Luther had too great an opinion of the prudence of his friend, that he did not trust to him his secret intention to

marry. Luther's own intimations are to me more satisfactory. From these I collect, that one reason both for his haste and his secrecy was, that he might be joined in matrimony, as he says, with Catharine, BEFORE HE SHOULD BE COMPELLED TO HEAR A TUMULT OF VOCIFEROUS OPPOSITION.* Moreover, being perfectly aware of the natural timidity of Melancthon's disposition, he did not invite him to supper on the evening of his marriage; and I entirely agree with the acute author of the Commentary on Lutheranism, that the omission appears to have given some degree of temporary offence. But Melancthon loved Luther too well to harbour long the slightest alienation of mind. Accordingly, on the fourth day after the marriage, we find Mⁿ. writing in the best possible humour to a DISTANT clergyman, W. Lincus, thus: "Doctor Martin is married. May this prove a happy event! He would have invited you to the marriage-dinner, but he feared to put you to expense. By our friendship I do entreat you to come. It will afford more ample matter for Doctor Scurfius's declamation."‡

On the whole, there is the fullest evidence, that, of all his coadjutors in the business of Reformation, Luther himself was the slowest to admit the lawfulness of the marriage of monks. In the year 1521 he expresses his surprise "that his Wittemberg friends now carry the matter so far as to allow even monks to marry. However, says he, they shall not force a wife upon ME."‡ And during the same year he discusses the question of celibacy, in long letters with Melancthon, to this effect; "What then, am I also at liberty to marry? Am I no longer a monk? It should seem that because I supplied you with a wife, you wish to take revenge upon me; but depend upon it, I will take effectual care not to be caught in your snares."

All his doubts, however, on this subject were completely done away in a very short time after, and he gave his sentiments to the public without reserve.§ Lastly, having thus attained true Scriptural views of the nature of Christian liberty, when the proper moment for his

* He lived twenty years with her in the greatest harmony. See. II. 18.

† See. 17.

‡ Vita Melan. Camer.

* Letter to Amsdorf, 295.

† Amœn. Lit. IV. 425. This clergyman had also been an Augustine monk, and married a wife. See. 214.

‡ Ep. II. 240. to Spalat. § See page 428.

own marriage, as he thought, arrived, he acted according to those views without hesitation, under the full conviction that he was doing right, and in confident expectation of the Divine blessing. In all this there is no inconsistency in Luther. Still, the soundness of his discretion is called in question, for marrying a wife at the melancholy conjuncture of affairs in Germany, the Rustic civil war being scarcely over, and Frederic the Wise lately dead. Those, however, will acquit him of all blame, who think with Seekendorf, "That in time of war, or on the decease of princes, men are not bound, either by law or reason, to abstain from matrimonial contracts."

If censure on these accounts had been any where due, one might wonder that it should not have fallen on so celebrated a reformer as Spalatinus himself, who lived many years with Frederic, as his domestic chaplain and private secretary. Spalatinus not only actually married his wife a few months after the elector's death, but even solicited that prince's leave, during his last illness, to marry and to leave his court; and it does not appear that he thereby gave any offence to his master, or acted inconsistently with the prevalent maxims of the times. I cannot but observe, that the sentiments of the several actors in these scenes would have been better understood, if the dates of their private letters had been more attentively considered by historians, and some expressions contained in them interpreted more agreeably to the meaning of the originals. Melanethon's letter to Camerarius is in Greek; those of Luther, Spalatinus, and the rest, are in Latin.

It is to me utterly unaccountable that Beausobre should positively affirm that Spalatinus and Melanethon married in the year 1524;* whereas all the accounts agree that the former was married at Altenburg in November 1525,† and the latter so early as the year 1520.‡ Luther, in a letter written in 1522, mentions the birth of Hannah, whom he calls the elegant daughter of Philip;§ and Camerarius his biographer informs us,

that Melanethon, not long after the Leipsic disputation, married a very reputable virgin of an ancient family in the city of Wittemberg, and lived with her for thirty-seven years.* In fact, the marriage took place on the 25th of November 1520, and appears to have been brought about by the interference and advice of Luther.†

CONTROVERSY WITH ERASMUS.

EVERY student of the history of the Reformation finds both instruction and amusement in observing the conduct of Erasmus. On his merits, as a restorer of learning, though it is scarcely possible to express ourselves too strongly, we need say no more. His well-earned honours in that respect are beyond the reach either of calumny or envy. It is the purity of his Christian principles, and the integrity and conscientiousness of his motives, which are called in question. His writings against monks and friars are allowed to have been of considerable service in abating the attachment of mankind to popery; yet a most excellent judge‡ has not scrupled to affirm, that, through an excessive desire to be applauded for politeness, elegance, and moderation, no man had injured the cause of Luther so much as Erasmus. In fact, Erasmus himself boasts of his services in this respect to the Romish cause, and intimates how ill he had been requited.§ The real character of this great man may be better known by a judicious selection of a few extracts from his own writings, than the numerous and contradictory accounts of his enemies and his advocates. Several passages, conducive to this purpose, will, I trust, be found in different parts of this History.

The weak side of Erasmus was his disposition at all times to court the favour of persons of rank and distinction; and it was through their incessant importunities that he was at length prevailed on, though with much reluctance, to enter the lists against Luther. The papal advocates who had hitherto appeared in the controversy had done their own cause no good. The reformers were growing

* III. 136.

† Amœn. Lit. IV. 427. Sec. I. 22. 314. II. 30.

‡ S. 44.

§ Ep. II. 92.

* P. 36.

† Melch. Ad. Vit. Mel. Ep. Luth. I. 278. II. 7.

‡ Seck. 201.

§ Ep. Sylv. Prier. et Georg. Duc. Sax.

more bold and numerous every day. The ancient hierarchy was shaken to its very foundations; and it was become sufficiently manifest, that neither ecclesiastical menaces, nor ecclesiastical punishments, could retard the progress of the new doctrines. The wisest and most moderate of the Roman catholics saw plainly that the church had lost much of its credit with the people in general, and that nothing could materially serve their cause, but what tended to regain the PUBLIC OPINION. For the purpose of compassing so important an end, they all, to a man, fixed their eyes on Erasmus. Not very anxious respecting his private sentiments in religion, they were fully convinced of his qualifications for the task they wished him to undertake. An extensive erudition, a perspicuous and eloquent style, and especially an exquisite vein of sarcastic humour, marked this celebrated scholar as the proper champion to engage Luther. Accordingly, neither pains nor artifice were spared to secure his services. Princes, and prelates, and cardinals, and even the pope himself, were most assiduous in touching those strings, the vibrations of which they judged most likely to gratify his pride, stimulate his ambition, and awaken his natural timidity. King Henry VIII. of England is known to have entreated him to commence active hostilities against Luther; and the pope Adrian himself, in two memorable epistles, condescended to act the same suppliant part. The consummate address, artful flatteries, and lavish praises, used by the pontiff on this occasion, do but little accord with that reputation which some would allow him, for simplicity of manners, and ignorance of mankind.* The duke George of Saxony, agreeably to that sincerity and openness, which were indeed parts of his character as well as his violence and bigotry, exhorted Erasmus to take up his pen, and come forward as quickly as possible, and attack Luther openly; or, he said, there would be a general outcry against him, as one who had neglected his duty, and neither cared for the dignity of the church, nor the purity of the Gospel. "He ought to have done this several years ago; when he might very easily have extinguished the little flame, which had since increased to an immense con-

flagration. Whereas the little skirmishes which he had had with the heretic never looked like serious fighting; and the consequence had been, that many persons considered him as in reality of the same sentiments with the man whom he treated with so much lenity and forbearance."* Erasmus, in his answer to the duke, said he had hitherto not yielded to his highness's solicitations, for two reasons: 1. Both his age and his disposition forbade him to engage in so very dangerous a business. He had really a sort of instinctive aversion to religious controversies. 2. He had considered Luther's doctrine, whatever it might be, as a species of "necessary evil, from which he had hoped that, in the present very corrupt state of the church, some good might arise. He had never had the smallest connexion with him, but could not bear that his own moderation should be at last construed into a dishonourable collusion. He therefore at length came forward into the field. Both the king of England, and pope Clement VII. had urged him to take this step."†

Erasmus had sent to this pope his Paraphrase on the Acts of the Apostles; and, at the same time, expressed his inviolable attachment to the Roman See, and boasted of having refused the most pressing solicitations, even of great princes, to join Luther.‡ Clement, in return, made him most magnificent promises, and gave him two hundred florins, which Erasmus declares he would not have accepted, unless the pope had particularly specified that the money was merely an acknowledgment for the book.§ Cardinal Campeggio also, in three flattering epistles, had requested to have a conference with him at Nuremberg, and afterwards sent express messengers to Basil to receive his advice.|| Nothing could be more grateful to Erasmus, than to be thus looked up to by persons in high stations. Princes, he tells us, from all quarters, exhorted him to write against Luther. He sent a trusty servant to England, for the purpose of removing a suspicion, which had been injected into the mind of Henry VIII. that he had assisted Luther in his reply to the king; and he expresses great satisfaction that this step had been

* Ep. 800. † Ep. 813. 743.

‡ Ep. Clement. 783. § Ep. Pirck. 803.

|| Ep. Pirck. 794. 803.

* Append. Adrian to Erasmus.

attended with much success. His servant was rewarded; his old friends were increased and confirmed in their affections: also Henry and Cardinal Wolsey had even condescended to make their apologies to him.* In fact, Henry VIII. had solicited him to take the field against Luther in such strong terms, that early in the year 1523 we find Erasmus declaring he could no longer refuse compliance without absolutely affronting that monarch.† Accordingly, in the September of the same year, he wrote to the King, "I am meditating something against the novel doctrines, but I dare not publish it before I leave Germany, lest I should fall a victim before I appear in the contest."‡

But of all the bigots who importuned Erasmus to commence an attack on the German Reformer, none was more violent, or used more acrimonious or unchristian language, than Tonstall, Bishop of London. Luther's treatise on the abolition of the Mass seems to have particularly offended this angry prelate. He asks, "What can the heretic do more, unless he means to abolish Christ himself, as indeed I hear the Divine Virgin is rejected by his followers?" He then proceeds, "By the sufferings and blood of Christ, by the glory which you hope for in heaven, I exhort and conjure you, Erasmus, nay, the Church entreats and conjures you, to encounter this many-headed monster! You are now advanced in years, and, I pray, how can you conclude your life better than in driving back into his den, by the sword of the Spirit, this Cerberus, who by his dismal barking so insults all the ecclesiastical orders?"§

These and similar multiplied and reiterated importunities, to which we may probably add the fear of losing the pension which he received from England,|| at length determined Erasmus to become an open adversary of the Reformers.

* Ep. 1860.

‡ Ep. 773.

|| Seck. 309.

† Ep. 744.

§ Ep. 772.

CONTINUATION OF THE CONTROVERSY WITH ERASMUS.

1. THE DIATRIBE.
2. LUTHER'S TREATISE DE SERVO ARBITRIO.
3. SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS USED IN THE CONTROVERSY.
4. FURTHER ACCOUNT OF THE SAME CONTROVERSY.
5. LUTHER'S ARGUMENTS FROM ST. PAUL AND ST. JOHN.
6. THE REPLY OF ERASMUS. HYPERASPISTES.
7. SCEPTICISM OF ERASMUS.
8. ORTHODOXY OF LUTHER COMPARED WITH THE SCEPTICISM OF ERASMUS.
9. MELANCTHON'S JUDGMENT OF THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN LUTHER AND ERASMUS.
10. HOSTILITY OF ERASMUS: HIS APOLOGIES.
11. INCONSISTENCY AND LEVITY OF ERASMUS.

1. THE DIATRIBE.

IN the autumn of 1524, this elegant scholar published his dissertation, called *Diatribes*, on the Freedom of the Will; having first sent a part of the manuscript to Henry VIII. for the approbation of that prince, who always pretended to a considerable degree of theological acumen. Perhaps the author hoped by this flattering attention to induce Henry to engage for the expenses of the publication; as he took care to inform his majesty, that no printer at Basil would dare to undertake his or any work which contained a word against Luther, and that therefore he must print the book somewhere else. "We may, however," said he, "write what we please against the pope. Such is the present state of Germany."*

In editing his treatise on Free Will, Erasmus appears to have valued himself very much upon his courage, and to have expected mighty consequences from the publication. "The little book," says he, "is out; and though written with the greatest moderation, will, if I mistake not, excite most prodigious commotions. Already pamphlets fly at my head."† Again, "The die is cast: my little book on Free Will is published: a bold deed, believe me, if the situation of Germany at this time be considered:

* Ep. 774. Jortin, 322.

† To Tonstall, 813.

I expect to be pelted, but I will console myself with the example of your majesty, who has not escaped their outrages."* Very much in the same style he expresses himself to Cardinal Wolsey, and adds, "I have not chosen to dedicate this work to any one, lest my calumniators should instantly say that in this business I had been hired to please the great: otherwise I should have inscribed it to you, or the pope."†

The reader, whose expectations may have been raised by all this ostentatious parade, will be greatly disappointed on the perusal of the Diatribe of Erasmus. It is evidently the production of one who has scoured the surface of his question, but by no means penetrated into its substance. The author affects much moderation, and would persuade us that he scarcely undertakes to decide: he pretends only to CONFER, or to INQUIRE. An experienced disputant, however, soon perceives, that, under a garb of modesty and diffidence, there is in this performance a firm attachment in some degree at least to the Pelagian tenets.‡ Close reasoning was not the province of Erasmus, and he constantly betrays a consciousness of being out of his element. He uses plenty of inconclusive argument, but is nevertheless abundantly positive.

The ablest defenders of the FREEDOM of the Will have owned their entire inability to reconcile the prescience of the Deity with the contingency of human actions, or the responsibility of created intelligent beings; but Erasmus, like a true controversialist who conceived it his chief business to conquer, chooses rather to have recourse to scholastic subtleties and distinctions, than candidly to acknowledge his ignorance in a matter which has hitherto exceeded the skill of philosophy.

In reading the Diatribe, persons will be affected differently, accordingly to

circumstances. Those who have not made this contentious question their study, may be pleased with the writer's elegant flow of classical Latinity; but if they are of a religious turn of mind, they will be puzzled and confounded as to the grand points in debate, rather than materially enlightened or consoled. Those who have well digested the arguments on both sides, and are aware of the respective difficulties, and know precisely where in this business all human reasoning and research ought to stop, will be convinced how ill-qualified Erasmus was to elucidate difficulties respecting the volitions of the human mind, especially theological difficulties. These they will find neither cleared up in the Diatribe, which indeed may be impossible in some instances, nor yet distinctly stated, which is the next thing to be aimed at, and is always possible.

No man that ever lived, perhaps, was less disposed than Martin Luther to temporize with his adversaries in essential points; yet in the instance of Erasmus, it is admitted that he exercised extraordinary patience and forbearance. The reason is, Erasmus, by his writings against monks and friars, had been of considerable service in abating the attachment of mankind to popery. Moreover, he was one of the first literary characters in the world, and well deserves the thanks of all who have a relish for classical learning. No wonder therefore Luther, in the great business of the Reformation, should have been anxious to prevent so much weight from being placed in the opposite scale. But Erasmus grew every day more and more out of humour with the Lutherans. He had repeatedly declared that the Church wanted reformation, but would never run any risk to forward the good cause. Hence the reformers became cold in their regards for him; and he, in return, beheld with pique and jealousy the rapid progress of the new system. Mutual abuse and accusation was the unavoidable consequence of this state of things. By some, Erasmus was libelled as a deserter of the faith, and a parasite, who paid his court to popes, prelates, and cardinals, and might be hired for a morsel of bread, to any purpose.* This was enough to raise the indignation of a man who had been accustomed all his life to

* To Henry VIII. 816.

† To Wolsey, 809.

‡ The learned reader will be aware, that besides Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, strictly so called, there are also numerous shades of distinction included under the term Pelagian. However, with all these sectaries it seems indispensable to deny the Scriptural doctrine of the natural depravity of man, and the Calvinistic sentiment of irresistible grace,

* Ep. 805.

receive commendations and flatteries. The angry scholar took up his pen to chastise the Lutherans, and ceased to be on good terms with them any longer. "They were men of a seditious turn of mind;* some of them neither feared God nor man, insomuch that Luther and Melancthon themselves had judged it necessary to write against them."† In the Lutheran faction, said Erasmus, there were persons who were actuated by a spirit widely different from that of the Gospel.‡ Men, who stood prepared for every mischief, represented him as timid, because he acted conscientiously. Could he but see Evangelical fruit, he would soon convince them he was no coward.§

For a long time, however, the hostility of Erasmus was confined within the bounds of his epistolary correspondence. But circumstances were every day arising to exasperate the contention, and widen the breach between him and the reformers. Ulric Hutten, an intemperate admirer of Luther, published an acrimonious invective against Erasmus, which drew from him a little tract, called *Spongia*, sufficiently censorious and peevish.||

Hutten had taken the liberty of blaming Erasmus for paying too much regard to the court of Rome. This was a very tender point; and the more provoking, first, because the fact was undeniable; and, secondly, because the Romish faction really disliked him almost as much as they did Luther;¶ notwithstanding that the ecclesiastical dignitaries gave him good words and fair promises, for the purpose of persuading him to take a decided part against the great Saxon Reformer.**

The sagacity of Luther pointed out to him distinctly the situation of the mind

* Id. 781.

† Id. 792.

‡ Id. 805.

§ Id. 845.

|| Erasmus, however, boasts of his lenity towards Hutten, and says he had passed over his scandalous conduct; that he had been a spendthrift, a gamster, and a fornicator, and had extorted money from the Carthusians; that he had attacked some ecclesiastics, and killed some monks. *Catal. Lucub.*

¶ Erasmus represents the divines as hating literature, and as accusing him of heresy. *Ep.* 803. He says, he did not much care for the abuse of the Lutherans, but to be pelted on both sides was hard. *Id.* 826.

** *Id.* 743, 819, 820.

of Erasmus, thus puzzled and distracted by a contrariety of motives. He viewed him as a man of letters buoyed up with the love of praise and the patronage of the great; also, as flattered and caressed by popes and prelates, and supposed peculiarly qualified to support a falling church. Moreover, he was aware how Erasmus, by trimming artfully between the two parties, had lost the confidence and friendship of both; and how, in his present state of irritation, he was disposed to do service to the Romanists, and regain their favour. He was sincerely sorry, therefore, that he had been so roughly treated by Hutten, and other advocates of the Reformation. He would gladly have prevented him from becoming an open enemy, as he had long despaired of ever seeing him a decided friend of pure Christianity. Reflecting on these circumstances, and hearing that Erasmus was about to publish his *Diatriba*, or some other inimical piece, Luther, in the almost forlorn hope of persuading him to peace and silence, determined however to make his last effort. For this purpose, he composed a memorable letter, quite in his own best style, clear, nervous, and ingenuous, and full of life, and fire, and spirit, and sent it to his classical adversary.* It is a specimen of epistolary writing in perfect contrast to the manner of Erasmus, and must have vexed him not a little. To have been told, that the "affairs of the Reformers were now advanced to such a point that their cause was in no peril, even though Erasmus should attack it with all his might," must have been peculiarly galling to his pride: yet the writer mixed so many handsome and just compliments with his animadversions, that Erasmus was constrained to allow, that Martin Luther had written him a letter sufficiently civil, but that, for fear of his calumniators, he did not dare to answer him with equal civility.†

But whatever might be the secret inclination of Erasmus, or whatever might have been his wish in other circumstances, he was now too deeply pledged, by numerous declarations and promises, to think of retracting his design of appearing in the field against Luther.

* See Appendix, Luther's Letter to Erasmus in 1524. Also *Ep.* 846.

† *Ep.* 803.

Luther writes to Erasmus.

He answered Luther briefly to this effect: I cannot admit you to have more Evangelical sincerity than myself, and I trust I do more to promote the Gospel than many who boast of being evangelical. I fear Satan may delude you; at least, I doubt the truth of your doctrines; and I would never profess what I do not believe, much less what I have not attained. Besides, I dread the ruin of literature.

As yet I have not written a syllable against you: otherwise I might have secured much applause from the great: but I saw I should injure the Gospel. I have only endeavoured to do away the idea that there is a perfect understanding between you and me, and that all your doctrines are to be found in my books. Pains have been taken to instil this sentiment into the minds of the princes, and it is hard even now to convince them it is not so.—Whatever you may write against me gives me no great concern. In a worldly view, nothing could do me more service. But it is my desire to surrender, with a good conscience, my soul to Christ; and I would that all were so affected. You profess yourself ready to give an account of the faith that is in you; why then do you take it amiss that any one, with a view to learn, should undertake to debate some points with you? Perhaps Erasmus, by writing against you, may do more good to the cause of the Gospel than some foolish scribblers of your own party, who will not suffer a man to be a quiet spectator of these contentions,—the tragical issue of which I do dread.*

It was the authority of Erasmus, and not his arguments, which determined Luther to publish an answer to the Diatribe. "I will answer him," says he, "for the sake of those, who, with a view to their own glory in opposition to Christ, make a bad use of his authority."† And again, "my dislike of the book is beyond all belief; and it is a pain to me to answer so learned a book, composed by so learned an author."‡

* MS. Archiv. 310. S.

† Nic. Hausman, II. 243.

‡ The words are: "Respondere tam erudito libro tam eruditi viri." Jortin thinks it should be *in*erudito libro. But I see no reason for suspecting an error in the text. The Diatribe is sufficiently learned, if by 'learn-

2. LUTHER'S TREATISE DE SERVO ARBITRIO.

LUTHER'S Reply did not make its appearance till more than a year after the publication of Erasmus. It is intitled, *On the Bondage of the Will*. The papal advocate Cocklæus* would intimate that Luther was induced to answer Erasmus, chiefly because Emser and himself had translated the Diatribe into the German language. But whoever peruses the elaborate work *De Servo Arbitrio*, and reflects on the author's numerous employments, will have no difficulty in accounting for the delay that took place. That he formed the design of confuting the Diatribe very soon after he had read it, appears from his letters to private friends. This tract was not published till the 1st or 2d of September, 1524: † and about the end of the same month he says, "I am entirely taken up with Erasmus and his Free Will; and I shall do my best to prove him wrong throughout, as is truly the case."‡ And in the succeeding October he says to another friend, "Go on with your labours, my Nicholas, and exercise all the patience you can: at present I am wholly employed in confuting Erasmus."§ But afterwards we find him interrupted by the affairs of Carolstadt, and resolving to postpone his answer to Erasmus till he should have done with that turbulent reformer.||

The Diatribe was published, A. D. 1524.

At length, towards the end of 1525, ¶ came out Luther's celebrated treatise *De Servo Arbitrio*, which provoked Erasmus the more, as it was in some measure unexpected. The work was received with avidity. The booksellers of Wittemberg, Augsborg, and Nuremberg, strove who could produce their numerous editions the fastest:

Luther's Answer was published, A. D. 1525.

ing' we understand an acquaintance with numerous writers of repute. But the extensiveness of Erasmus's reading, and the rapidity of his glances, very often did not allow him to think and digest.

Moreover, I find it is ERUDITO not only in Seckendorf's extract, but also in the original itself by Aurifaber,—a book exceedingly scarce, and which Jortin probably never saw. II. 238.

* Acta Luth. † Ep. Eras. 809 and 810,

‡ Georg. Spal. 299. § Nic. Haus. 300,

|| Amsdorfio, II. 270,

¶ December, T. III. 165. Jena.

and in regard to the merits of the composition, it may not be improper to observe, that Luther himself, many years afterwards, had so good an opinion of it, as to declare, that he could not review any one of his writings with complete satisfaction, unless perhaps his Catechism, and his Bondage of the Will.* The following address to Erasmus was printed by Luther, and placed as a sort of preface to this same treatise on the Bondage of the Will.

“Venerable Erasmus,

“Everybody wonders that Luther, contrary to his usual practice and the general expectation, should have been so long in replying to your Diatribe. How is it, say they, that a man, who hitherto has appeared rather to seek than to decline public discussions of this sort, should at once exhibit so much patience and forbearance? Or is fear the cause of his silence? for certainly his enemies triumph. They congratulate Erasmus on having gained a victory; and they ask with an air of insult, What, has this Maccabæus, this sturdy dogmatist, at last found an antagonist against whom he dare not open his mouth?

“The palm of genius and eloquence all concede to you;—much more therefore I, who am but a perfect barbarian, and have always been conversant with rude scenes. I confess further, you have broken my spirit, and made me languish before the battle: and this for two reasons:

“1. You have managed your opposition to me with so much astonishing art and steady moderation, that I find it impossible to be angry with you.

“2. By what fate or fortune it has happened I know not, but certainly you have not said one word new on this most important subject. And therefore it may seem superfluous for me now to tread again the same ground which I have so often gone over before; especially as P. Melancthon, in his invincible theological tracts, has trampled upon and absolutely ground to powder every argument you have produced. To be plain, your book,

in my judgment, suffers so exceedingly on being compared with his, that I am much grieved for yourself, that you should pollute your most beautiful and ingenious language with such sordid sentiments: and again, I feel most indignant to see such contemptible materials conveyed in the most precious and ornamental pieces of eloquence. They are like the filth of a dunghill placed in golden dishes. Your extreme backwardness to appear in this contest convinces me that you yourself were aware of this, and that conscience suggested to you, that whatever might be the force of your eloquence, it would be impossible for you so to disguise your notions, that I should not discover their vanity through every false colouring. I pretend to no eloquence; but, by the grace of God, I trust I have a little knowledge of the subject; and there you are deficient, notwithstanding your great capacity and extraordinary powers of language.

“In this business I have been inclined to reason thus: Our side of the question is so fortified by Scripture, that those who can be shaken by the trifling objections of Erasmus, however elegantly expressed, do not deserve that on their account I should write an answer to the Diatribe. Thousands upon thousands of books will do such persons no good. Enough has been done, by my friends and myself, for those who take the Spirit for their guide; and in regard to those who are not led by the Spirit, it is no wonder if they are shaken by every breath of wind. Wherefore I had almost resolved to be silent; not on account of my numerous engagements, nor the difficulty of the thing, nor yet through the dread of Erasmus and his prodigious eloquence, but most sincerely from the low estimation in which I hold the Diatribe,—not to mention, what is so characteristic of Erasmus, your excessive versatility in it throughout. You exceed Ulysses in caution: one while you affirm nothing, at another time you assume an air of positiveness: It is impossible to arrive at any distinct and satisfactory issue with such men,—unless indeed one had the art of catching Proteus.

“However, my faithful brethren in Christ Jesus, do now suggest a reason why I ought to answer you; and there is some weight in it. They tell me a reply is, in general, expected from me; they say, Erasmus’s authority is not to be de-

* At Strasburg there is said to be a MS. letter to Fabricius Capito in 1537, in which Luther expresses this opinion of his Catechism and his Bondage of the Will. Scultet. 34. And Sturmius tells us he himself has seen the letter. Melch. Ad. p. 82, fol. Vit. Luth.

spised, and that the faith of several is shaken. Therefore I am disposed to own, at length, that I may have carried my silence too far; that I may have been influenced too much by carnal reasonings, and not have sufficiently kept in mind that duty by which I am debtor both to the wise and to the unwise.

“For, though true religion does not rely on merely external means, but, besides him who plants and waters, requires the Spirit to give the increase; yet, because the Spirit is free, and in no wise dependent on our wills, the rule of St. Paul should ever be observed, ‘Be instant in season and out of season.’ ‘We know not at what hour our Lord will come.’ Be it so, that there are some who in reading my writings have not as yet been led by the Spirit; be it so, that the Diatribe has gained possession of their minds: what does all this prove, except that their hour may not yet be come? And who knows, my excellent Erasmus, but God may be pleased, through the means of such a poor wretched vessel as myself, to visit you?—and I do from my heart beseech the Father of mercies, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that the operation of this little book may be such, that I may thereby gain you as a most dear brother to the cause.

“In conclusion, permit me, my Erasmus, to request you to excuse my defects in eloquence; as, on the other hand, I have to bear with your want of information in this particular instance. God does not bestow all his gifts on one person.”

The controversy between these great men is the same which has appeared in various ages of the Church, and even in our own times. The doctrine maintained by Luther cannot, I think, be comprehended and expressed in fewer or clearer words, than in those of our own Church; namely, that, as fallen creatures, “We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.”* This humiliating sentiment was peculiarly offensive to Erasmus; and so it must ever prove to the pride of every human heart, which is not yet brought, through a sense of its unworthiness, to

deep contrition and penitence at the cross of the Saviour.

Erasmus had observed, that he could not but give some weight to the authority of numerous learned men, whose judgment had been confirmed by the consent of ages. Among these, he said, were excellent divines and holy martyrs, and many who had wrought miracles. Then, among the modern theologians, and universities, and councils, and bishops, and popes, what a mass of learning, genius, and goodness, all, he said, on his side of the question: and only Wickliff and Laurentius Valla against him.* To this Luther replies, “I own there is a great deal in what you say: I myself, for more than ten years, felt the force of this very argument, and more, I believe, than any person else: insomuch that I thought it impossible for this Troy to be taken. And I call God to witness with my own soul, that I should have remained to this day in the same state, had I not been compelled to yield to the force of evidence, and the pressure of my own conscience.† That Being, who knows the secrets of hearts, knows that my whole object is to magnify His grace, and in no degree to commend myself. But you would reduce me to the dilemma, either of giving up the point, or of boasting of myself, and blame the fathers. I extricate myself however at once, by owning, that I bow to your judgment in regard to learning, genius, history, and all other things, except three: and in regard to these three; namely, 1. What are the evidences of being led by the Spirit; 2. What is the right province of miracles; 3. What the nature and effects of sanctification:—as far as I know you from your writings, you are so inexperienced and uninformed, that you cannot produce from them a single syllable to the purpose. I repeat it, and press the point close,—that in all the instances on which you place so much stress, there is not one, where there is any clear proof of the operation of the Spirit, or of the existence of miracles, or of a sanctified disposition of the heart. You are not aware how much of what you say derives its credit from mere custom and common language; and how all this loses its weight the moment it is called to the bar of conscience.”

* Tenth Article of Religion.

* Diatribe, 1812, where Erasmus mentions Manichæus also.

† Luth. 436.

“Show me,” continues Luther, “any one instance of a man who, through the pure efficacy of Free Will, ever, in the smallest degree, either mortified his appetites, or forgave an injury. On the contrary, I can easily show you, that the very holy men whom you boast of as Free-willers, always in their prayers to God totally laid aside every idea of Free Will, and had recourse to nothing but grace, pure grace. So Augustine often, who is entirely on my side in this dispute: so Bernard also, who, when dying, said, ‘I have lost my time, because I have lived to bad purpose.’”

“Nevertheless, I grant that these holy men themselves would sometimes, during their disputes, hold a different language concerning the nature of Free Will. And, in general, I observe that good men, when they approach the throne of grace, forget the powers of Free Will, on which they may have written polemically; and despairing of themselves have recourse to grace alone. And though they may have exalted the natural resources of man, yet in prayer they forget all this: that is, in affection and practice they are different from what they were in disputation and argument. But who would not estimate the character both of good and bad men from the former, rather than the latter?”*

Erasmus had defined Freedom to be that power of the human will, by which a man can either apply himself to those things which lead to his eternal salvation, or turn away from them; for it would be ridiculous, he maintains, to bid a man choose, who had not the power of turning himself either one way or the other.† Luther, with as much acuteness as if he had studied Mr. Locke’s famous chapter on power,‡ replies, that as the expression, Power of the human will, means that faculty by which we choose or refuse, he does not see how this same power can act, or be used, either in the way of applying to any thing, or turning away from it, except by choosing or refusing. For if we should suppose the said power to be a sort of medium between the abstract faculty of the will and its operations, we shall find nothing is gained by such an hypothesis; nor is it possible to go one step further than

simply this, that men do choose and refuse.*

In reading the Diatribe, it is abundantly more difficult to discover the PRECISE SENTIMENTS of the author, than to perceive a steady intention to discredit the doctrines of Luther. He takes notice, that some, who differ widely from Pelagius, allow very much to the operation of grace, and scarcely anything to free will; but yet do not take it away entirely. They affirm that a man can neither begin, carry on, nor finish anything good, without the continual aid of Divine grace. This opinion, because it leaves a man the power of desiring and endeavouring, and yet takes away every ground for ascribing the effect to his own strength, Erasmus pronounces MODERATELY PROBABLE; yet he seems to think it objectionable. For he goes on to say, There are others whose opinion is MORE OBJECTIONABLE,‡ namely, who contend that the Will can do evil only, and that Grace performs all the good. These carry too far their fear of ascribing merit to good works. But the most objectionable sentiment of all is,‡ to call Free Will an empty name; and to say, it is of no avail, either before grace or after it; for that God works both the good and the evil in us, and that all things are absolutely necessary.

“You make three opinions here,” replies Luther, “when in reality, as far as I am concerned, there is but one. Perhaps, I may not have been able to express myself intelligibly to you, either in the German language, or in my indifferent Latin; but I call God to witness, that I intended the terms used in the two latter opinions, neither to convey or intimate any sentiment different from what is expressed in the first opinion.—You yourself say, that the human Will, since the fall, is so far depraved, as to have become the servant of sin, and of itself, utterly unable to amend its state:§ Then, what is Free Will, when applied to a faculty, where it is granted that all liberty is lost, and that slavery has commenced, under the service of sin, but an empty name? I believe Augustine to have been precisely of the same judgment. It is the Diatribe that is inconsistent. For if your Free Will, according to your first opi-

* Luth. 437. † Diatr. 1125.
‡ Locke, Hum. Und.

* Luth. 442. 6. † Diatr. 1224. durior.
‡ Id. durissima.
§ Diatr. 1221. Luth. 441 & 5.

nion, which you call probable, has so lost its liberty, that it cannot choose the good, I would wish to know what is the nature of those desires and endeavours, of which you speak as yet left in men's power: certainly they cannot be good desires, or good endeavours; for you admit that the Will cannot choose the good. Again, you allow that though desires and endeavours are in a man's power, yet still, there is no room for ascribing any effect to their efficacy. Now, who can comprehend such a position? If the will really possesses the powers of desire and endeavour, why are not effects, proportionate to these powers, to be ascribed to them? and if there be no effects whatever, then what proof have you that the will possesses the powers you contend for? There is no escape for Proteus here;—for if these are not monstrous contradictions, what are so?"

Beausobre undertakes to decide, without ceremony, in favour of the very great superiority of Erasmus, compared with Luther, in the articles both of BEAUTY OF STYLE, and of SOLIDITY OF JUDGMENT.* It is odd, that the Historian should make such an assertion, when this very controversy on the Will must have been present to his mind.—For though no man, in regard to beauty and elegance of style, will think of pitching Luther against Erasmus in general, yet, in this particular instance, Luther's tract *De Servo Arbitrio* is abundantly more orderly, perspicuous, and nervous, than any of Erasmus's writings on the same subject; insomuch that Erasmus himself owns it to be a work laboured with the greatest care.† Then, as to the argumentation and general management of the question, whether we think with Luther, or differ from him on the subject-matter in debate, we can scarcely read a page of his treatise, without perceiving the hand of a master conscious of his own

strength, and, at the same time, convinced of the weakness of his adversary. In fact, Luther regarded the question concerning the Will, purely as it related to religious doctrines that were near his heart; and therefore his profound knowledge of the Scriptures gave him a great advantage over Erasmus, who was a very superficial theologian, doubtful in his sentiments, and indeterminate in his expressions. Even in the metaphysical niceties, which could not be entirely avoided in the abstruse inquiry, he proved greatly his overmatch. Erasmus's extensive reading enabled him, indeed, to be diffuse and scholastic; but Luther was neither to be frightened nor overborne by quotations and authorities. He swept them away quickly, like so many cobwebs; and, by the application of a little plain good sense, pointed out what ought to be the boundaries of every attempt to investigate the nature of human liberty: and lastly, he supported his own sentiments on the question, without disguise, mystery, or ostentation.

Let us hear him briefly on the difficult subjects of Necessity, Contingence, and the Prescience of God.

"A Christian," says he, "should know that nothing is contingent in the mind of the Supreme Being, who foresees and orders all events according to his own eternal unchangeable will."—This is a thunderbolt to the notion of Free Will. For hence, all events, though to our minds contingent, are necessary and unchangeable as they respect the Divine Will. The Divine Will cannot be deceived or disappointed. Contingency implies a changeable will, such as in God does not exist.*

"Nevertheless, I wish we had a better word than NECESSITY, which is commonly made use of in this dispute. For it conveys to the understanding an idea of restraint, which is totally contrary to the act of choosing. In fact there is no restraint, either on the Divine or the human will: in both cases, the will does what it does, whether good or bad, simply, and as at perfect liberty, in the exercise of its own faculty. This unchangeableness and infallibility of God, is the ground of all our hope and confidence. If HIS will were liable to contingencies, what dependence could there be on his

* Beausob. III. 130.

† "—ingens volumen diu multoque studio, elaboratum." 923. To F. Choregat.

"—præter omnem expectationem emisit librum in me summa cura quidem elaboratum." 911. To F. Sylvius.

"—præter omnem expectationem provolans liber Lutheri—Quicquid Ecclesia Witem. potuit vel eruditione vel maledicentia, id totum in eum librum collatum est: Volumen est plusquam justæ magnitudinis." 919. To Mich. Episc.

promises? But, 'let God be true, and every man a liar.'—Your notions, my Erasmus, destroy peace of conscience, and all the comforts of the Spirit, and lead to impieties and blasphemies almost worse than anything of Epicurus.—Not that you intend all this: no; I do not believe you would teach such things designedly. But learn hence, how a man, who undertakes a bad cause, may be led on to advance most dangerous doctrines."*

"Luther proceeds thus: "So long as the operative grace of God is absent from us, everything we do has in it a mixture of evil; and therefore of necessity, our works avail not to salvation. Here I do not mean a necessity of compulsion, but a necessity as to the certainty of the event. A man who has not the Spirit of God, does evil willingly and spontaneously. He is not violently impelled, AGAINST his will, as a thief is to the gallops. But the man cannot alter his disposition to evil; nay, even though he may be externally restrained from DOING evil, he is averse to the restraint, and his inclination remains still the same. Again, when the Holy Spirit is pleased to change the will of a bad man, the new man still acts voluntarily: he is not compelled by the Spirit to determine contrary to his will, but his will itself is changed; and he cannot now do otherwise than love the good, as before he loved the evil."†

The origin of evil, however, Luther does not attempt to explain; and if Erasmus had seen the difficulties on that head as clearly as Luther did, and had been as candid in owning them, these controversialists would have found themselves much nearer agreed. Erasmus had affirmed, "that to represent God, first as causing evil in men, and secondly, as punishing them on that very account, would have the most pernicious consequences. Who would think God had any love for mankind? who would not think him a cruel Being, that took pleasure in the sufferings of the wretched; and lastly, who would take any pains to correct their vices, or subdue their passions?"‡ Luther's reply briefly amounts to this: "Wicked men will always harbour wicked and blasphemous thoughts; but pious and good men will adore the

Divine Economy, without scrutinizing into it too nicely, firmly persuaded that God only is just and wise, and never does wrong to any one; and that, whatever may be the appearance to us, there are always good reasons for what he does. We may not be able to comprehend how it is that he is just and merciful, though many perish, and few are saved; but it is our duty, nevertheless, to believe that he is so, and that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth. God does not punish the wicked, because he delights in the sufferings of the wretched, but because he has wise purposes in view, which call for their punishment. The best of men are content with this account: they pretend not to explain all the difficulties which arise on this subject; they rather repress the risings of pride and discontent, and exercise the graces of humility.

"But still I do not wonder that fallen and depraved creatures should be offended with such notions of the Supreme Being, as that he deserts men, hardens them, condemns them; and all this from the mere pleasure which he takes in the sins and the eternal punishment of the miserable. Is this the Being who is represented as so abundant in mercy and goodness? I myself have often been so offended with this view of the Almighty, as to have been brought by it to the very brink of despair, and to have wished I had never been born; till, at length, I learnt how wholesome a thing it is to despair of a man's own powers, and how near he then is to the grace of God."*

3. SCRIPTURAL ARGUMENTS USED IN THE CONTROVERSY.

In this detail, we may be very concise respecting the Scriptural arguments of the Diatribe; they are all so much alike. For example, 'I have set before you this day life and death, therefore choose life.' 'Turn ye unto me, and I will turn unto you.'† 'Whosoever desires life and good days, let him keep his tongue from evil,‡ &c. The numerous admonitions, threatenings, and promises of this sort, appear to have made a great impression on the mind of Erasmus.§ However,

* De Serv. Arb. 430.

† Ib. 434.

‡ Diat. 1217.

* Luth. 434. 461, b. & 462. and in other parts of the De Serv. Arbit.

† Zech. i. 3.

‡ Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13.

§ Diat. 1224-6.

they had all been well considered by Luther, and he had his answer at hand. "They prove nothing," says he, "as to the human powers of performance, but are merely imperative as to our duties. For, if they prove anything in regard to our powers, they prove too much; they would prove, that our wills, without the assistance of God's grace, are in a condition to keep all the Divine commandments,—a position which Erasmus will not maintain. The use of these scriptural directions and admonitions is, to teach man, who is naturally proud and blind, the nature of his disease; how miserable and impotent he is, and how completely a captive in the chains of sin. It is true, it is written, 'Turn ye to me;' but does it thence follow, that we can turn ourselves? It is written also, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart;' but will any man say, that fallen creatures can love God with all their hearts? All such passages point out what the holy law of God requires, but are no proof of our ability to perform it. The Diatribe is a little stupid, or at least rather sleepy here."*

Erasmus had owned, † that there were some passages of Scripture, which seem to take away the liberty of the will entirely; and these he had attempted to explain. In answer, Luther says, "You may here observe to what little purpose it is for a human being to raise a smoke, in opposition to the thunder and lightning of God." And then he proceeds to make great use of the ninth chapter of Romans; and, with an air of triumph, he derides the comments of Erasmus, who, after Origen and Jerome, had had recourse to tropes and figures in his interpretation of St. Paul. "Mere human reason," continues Luther, "can never comprehend how God is good and merciful; and therefore the Diatribe makes to itself a God of its own fancy, who hardens nobody, condemns nobody; pities everybody, saves everybody, takes away hell, and the fear of death and punishment. In this way would the writer excuse and defend the Almighty as just and good.

"But Faith and the Spirit judge otherwise. By them we believe God to be good, though he should visit with destruction even the whole human race.

Moreover, to what purpose do we fatigue ourselves with attempts to place the blame of a hard heart on the abuse of Free Will; when not a single instance can be brought, either where the heart was softened without the help of the Holy Spirit, or where a man obtained mercy while he trusted in his own strength?—Let us stick close to the pure, simple word of God."*

The reasonings of St. Paul, respecting the foreknowledge and predetermination of God, appear to have gravelled the author of the Diatribe more than any other arguments contained in the sacred writings.—"Thou wilt say then, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" † This interrogation is evidently grounded on the idea, that necessity takes away all human responsibility; and, further, that as the will of God is irresistible, it is unreasonable to find fault. Erasmus admits this to be a great difficulty; and the intelligent reader will think that he had better have made no attempt to solve it. "God," says he, "who knows what is to come, and has the power of preventing it, and yet does not prevent it, must be considered, in some way, as choosing that the thing should be so. And this is St. Paul's very argument: 'Who can resist his will,' either when he has mercy on, or when he hardens whom he pleases. Thus, the will of God, which is the chief cause of every event, APPEARS to fix a necessity on all human determinations. Neither does the Apostle untie the knot; but, on the contrary, he rebukes the objector. Who art thou 'who repliest against God?'—But observe, it is only the impious murmurer whom he rebukes, just as a master would rebuke a forward servant,—'What have you to do with the reasons of my orders?—see that you obey them.' Now this same master would have given a different answer to a prudent, well-meaning servant, who modestly, and with a good intention, had asked the question. It was very right that Pharaoh should perish: nevertheless, this king was not compelled by the Divine volitions to continue pertinaciously wicked. God foresaw, and in a certain sense, chose, that he should continue in sin, and should perish, for he had long ago DESERVED to suffer for his notorious

* Luth. 448.

† Diat. 1230.

* Luth. 457. & 458.

† Rom. ix.

crimes. But, I ask, at what point in a man's life DOES DESERT begin, on the supposition that there is no freedom, and that all is necessity from beginning to end?

"In the same manner," continues Erasmus, "God foreknew, and therefore in a certain sense must have chosen, that Judas should betray his Master. If you consider the prescience of God as infallible, and his will as unchangeable, it must necessarily happen, that Judas would betray his Master; and yet Judas might have changed his mind. Suppose he had changed his mind; you will say, what then? I answer, that still the Divine prescience would neither have failed, nor the Divine will have been obstructed; for, in that case, God would both have foreknown and chosen that Judas would alter his mind. The schoolmen here make a very nice distinction, between the necessity of a consequence, and a consequence in itself necessary.* They admit the former, but deny the latter." "But," says he, "it is not my design to insist on these subtilities."

It was natural that the obscure and indeterminate sentiments of Erasmus, the result of scholastic and theoretical reading, should make little impression on the mind of Luther, whose religion was vital, practical, and experimental in the highest degree; and who had been led, by internal conviction, to feel what nature could NOT do, and what grace alone COULD effect. Such a character, furnished at the same time with a deep and comprehensive knowledge of Scripture, was conscious of a reasonableness and stability in his faith, which is never to be attained by mere study, acquaintance with books and opinions, or any exertion of natural powers. In this part of the argument, Luther is remarkably nervous and distinct. "You undermine," says he, "at once, all the Divine promises and threatenings; you destroy faith and the fear of God; in fact, you deny the Deity himself, unless you allow a necessary efficacy to his prescience. The distinction of the necessity of a consequence, and of a consequence in itself necessary, is a mere figment. The Diatribe may invent and re-invent fancy after fancy of this sort, may cavil and re-cavil as much as it pleases; I maintain, if God

foreknew that Judas would be a traitor, then it could not be otherwise; and though Judas certainly committed the act in pursuance of his own will, and without any restraint, yet it was not in his power, or that of any created being, to change his wicked disposition.—The wicked choice here made by Judas was his own act; but that such an ACT should exist, is to be ascribed to the omnipotence of the Divine agency, precisely as all other things are.* We must never give up this,—that God cannot lie,—that God cannot be deceived. The learned in all ages may have been blind, but there is no obscurity, no ambiguity here."†

4. FURTHER OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONTROVERSY.

THE objections of Erasmus at bottom were levelled, no doubt, at the doctrine of the total depravity of human nature. Occasionally an expression escapes him, which is full to this point. For example: "The propensity which is in most men to evil, though it is not to be overcome without the help of Divine grace, yet does not entirely destroy their liberty. If that were so, why is time given for repentance? why even a hundred and twenty years afforded to the Antediluvians, if no portion of men's repentance depended on their own wills? Again, the case of Cornelius the centurion proves, that a man, before the reception of grace, may, through God's help, prepare himself, by the performance of good moral actions, for the Divine favour, though he be not yet baptized, nor hath obtained the gift of the Holy Ghost. For if all Cornelius's actions, before this last gift of the Spirit was bestowed upon him, were bad actions, one might ask, whether bad actions can be the cause of procuring us the favour of God?"‡

Luther replies,—"The very same objection may be made to all the precepts of God; namely, why do you issue com-

* Diat. 1232. "—necessitatem consequentiam, consequentis necessitatem."

* Erasmus owns, in Diat. 1232, that there is no denying that the Divine operation must concur in the production of every action; and for this reason, because every action implies a real existence of something, and even of something good. This concession, I conceive, provided Erasmus had been consistent with himself throughout, is the whole of what Luther, or any other person of Luther's sentiments, would or could desire.

† Luth. 461—3.

‡ Diat. 1236.

mands where there is not a power to obey? whereas, the design of the commands is, to instruct and to admonish; in order that men may know their duty, be humbled on account of their defects, and, as I said before, have recourse to grace and mercy. I also, as well as Erasmus, have read the Acts of the Apostles, but not one syllable do I find there, which indicates that Cornelius's actions without the Holy Spirit were morally good. This is a mere dream of the Diatribe: the contrary is the fact. He is called a just man, and one that feared God. Now to say, that there can be, without the Holy Ghost, a just man, and one that fears God, is to say that Belial is Christ Jesus. Be it so, that Cornelius was not then baptized, and had not heard of the resurrection of Christ; does it follow he had not had the gift of the Holy Ghost? you may just as well say, that John the Baptist, and his parents, and the mother of our Lord, and Simeon, had not received the Holy Ghost.*

It may be useful to give a short specimen of the manner in which these theological combatants respectively manage the very difficult and delicate subject of the Divine and human co-operation. "There are passages in St. Paul," says Erasmus, "which appear to take away every particle of freedom: for example, 'Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, as to think anything of ourselves: our sufficiency is of God.' 2 Cor. iii. But there are two ways of supporting my side of the question. 1. Some very orthodox fathers divide human actions into three parts; thought, choice, and execution. They allow there is no room for liberty in the first and third. Grace alone implants good thoughts, and grace alone finishes the work; but in the middle part, namely, the choice, there is a co-operation of grace and the will; though even in that co-operation, it is allowed, that the principal part of the effect is due to grace. 2. The other way of getting rid of the difficulty, consists in taking notice of the force of the very peculiar expression used by St. Paul, - - - 'as to think anything of ourselves,' that is, as from ourselves. Surely a man might use such an expression, who allowed the natural powers of the will to be sufficiently efficacious to choose the good, since these very powers

are the gift of God; and so St. Paul frequently checks a disposition to pride and arrogance,—'what hast thou, that thou hast not received?' Nay, the declaration that God works in us, both to will and to do, is consistent with freedom; for it is added, according to our good wills; that is, our good wills co-operating with the grace of God. This is Ambrose's interpretation of the passage;* and is the more probable, because, a little before, we are exhorted to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; words, which undoubtedly teach us, that both God works and man works.—But how can man be said to work, if his will be in the hands of God, what clay is in the hands of the potter?"†

Luther's observations on the same subject merit our particular attention. "I grant," says he, "that Erasmus has proved that the creature co-operates with the Creator in his operations. But what has our present controversy to do with any questions concerning co-operation? The orator was to have harangued concerning a palm, but his whole discourse has been about a gourd. Or, as Horace says, 'the potter began to make a cask, but produced a pitcher in the end.'

"We know very well that St. Paul co-operated with God in teaching the Corinthians, when he preached to them publicly, and when God, at the same time, influenced them internally by his Spirit. God is the universal agent in everything: even the wicked are subservient to his will. The difference between the co-operation of the wicked and the good is, that the former are devoid of all spiritual principle, whereas the latter, as St. Paul says, are led by the Holy Ghost.

"Our present inquiry, however, is not concerning what we can do THROUGH GOD'S HELP, but what is the extent of our natural powers without the Divine assistance; and whether we can of ourselves in any measure prepare ourselves for the new creation by the Spirit. To

* On looking into Ambrose, I do not perceive the least ground for understanding him in this sense. His words are, "pro bona voluntate," without the possessive pronoun; and so it is in the original, *ὑπερ τῆς εὐδοκίας*, which is very properly translated, "of his good pleasure." Philipp. ii. 13.

† Erasmus, 1238, 1239.

this single point Erasmus ought to have adhered.

“My undisguised sentiments are these.—Man, before he is created, can do nothing in any way to promote his creation. Neither after his creation can he do anything to preserve his existence. Both his creation and his preservation are the result of the sole pleasure of the omnipotent and gracious energy of God; nevertheless, God does not operate in us, without making use of us, as beings whom he hath created and preserved for the express purpose of a mutual co-operation; namely, that he should work in us, and we co-operate with him. The very same is to be said of the new creature. The man, before he is renewed by the Spirit, can do nothing, can attempt nothing, to prepare himself for this new creation. Neither after he is renewed, can he effect anything, to insure a perseverance in his new state. The Spirit of God alone doth both these things,—he both renews and preserves the renewed, without any aid on our part; as St. James, speaking of the new creature, says, ‘of his own will he begat us by the word of his power.’ But here also it must be remembered, that he does not operate in the renewed, without using them as beings purposely renewed and preserved, that he should work in them, and they co-operate with him. For example: he makes use of them to preach, to pity the poor, to comfort the afflicted. But what does Erasmus’s notion of the Will gain by all this,—except an absolute confutation?

“I would not,” continues he, “attribute malice or bad motives to the author of the Diatribe, but I think he can scarcely be deemed sound and sober, when he attempts to prove the freedom of the Will by magnifying the efficacy of Divine grace. Every action of man, says he, may become good through the assistance of the grace of God.* This is the inference of Erasmus, from a selection out of the Gospels and St. Paul’s Epistles, of a number of very beautiful similitudes and parables, which imply the Divine assistance and co-operation.† Far be it from me to deny this; but then, from the very same passages of Scripture, I infer that though a man with the grace of God may surmount all difficul-

ties, yet without that assistance he can do no good works whatever. He who could undertake to support the notion of Free Will by such Scriptures as speak highly of the efficacy of Divine grace, must surely look upon men as senseless stocks and stones. Yet Erasmus has not only done this, but he also boasts in the most triumphant manner as if he had gained a complete victory. This proceeding, however, of my opponent, has given me some insight into the nature and power of the liberty for which he contends. It is no less than a species of insanity. For what else, I beg, but Free Will could induce a man to talk in this manner?*

“I would that Erasmus would mark the consequences of his own reasoning: Scripture extols the assistance of Divine grace, therefore Scripture confirms the doctrine of Free Will. By what logic does he argue thus, and not directly the contrary? For example: Divine grace, and the assistance of it, are preached and magnified; therefore there is no room for Free Will. For to what purpose should grace be conferred? Is it for this, that the pride of a Free-willer, already sufficiently haughty, should, like a bacchanalian in his riots, boast and exult in the possession of the gift of grace, as if it were to him a superfluous and unnecessary ornament?

“Wherefore, though I am no orator, yet my rhetoric is, in this instance, sounder than that of the Diatribe, when I affirm, that all the passages of Scripture—and they are innumerable—which take notice of Divine help, are so many arguments for the inability of man. For the very reason why grace is necessary, and why Divine help is afforded, is, that the human powers can of themselves do nothing, or, in other words, do not avail to choose the good. An inference this, which the gates of hell can never subvert.”

Luther concludes his reply to the Diatribe in the following manner: “The system of Erasmus proceeds upon the principle of allowing some little to the powers of fallen man; and I believe his intention to be good; as he thereby hopes to remove some difficulties and inconveniences, and to reconcile certain apparently contradictory passages in Scripture. But the system entirely fails in

* Eras. 1211.

† Hb. 1235, 1239, and 1241.

* Luth. 474. 6.

its object: for, unless you ascribe a perfect and complete ability to the human will, as the Pelagians do, the appearance of several contradictions in Scripture, and also all the difficulties which are raised respecting reward and merit, and the mercy and justice of God, remain in full force, notwithstanding this petty allowance of power to the wills of men. We must therefore go the full length of denying to fallen creatures the existence of any power to do good works without the grace of God: on this plan, we shall find no contradictions in the sacred pages: and if there should remain some difficulties, in consequence of ascribing all events to God, we shall still know precisely what the difficulties are, and modestly submit to be ignorant of what we cannot understand.*

“But, my Erasmus, never believe that I defend my side of the question from passion rather than from conviction. I cannot bear your insinuation that I think one thing and write another, or, that, in the heat of defence, I contradict my former assertions. My publications prove, that to this hour I have constantly maintained the natural inability of man. The truth has been my only motive. The charge of being vehement I submit to, if indeed I am to be blamed on that account: at the same time, I cannot but rejoice that there is such testimony for me in the cause of God, and I pray God it may be found so at the last day. For well will it be then for Luther to have the full testimony of the age in which he lived, that he defended the cause of truth not indolently nor deceitfully, but with sufficient warmth, or, perhaps, a little too much. Then shall I happily escape the threatening of Jeremiah, ‘Cursed is he who doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully.’

“And if you shall judge me too severe upon your Diatribe, you must excuse me. I harbour not the least ill-will towards you. My sole motive is, to prevent you from injuring exceedingly the cause of Christ BY YOUR AUTHORITY; though it be vain for you to attempt it, either by your learning, or manner of treating the subject.—Besides, let me ask, what writer has his pen under such complete dominion that it never breaks out into excess? You yourself, who, by aiming at moderation, have become almost frigid in this little tract, yet frequently shoot bitter and

fiery darts; insomuch, that your reader must be very candid, and very much in your favour, to acquit you of the charge of virulence. However, all this is nothing to the question between us: as men, we ought to be sensible of our infirmities, and mutually to forgive one another.”*

5. LUTHER'S ARGUMENTS FROM ST. PAUL AND ST. JOHN.

To the preceding reply to the objections contained in the Diatribe of Erasmus, Luther thought it expedient to subjoin a few striking passages from the New Testament, with a short comment upon them,—as follows:

“To produce all those Scriptures which prove the original inability of man, would be almost to transcribe the Sacred Writings. Whole armies are at hand; but I shall confine myself to the production of two Generals, namely, Paul the Apostle, and John the Evangelist.

“The language of the former is, that, ‘the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,—to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile.’ These words have no ambiguity in them; they prove that the Gospel is absolutely necessary to save men from the anger of God. Again, ‘Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin: there is none that doeth good, no not one: all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.’ And, ‘The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness.’ Here it is for Erasmus to point out the exceptions, either among the Jews or the Greeks. What! not one among those two excellent nations who endeavoured to attain the Honestum? Not one who exerted to good purpose those natural powers you contend for? St. Paul is peremptory, declaring them all under the wrath of God.

“Moreover, experience confirms this account. Produce the best men that ever lived. Is there any one of them who ever dreamt of that wrath of God which is here said by St. Paul to be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness? Or, who ever suspected that the road to justification and salvation is by believing on the God-man who died for sin, rose again, and now sits at the right hand of God? Read what the greatest philosophers have thought and written concerning the anger of God against sin,

* Luth. 474. 6.

† Luth. 475.

in a future life. Examine what the Jews, who had so many signal advantages, thought of the true way of salvation. They not only rejected it, but have hated it to such a degree, that no nation under heaven has persecuted Christ so atrociously, even until this day. Yet, will any man say, that, among such multitudes, there has not been one who has cultivated his natural ability, or endeavoured to make the best of his Free Will? How is it, that this most excellent faculty of Free Will should, in no one instance of the very best men, have led to the discovery of the way of justification? How is it, that the very best Free-willers have not only been quite ignorant of it, but, even after that it was revealed to them, have rejected it with the greatest hatred? So St. Paul, 'It became a stumbling-block unto the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness.'—I say then, this natural ability, or Free Will, which you contend for, as far as it respects religion, is the greatest possible enemy to the salvation of men. It cannot be but that some Jews or Gentiles have endeavoured to make the most of this boasted faculty, and yet they have been at constant war with the grace of God.

“Let Erasmus now tell me how the wills of natural men can be said to exert some degree of endeavour towards the good, when it thus appears that they esteem the righteousness of God to be either a stumbling-block or foolishness.”

Luther makes great use of the important doctrine of justification by faith, as stated by St. Paul; but it would detain us too long, were we to dwell upon all the passages which he produces from this apostle. He argues thus from Romans iii. 19. 'Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world must become guilty before God.' But not so, if a man by nature possesses a power of discharging in any degree his duty to God. Such a one may say to the Almighty, 'There is a something which you cannot condemn:—you have furnished me with a power to do something; and, as far as this goes, there is no guilt; and my mouth will not be stopped. And certainly, if the human Will be a well-disposed and efficacious faculty, it is not true that the whole world must be reckoned guilty before God; for this very faculty is by no means a slight matter, or confined to a small part of the world: whereas the **WHOLE** world is pronounced

guilty before God. The expression is so general, that neither the whole conduct, nor any part of the conduct of a man, of men, or of a number of men, can, by possibility, be here excepted.

On the next verse, 'Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God,' Luther observes, that Jerome had ignorantly been the cause of introducing into the world a very erroneous and very mischievous idea, namely, that, by the works of the law, St. Paul intended only the works of the ceremonial law. "Augustine," says he, "excellently withstood this false comment; nevertheless, through the prevalence of Satan, it has spread very much, and keeps its ground to this day."

Here Luther opposes Jerome, and supports Augustine with great perspicuity and strength of argument.

As the Reader of this History is well aware that there is no part of religious truth which was nearer the heart of Luther, or which he had studied more intensely than the doctrine of justification by faith, he will not be surprised to find this great Reformer combating with all his might such notions of the natural faculties of man, as he conceived to be utterly subversive of this fundamental article. Erasmus's defence of Free Will he understood to be, in effect, a struggle to establish in men's characters some degree of merit, be it more or less: and such an attempt, according to Luther's ideas, militated directly against the important doctrine just mentioned. He asks, therefore, "What can the advocates for the free powers of man say to the declaration of St. Paul, 'Being justified **FREELY** by his grace?' **Freely**: what does that word mean? How are good endeavours and merit consistent with a gratuitous donation? Perhaps you do not insist on a merit of congruity, but only of congruity. Empty distinctions! Nay, Erasmus owns, that he defends Free Will in order that he may find some place for merits: and he is perpetually expostulating, that, where there is no liberty, there can be no merit; and where there is no merit, there is no room for reward. To be brief, St. Paul represents justification as a perfectly free gift, without any consideration of merit; and that along with this free gift are bestowed also the kingdom of God and life eternal. Then, where are the desires, the endeavours,

the merits of Free Will? and what are their uses? Suppose we admit that the advocates of Free Will allow only exceedingly little to that faculty; they nevertheless make that little the foundation of justification, because they represent the grace of God as obtained by that little. Indeed they have no other method of answering the question, Why does God justify one man, and not another? but by having recourse to the different use which they suppose men to make of their Free Will; namely, that in one case there are exertions, in the other no exertions; and that God approves of one man on account of his exertions, and punishes the other for the neglect of them; not to say that they imagine he would be unjust if he did otherwise. Thus our gracious God is described as a respecter of works, of merits, and of persons;—and thus, whatever may be pretended to the contrary, the dignity of the merits is maintained and inculcated; for, indeed, our opponents do deny that they hold a merit that has any worthiness in it;—all that they hold is, a merit which has the effect of a dignity or worthiness. What a wretched evasion! There is hardly any word one might not play upon in that way. Thus, the thorn is not a bad tree, it only produces the effects of a bad tree: The fig-tree is not a good tree, but has the effects of a good tree:—The Diatribe has nothing in it of the nature of ungodliness; it only speaks and acts as ungodly persons do.”

“In my judgment,” continues Luther, “my opponents are at bottom worse than the Pelagians. The Pelagians speak plainly and openly: They call a thorn a thorn, and a fig a fig. They ingenuously assert a real worthiness in their merits; and by this worthiness or dignity of merit they purchase the favour of God. Whereas, those with whom I have to do, imagine that the favour of God is to be bought at a very small price, namely, the meritorious use of that extremely small degree of liberty, which has escaped the wreck of our original depravity. But how does St. Paul, in one word, confound in one mass all the assertors of every species and of every degree of merit! ‘All are justified freely, and without the works of the law.’ He who affirms the justification of all men who are justified, to be perfectly free and gratuitous, leaves no

place for works, merits, or preparations of any kind; no place for works either of condignity or of congruity; and thus, at one blow, he demolishes both the Pelagians with their complete merits, and our Sophists with their petty performances.”

Our author then proceeds to take notice,—

That St. John, “who makes havoc,” he says, “everywhere, of the doctrine of an innate free propensity to good,” at the very outset of his Gospel attributes so great blindness to our natural dispositions, that we do not even see the light, so far are we from making any exertions to come to it. ‘The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.’ “Let us attend to the case of Nicodemus, who may justly be esteemed an example of the utmost that the mere powers of nature could accomplish.—In what desire, or in what exertion, I pray, does this character appear to have been deficient? He owned Jesus to be a messenger from God; he was struck with his miracles, and he applied to him for instruction. Does not he appear, it may be said, to have sought salvation through the impulse of his natural faculties? But mark how he blunders. As soon as he learns from Christ the true way of salvation by being born again, he is so far from being pleased with the important information, that he discovers an aversion to it, and thinks the thing impossible. Nor is this any more than an instance of what happens daily. All the human faculties, both of the understanding and the will, nay, the whole world itself, it must be confessed, fell short of the knowledge of Christ before the preaching of the Gospel. Yet Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. What insanity, then, to pretend that there remain nevertheless in our fallen nature, sufficient powers to direct our application to the things which concern our eternal salvation!”

“Again, St. John pronounces unbelievers to be in a state of condemnation, because they believe not on the only-begotten Son of God. Now tell me at once, whether the human will can or cannot make a believer. If it can, then there is no need of the grace of God. If it cannot, then the unbeliever, with this very faculty of freedom, is condemned already before God. But God condemns nothing except ungodliness. I may well

ask, therefore, what pious efforts towards salvation can ungodliness be supposed to make?"

Luther concludes his whole treatise with two or three concise observations: thus;

Obs. 1. "One of the most invincible arguments in favour of the depravity of the human will is to be found in my former publications, and it has not been noticed by the Diatribe.—St. Paul teaches both the Romans and the Galatians, that there is in holy men a strong contest between the Flesh and the Spirit, so that they cannot do the things which they would. From this statement I argued thus: If the nature of man is so bad, that, even in those who are renewed by the Spirit, it not only makes no effort to do good, but, on the contrary, fights against the gracious affections; how can it be supposed to have, in those who are not born again, but are slaves of Satan, the least tendency whatever to virtuous endeavours or exertions?"

"I could wish Erasmus to try his strength in answering this argument.

"For my part, I freely own, I have not the smallest desire, if the thing could be granted, that my salvation should depend in any degree upon myself; not only because, in contending against many dangers, and difficulties, and evil spirits, I should fail of success, but because, even if there were not these, I should be in a constant state of uncertainty. For, were I to live and labour to eternity, my conscience would never feel sure that I had done enough to secure the favour of God. Whatever I did, there would always be this scruple left; Is this enough, or does not God require something more? All self-righteous persons know this to be their case; and I also, to my great loss, have sufficiently experienced the same for many years.

"But now that my salvation depends upon a gracious and merciful God, I rest assured that he is faithful, and will never deceive me; and at the same time, that he is so great and powerful, that neither adversities nor wicked spirits can hurt me. I do not ground my security on the merit of my works, but on the divine promises of mercy."

Obs. 2. "The difficulty which arises in the minds of some, from the consideration of the punishment of the wicked, may be relieved in some measure by such

reflections as these: God is to be honoured and adored as evidently most merciful to those ungodly persons whom he justifies and saves: and surely so much credit should be given to the Divine wisdom as that we may believe God to be just, though to us, in some instances, he may appear the contrary: But—you cannot comprehend how a just God can condemn those who are born in sin, and cannot help themselves, but must, by a necessity of their natural constitution, continue in sin, and remain children of wrath. The answer is, God is incomprehensible throughout; and therefore his justice as well as his other attributes must be incomprehensible. It is on this very ground that St. Paul exclaims, 'O the depth of the riches and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Now his judgments would not be past finding out, if we could always perceive them to be just.

"Does not common sense compel us to own, that human wisdom, knowledge, strength, and power, dwindle as it were into nothing, when compared with the corresponding attributes of God? What folly and perverseness then, to dispute the point with him respecting his justice and judgment, and arrogantly to rejudge his decisions! What! shall we submit to the Divine Majesty in all matters but one, and call his fidelity in question in the attribute of justice, even when he has absolutely promised that the time shall come when he will reveal his glory, in such a manner, that all may see clearly, and be completely satisfied that he is, and always has been, just and holy in all his ways?"

Obs. 3. "Again: The Divine administration of the world does not please you. You suspect God to be unjust, or you are tempted to think there is no God. The wicked, in many instances, thrive; and the good are unsuccessful. This consideration very much afflicted Job, David, Jeremiah, Asaph, &c. Yet this great difficulty, perfectly insurmountable by nature and reason, gives way at once to a single ray of evangelical light, which teaches us that there is a future life, in which the wicked will be punished, and the righteous rewarded.—Then I reason thus: If the light of the Gospel, by a single word with EARTH, has so very easily resolved a difficulty which has proved distressing to thinking men in all

ages, how clear will everything be, when faith and the written word shall be no more, and the Divine Majesty itself shall be revealed! Do not you think that the brightness of the glory of God may very easily resolve a doubt which could not be resolved by the light of revelation, when you have an instance of the light of revelation clearing up a difficulty insuperable by the light of nature? Observe; the common distinction is a good one: there are three lights, one of nature, another of grace, and a third of glory. The light of nature cannot explain why a good man should suffer, and a bad man should flourish; but the light of grace solves the difficulty. Then, the light of grace does not inform us why God should punish an ungodly man, who cannot by any powers of his own, amend his disposition. Nay, I will own that both the light of nature and of grace incline us to excuse the poor wretched man, and to think hardly of God, and as unjust in his judgments; especially as he gives a crown of glory to another, who, by nature, is quite as ungodly, and perhaps more so. But remember, that the light of glory teaches us a different thing; namely, that the ways of God, which are incomprehensible at present, will, at the last day, appear most manifestly to be strictly just, and holy, in the very highest degree.

“I am ready to go farther into this question, if it should be necessary:—but at present I conclude,

“That if we believe the prescience of God, there can be no faculty of contingency in man, or angel, or any creature, whereby the Divine Will can be obstructed.

“That if we believe Satan to be the prince of this world, there can be no deliverance from his slavery but by the power of the Holy Ghost. And this is another proof of the entire depravity of human nature.

“That if the Jews, aiming at righteousness by their own strength, have fallen into a state of ungodliness and condemnation; and if the ungodly Gentiles have, through the free mercy of God, attained to a state of righteousness and justification, it is very plain from experience, that without the grace of God the human will is inclined to evil, and to evil only.

“On the whole, if we believe that Christ has redeemed us by his blood, we are compelled to confess that man was

completely in a state of perdition, otherwise we make Christ of none effect; or, if we do admit his efficiency, still we allow him to be the Redeemer only of a very bad part of human nature; and maintain that there is a better part, which stands in need of no redemption,—a supposition too blasphemous to be admitted.

“And now, my Erasmus, I call upon you to fulfil the promise you made,—that you would yield to any one who should teach you better doctrines. Lay aside all respect for persons. You are a great man, I confess, and are furnished by God with many of the noblest accomplishments:—to mention nothing else, you are a miracle in genius, erudition, and eloquence. As to myself, I can say nothing, except that I ALMOST GLORY in being a Christian.

“I most exceedingly commend you, forasmuch as that you are the only one who, among all my adversaries in this religious cause, has attempted to handle the real matter in dispute: nor have you fatigued me with extraneous matter about the papacy, purgatory, indulgences, and such like trifles, about which I have hitherto been hunted on all sides to no purpose. You and only you have seen the true hinge upon which all turned, and have aimed your blow at the throat. On this account I can sincerely thank you; for I employ what leisure I have very agreeably on this subject. I wish the wild Anabaptists, who boast of new revelations, were following your example; we should have fewer sectaries and less sedition, and more peace and harmony.

“At the same time I must say, that, unless you could treat your subject in a different manner from what you have done in your *Diatriba*, I most earnestly wish you had confined yourself to your own peculiar gift, by which you have already done so much good, and gained so much applause: I mean, that you should continue to cultivate, and improve, and adorn polite literature. In this you have been of use to myself; and therefore, while I look up to you with wonder and veneration, I own myself under considerable personal obligation to you.

“But it has not pleased God to qualify you for the great business we have in hand.—I entreat you not to suppose this to be an effusion of pride. I pray that the time may be near, when the Lord shall make you as much superior to me

in this concern of the Reformation, as you are already in everything else. However, it is no new thing, if God should teach Moses by Jethro, or Paul by Ananias. You say you have missed your aim, if you have Christ yet to learn; and I do suspect you begin to think that this may possibly be the case. You are but a man; and it is not very unlikely, but, after all, you may not have rightly apprehended the Scriptures and the Fathers, to which you think you have trusted as sure guides. Your own very doubtful way of speaking leads me to think so. You say, 'you assert nothing, but only discourse and argue.' A man does not express himself so, who has got hold of his subject right, and understands it to the bottom. In this book of mine, I do not merely discourse or dispute, but I have asserted, and do assert, and I submit to nobody's judgment whatever, but exhort every one to obey the Divine truths which I maintain.

"May the Lord, whose cause it is, illuminate you, and make you a vessel of honour and glory! Amen."

The student of the history of Luther has frequent occasion to remark, that, notwithstanding the violence and asperity of the language of this great Reformer on many occasions, he was rarely betrayed into rash and intemperate actions. Is it possible to devise more prudent maxims of conduct, than those by which, in the main, he appears to have been directed in his dealings with Erasmus? * Perfectly aware of his influence and reputation as a scholar, and of his defects as a man of practical religion, he dreaded his opposition and enmity to the Reformation, but had little hopes of deriving advantage from his friendship. How then did it become Luther to act on such an occasion? For a long time he treated him with kindness and respect; and, in attempts to secure his neutrality at least, went quite as far as conscience would permit him: and even on the very eve of a rupture, and after many peevish and inimical declarations on the part of Erasmus, he omitted not to make a wise and animated effort to prevent open hostilities, by writing that celebrated letter, which is already before the reader in the Appendix; †

every line of which displays the spirit of a man who sincerely wished for peace, but who, at the same time, in case of being attacked, was conscious of his own powers of defence and resistance. AFTER the publication of the Diatribe, Luther had nothing left but to consider Erasmus as an avowed adversary, and with all his might to aim at lowering his reputation, by exposing his incompetency in theological inquiries.

6. THE REPLY OF ERASMUS. HYPERASPISTES.

ERASMUS affected to resent nothing in Luther's Reply, but his uncivil and acrimonious language. How far this was really so, must be left to the Reader's judgment. Certainly he discovered an uncommon anxiety to be esteemed victorious on this occasion; and gave reason to suspect that he had received deeper wounds in his conflict with the Saxon divine, than it is usually in the power of mere hard words or abuse to inflict. He printed his Rejoinder in two parts; * and in his advertisement to the former of them he tells us, that, through the management of the Lutherans, he had been allowed but ten days before the Fair of Frankfurt for the composition of it; and that if any one distrusted this assertion, there were, at Basil, very positive witnesses of its truth. He says, he had hastened the publication to check the triumph of his adversaries; and then bids his Reader farewell; assuring him, in so many explicit terms, that, in the perusal of his book, he may expect to find an indisputable superiority of argument.

Throughout both the books of the Hyperaspistes, one cannot but notice numerous indications of anger and irritation. The kind and complimentary expressions of Luther, as well as the tribute of praise therein paid to his adversary's talents and attainments, the sincerity of which there could be no good reason to suspect, he represents as the honey of a poisoned cup, or the sting accompanying a serpent's embrace.

On the whole, there can be no doubt but the controversy with Luther was eventually the cause of much pain and vexation to Erasmus. His greatest admirers allow that the Diatribe is a feeble

* See page 436.

† See page 436, n.

* Called Hyperaspistes.

and timid production, and unworthy of its author. Accordingly it gave offence to both parties, was esteemed by neither, and disappointed all the learned. Even Jortin observes, that those who shall carefully peruse the writings of Erasmus on HUMAN LIBERTY, will see that he had not the clearest and precisest notions. In fact, Erasmus himself was well aware of his unfitness for this business, and, in a letter to the bishop of Rochester, ingenuously owns, that he was not on his own ground while writing on the Freedom of the Will.* And, in another letter to a friend, he goes so far as to say, "But, to confess the truth, we have lost Free Will. There my mind dictated one thing, and my pen wrote another." This is undoubtedly an incautious expression; and it has been produced as a proof of the insincerity of Erasmus in his dispute with Luther.† It seems, however, uncandid to construe the preceding declaration of the author of the Diatribe so much to his disadvantage, as to suppose that he wrote against his conscience on that occasion; especially as it is the constant strain of his letters about that time, that he had written the Diatribe against Luther very unwillingly, yet very sincerely. To Melancthon, on the subject of the Diatribe, he writes, "I have handled the points in dispute with the greatest possible moderation, yet not in any way contrary to my real opinion; though I am ready to give that up, as soon as any one shall convince me that a different opinion is nearer the truth."‡ To his friend Henry Stromer he describes the state of his mind as follows: "I, who have spent all my time among the Muses, am now compelled to engage in this bloody contest. It could not be otherwise. There was a cry that Erasmus and Luther had agreed to preserve mutual silence. Then I dared no longer to disappoint the expectation of the princes. Add, that the Lutherans provoked and threatened me, inasmuch that my silence would have been attributed to fear. The die is cast, yet so, that I have not written a single word on Free Will contrary to my real sentiments.—There are many of my countrymen who favour Luther: but if I had foreseen that this new gospel would

have given rise to such a set of brawlers, I would have been an avowed enemy of the whole faction from the very beginning."

In the same letter he declares that he had ceased to be a free agent from the moment that he had published a book upon Free Will; and that he had wished to have remained a mere spectator of the new scenes, not from any backwardness to support the church to the utmost, but because the ecclesiastical differences were about paradoxical propositions. "The Christian world," he said, "was become so excessively corrupt, that even if he had thought very ill of Luther, he almost judged him to be a necessary evil; and that, therefore, to take him away, was to take away what was best in the present circumstances." But now at Basil, says he, "the novel gospel has produced a quite new race of men, who are obstinate, impudent, and abusive; who are cheats, liars, and hypocrites; they quarrel among one another; they are disobliging and troublesome to the last degree; they are seditious and wild; they brawl and jangle; and, in short, are so disagreeable to me, that if I knew of any town perfectly free from them, I would certainly go and live there."*

This is one of the numerous passages in the publications of the author of the Diatribe, which prove how possible it is for a man so far to bridle his bad passions, as to write on some occasions with extraordinary mildness and diffidence, and yet at the same time overflow internally with a bitter and acrimonious spirit. It appears there was no need of Luther's severe animadversions to excite the enmity of Erasmus against the reformers. His treatise, however, on the Bondage of the Will, certainly had the effect of rendering his hostilities, ever after, more open and irreconcilable.

In general, Luther's style in Latin is far from being correct or polished; but, on this occasion, he had taken so much pains, as to make Erasmus believe he had been assisted by his learned friends, and especially by Melancthon. He admits, as we observed before, that his performance is an elaborate work, composed with the greatest care; at the same time, he pronounces it virulent, scurrilous, and malicious, and such as no man would

* Beausobre, V. 132, and Jortin, 335.

† Jortin, 413; Seck, 310; and Ep. 985.

‡ Ep. 820.

* Ep. 835.

have written against a Turk. "All the learning," says he, "and all the abuse, which the church of Wittemberg could produce, is in this book. Never did Luther rage against any one more like a madman. It is a large volume, and has been translated into German, for the purpose of exasperating ploughmen, cobblers, and weavers, against me.* What is become of the pacific Erasmus? compelled to turn gladiator in his old age, and, what is worse, compelled to fight wild beasts."† Thus it appears that this elegant scholar could sometimes use hard words, as well as Luther; and though it is very true that the latter, in his reply, treated him with a mixture of compliment, praise, scorn, insult, ridicule, and invective,—and all without much ceremony,—the discerning Reader may be allowed to doubt, whether Erasmus, in his heart, was not more provoked at the excellencies of his adversary's composition, than at any abuse which it contained.

He may doubt, also, whether Erasmus would be more pleased upon finding afterwards that Melancthon had not joined Luther in his attack upon the Diatribe, or vexed to see that Luther, without that assistance, was able to furnish so finished a reply.—Melancthon, both in letters to his own particular friend Camerarius, and to Erasmus himself, denies the charge. To the former he says, "I do not in the least merit the heavy charge he lays upon me; but I have resolved to stifle the affront." To the latter he acknowledges his obligations, and exhorts Erasmus never to give way to such unfriendly suspicions of him, as were to be found in the first part of his *Hyperaspistes*.—In effect, this letter displays a little of the timid trimming temper of Melancthon, which NATURALLY resembled in some degree that of Erasmus himself; but—religious principles were lively and efficient in the former. To Camerarius he begins his letter thus: "Did you ever read a more bitter publication than this of Erasmus?" He calls it *Hyperaspistes*, but "it is absolutely aspis," that is, a wasp.‡

But that, which more than all the rest demonstrates the excessive irritation of the mind of Erasmus, is a letter to John, the new elector of Saxony; in which he begs that Luther may be punished, or at least admonished, for having charged him with holding atheistical or Epicurean opinions. The MS. is among the Archives of Weimar, subscribed in the hand-writing of Erasmus; thus: "I, Erasmus of Rotterdam, the most devoted servant of your most serene Electoral Highness, have subscribed this with my own hand." It is said to abound with an incredible bitterness against Luther, whom the author represents as having injured his reputation, by propagating criminal falsehoods.—Among the same papers at Weimar, there is a letter of Luther's which should seem to have been written to the Elector on that occasion, to the following effect: "That to himself and his colleagues it did not seem wise for the Elector to intermeddle with a business which was purely ecclesiastical, and in which he neither could be, nor wished to be, the judge; and that it was the duty of Erasmus to give him no trouble about it. That, moreover, if the question was really of a political nature, it required the judgment of a greater tribunal than that of any prince whatever, and therefore Erasmus ought to have addressed the whole world in general. And, lastly, That it was unjust to punish any person upon the accusation of a private letter; that an action ought to be instituted, the forms of law observed, and an opportunity of defence afforded."* One may well ask, Where is now the mild and gentle spirit of Erasmus, who so constantly boasts of having dissuaded princes and prelates from using cruelty and persecution?

The author of *Hyperaspistes*, at the time of writing his book, was not in a temper to throw much light upon so difficult a subject as that of the Freedom of the human Will.—Pride, anger, and chagrin, may give rise to severe and satirical criticism, and even quicken the penetration, but never strengthen the judgment.

Erasmus informs us of his reasons for proceeding to write a second book of the

* I. Hyper. 1305.

† To Sylvius. To Reginald Pole. To the Bishop of Langres, 918, 919.

‡ Ep. 1071. To Camer. lib. iv. 28. p. 636. Eras. et Melan. Ep. Lond.

* Comment. de Luth. 312.

Erasmus writes to the Elector of Saxony.

Hyperaspistes. The moderation of his Diatribe was construed by some into a collusion with Luther. They said he had spared his adversary, and they called him timid and frigid. Even after his skirmish in the first book of Hyperaspistes, there were persons who still termed the controversy a collusion. "Then his friends," he added, "pressed him with having promised to go on; and his enemies boasted that he had been beaten."

From this account of Erasmus himself, we cannot be much at a loss to comprehend what were the prevailing sentiments of mankind in his own time respecting the success of his pen, in the attempt to lower the reputation of Luther.*—Observe what an indirect tribute of praise he unawares pays to his adversary, in the very first page of his second book of Hyperaspistes. "In what remains," says he, "we shall be less interrupted by his calumny and abuse: not that Luther can ever forget himself, but because THE DENSITY OF HIS ARGUMENTATION, and HIS NUMEROUS TESTIMONIES FROM SCRIPTURE, did not allow him so free a field for scurrilous language."

In regard to the Diatribe, it is rather historical than argumentative; and, though in general extremely moderate and inoffensive, yet, in some places, the writer bites so hard, that even Melancthon ventured to reprove him gently on that account.†

In the Hyperaspistes, the author accuses his adversary repeatedly of savageness, impudence, lying, and blasphemy. Strange! that a man who professed to dislike so very much the asperities of Luther, should abound in language of this sort! Let us hear him in a single sentence. "Luther promises himself a wonderful reputation with posterity: whereas I am rather inclined to prophesy that no name under the sun will ever be held in greater execration than the name of Luther. . . . The beginnings of the mischief he has done we have already seen in the Rustic War."—A notable instance this of the mildness and candour of Erasmus!‡ Yet, notwithstanding all this bitterness and acrimony, it is suffi-

ciently plain, from many parts of his writings, that he by no means thought so ill of Luther as one might conclude from such passionate expressions as these. I will select a passage from his letter to the bishop of Lingen. "I am surprised to observe in Luther two distinct characters. Some of his writings appear to breathe the spirit of an Apostle: again, in scurrility and abuse who ever equalled him?"† And it should be observed, that Erasmus, in this very letter, is giving an account of Luther's answer to his Diatribe.

The first book of the Hyperaspistes is a hasty and passionate effusion, in which Erasmus reproaches Luther, times almost without number, for having abused and calumniated him in his reply to the Diatribe. The second book is abundantly more elaborate; and it is here that Erasmus exerted his utmost strength. In the Diatribe he was not a hearty combatant. He apologizes to Melancthon for appearing in the field against Luther in that instance, and accounts for the step from the peculiar circumstances in which he found himself entangled; and, if I mistake not, he would have been delighted if the affair had ended there, without any answer from Luther. In writing the first book of Hyperaspistes, he had no time to think; but, in the second, he was completely unfettered, and completely in earnest; and if he had been able, he would, without the least mercy, have trampled on Luther, and ground him to powder.

The second book is very long, and very tedious; but as it appears to me, the tediousness, of which every reader must complain, is not owing so much to the length of the performance, as to the confusion which pervades it throughout. The Writer is kept sufficiently alive, amidst great prolixity, by the unceasing irritation of his hostility and resentment; but the Reader is fatigued and bewildered, by being led through obscure paths one after another, and never arriving at any distinct and satisfactory conclusion. A close attention of the mind to a long series of confused and jumbled propositions, wears the intellect, as infallibly as a continued exertion in looking at objects difficult to be distinguished, ex-

* Des. Eras. pio Lectori.

† "Perplacuit tua moderatio, tametsi alibi nigrum salem adperseris." Ep. 821.

‡ Hyp. II. 1485.

* Ep. 919.—See also Vol. III. Erasmus, Chap. II. Cent. XVI. near the end.

hausts the powers of the most perfect organs of vision.

It is agreed, that on the subject of the Freedom of the Will, there are parts of the inquiry absolutely beyond all human comprehension. On these Luther scarcely touches, owning at once their difficulty. But not so Erasmus: and this is a remarkable distinction between the two writers.

Moreover, there is in Erasmus an ostentatious affectation of a superiority of scholastic knowledge, at the very time that he affects to dislike and despise it. For example, "I have either no eyes," says he, "or Luther does not understand the difference between a necessity of a consequence, and a necessary consequence." And then, after having, with much parade, exposed, as he thinks, Luther's ignorance of the scholastic distinctions, and also having shown—what nobody ever can show—the manner by which the prescience of God may be consistent with the contingency of events, he contemptuously concludes thus: "I was conversant, when a boy, with these logical subtilities, though I neither liked, nor had much talent for them; but I had almost forgotten what I had learnt, and for that reason I did not much trouble the Reader about such things in my Diatribe. On the other hand, Luther, who has spent a great part of his life in these inquiries, never reasoned less to the purpose, or more like a madman, than in the use which he has made of this sort of knowledge."*

7. SCEPTICISM OF ERASMUS.

LUTHER, in various parts of his *BONDAGE OF THE WILL*, had more than insinuated, that Erasmus was unsound, not only in some of the great articles of the Christian faith, but even in the leading truths of Natural Religion. Erasmus took fire at this, and repeatedly declared the accusation to be the greatest of all possible calumnies. In particular, at the conclusion of the first book of his *Hyperaspistes*, he makes a declaration, with all imaginary solemnity, of his most entire and sincere faith in God and the Holy Scriptures.—However, as this great and learned man certainly stands

in the early history of the Reformation as a very prominent character, it will be proper, before we conclude this detail, to lay briefly before the reader, from his own writings, as well as from those of others, some additional testimonies, which have had weight with many orthodox divines, in inducing them to deny the soundness, and to suspect the sincerity, of this eminent scholar. And here I would again suggest, what the discerning reader cannot but already have collected from the intimations dispersed throughout this narrative, that the dispute between Luther and Erasmus is in reality not so much about the nature of human liberty, as the true Scriptural doctrine of Original Sin, and the efficacy of Divine Grace. These are properly the fundamental points of discussion; and it is only indirectly, and, as it were, by consequence, that the nature of the human will becomes an object of inquiry.—This single observation is the key to a right understanding of many things which are advanced on both sides in this controversy.

1. In his *Diatribe*, Erasmus, with great coolness and deliberation, speaks of the Lutheran, and other divines of the same class, in the following terms: "They exaggerate Original Sin to such a prodigious degree, as to maintain, that men by nature can do nothing but express their ignorance and hatred of God; and that the works even of a justified man are sinful. Moreover, that propensity to evil, which is derived from our first parents, they consider both as a sinful and an invincible propensity. They appear to me, in describing salvation as all of grace without works, to narrow the mercy of God in one way, while they extend it in another; as if a host should furnish his guests with a slender dinner, for the purpose of making a splendid show at supper; or as painters, who cast a shade over some objects, with an intention to make others look bright. Further, when, according to them, God lays on men the heavy load of so many commandments, which have no other effect but to make them hate him, and increase their own condemnation;—what is this, but to represent the Deity as more cruel than the tyrant Dionysius, who first enacted many laws which he foresaw would probably be broken, and then connived at the defaulters for a time; and when almost all his subjects were be-

* II. Hyp. 1427.

come obnoxious to his penalties, began at length to inflict his punishments?"*


2. In the Hyperaspistes, on the same subject of Original Sin, he expresses himself thus: "I have shown that Paul, when he says we are children of wrath, may be understood to speak, not of men's condition by nature, but of the depraved state of their morals, into which they have voluntarily brought themselves. But grant that all men are children of wrath; still, it will not follow that sin predominates to such a degree as to have left no seeds of piety and virtue in mankind. Even in brute-animals we perceive some marks of goodness. Doves and turtles are chaste in their connexions; elephants are modest and religious; dogs are grateful; apes are pious towards their young; and bees and ants exhibit a political economy. Again, all men allow that they have derived from their first parents a propensity to sin, yet not in the same degree. Who goes so far ever as to charge with impiety, either infants, or even boys of a good disposition, that have not yet been spoiled by intercourse with the world? Every fault does not amount to impiety: even baptism does not entirely take away the propensity to sin; it only lessens it."†

3. How far Luther was justified in representing the author of the Diatribe as in reality a favourer of the sentiments of Lucian, Epicurus, and Porphyry, those will be the best judges who are most acquainted with the circumstances of the life of Erasmus, and the contents of his voluminous writings. From these, many passages may certainly be produced, which prove, that at least his religious faith was extremely loose and desultory, and his profession of certain doctrines the effect of custom and convenience, rather than of judgment and decision.—Even in his controversy with Luther, he scruples not to admit that the point in dispute between them was not very near his heart: "If," says he, "you had overcome my Diatribe with strong arguments, you would not have offended me in the smallest degree; nay, you might perhaps have drawn me over to your opinion, for my mind is not so very averse to your sentiment, provided the schools only, and not the dogmas of the church also, stood in the way."*

4. There is a short epistle of Erasmus, written in January 1525, to the very learned and excellent Re-

A Letter of Erasmus to Ecolampadius.

A. D. 1525.

former Ecolampadius, which throws more light on the real character and the secret motives of the writer, than many hundreds of pages from his voluminous publications. Erasmus and Ecolampadius had professed a regard for each other; and the former, it seems, had cautioned the latter not to injure the reputation of Erasmus by representing him as connected with the Reformers.—Now, Ecolampadius, in a preface to his Commentary on Isaiah, happened to use the expression, OUR GREAT ERASMUS.* This was a mighty offence; as leading to a suspicion that he and Erasmus were of the same opinion. He tells Ecolampadius plainly, that he would rather have been ILL treated by him, than brought forward in this way, as a friend of his party. His letter begins in this strain: "I pretend not to pass sentence on you; I leave that to the Lord; to whom ye must stand or fall. 

But this I reflect upon; namely, What do several great men think of you? the Emperor, the Pope, Ferdinand, the king of England, the bishop of Rochester, Cardinal Wolsey, and many others, whose authority it is not safe for me to contemn, neither is it prudent for me to despise their favour? You know very well there are some who look upon you Reformers as heresiarchs and schismatics. Now what will such persons say, upon reading in your Preface the words, 'OUR GREAT ERASMUS?' Will not the consequence be, that dangerous suspicions of powerful princes, or implacable enemies, who had begun to think a little better of me since the publication of my Diatribe, will be all revived?"

The biographer and great admirer of Erasmus was much shocked with this letter.† Indeed, we here learn the reason why Erasmus was always so much provoked at the Reformers, whenever they intimated that his conduct was influenced by the fear of losing his pensions, or, in general, the patronage of the great.—From his own mouth he is convicted of the charge. In secret, he honoured and valued Ecolampadius; but dreaded to be commended by him. And

* 1246. Diatr. † II. Hyp. 1401.
† I. Hyp. 1317.

* Magnus Erasmus noster.
† Jortin, I. 369.

wherefore? Lest he should thereby offend those very persons whom he despised in his heart.—What a wretched state of bondage!!

Erasmus appears to have been under the influence of the same timid worldly spirit, soon after he had received from Luther that very animated letter, mentioned in page 436, which constrained him to confess to his friend Pirckheimer, that “Martin Luther had written to him in a strain sufficiently civil, but that he did not dare to answer him with equal civility, on account of his calumniators.” He adds, “However, I did give him a short answer.”*

See this answer in page 436.

But there is another letter of Erasmus to the same friend, which one cannot read without astonishment. “I never maintained,” says he, “that the opinion of Ecolampadius on the Eucharist was by far the soundest. It is true, that among some friends I went so far as to say that I could adopt that sentiment, if the authority of the church had approved it; but I added, that I could by no means dissent from the church. By the church, I mean the consent of the body of Christian people. I know not how the hypocrites, whom you speak of, have represented my words. For my part, I certainly speak sincerely; nor have I ever doubted of the truth of the Eucharist. What weight the authority of the church may have with others, I cannot say; but with me it weighs so much, that I could be of the same opinion with the Arians and Pelagians, if the church had supported their doctrines. It is not that the words of Christ are not to me sufficient; but no one should be surprised if I follow the interpretation of the church, upon whose authority my belief of the Canonical Scriptures is founded. Others, perhaps, may have more genius and more courage than I have: but there is nothing in which I acquiesce more securely than in the decisive judgment of the church. OF REASONINGS AND ARGUMENTS THERE IS NO END.”

This language, as it certainly needs no comment, so neither does it need much addition to be made to it, to show the real character of the writer.† It is this sort of language, repeatedly made use

of, which has induced both many Protestants and many Roman Catholics to consider this eminent scholar either as a sceptic or a dissembler; notwithstanding his reiterated complaints of being calumniated, and his solemn declarations of the soundness of his faith.*

S. ORTHODOXY OF LUTHER COMPARED WITH THE SCEPTICISM OF ERASMUS.

THE curiosity of a merely speculative student of history may be much gratified in examining so extraordinary a character as that of Erasmus; but a sincere and zealous Christian will turn with pleasure from this ambiguous and versatile genius, to contemplate the contrast, which his honest adversary affords to the mind weary and disgusted with multiplied instances of insincerity and tergiversation. Luther's opinions never sit loose on his mind; they are always near his heart; and whatever may be his faults of excessive vehemence or asperity, he is perfectly free from fickleness and indifference. The inexhaustible levity of Erasmus seems to have been peculiarly offensive to Luther. “I could wish,” says he, in a letter to Amsdorf, “that the writings of Erasmus were entirely exploded from our schools; for even if they were not hurtful, they could do no good. It is not expedient to accustom Christian youths to the diction of Erasmus. From him they will never learn to speak or think seriously and gravely on any subject whatever; but only, like a jackdaw, to peck and laugh at every body, and play the part of a fool. By this levity and this vanity their minds will become gradually so much disused

Luther to Amsdorf.

† Erasmus, in a letter to Pet. Barbirius, speaks in the highest terms of Ecolampadius's book; saying, “It is so accurately written, and contains so many arguments and testimonies, that it might deceive the very elect.” Ep. 894.—We have already, in the Note to p. 424, referred to Erasmus's expostulations with the German reformer Conrad Pelican. They are contained in three letters, which show the writer to have been very much out of humour with this Reformer. He gives an account of a conversation they had had together, and accuses Pelican of grievously misrepresenting what had passed.—963-966. He appears also, by a letter to a Polish baron, to have suspected Pelican of having informed Luther of that conversation. 917.

* Ep. 803, to Bilib. Pirckheimer, a Counselor of Charles V.

† Ep. 1029 & 941.

to religion, that they will at length dislike it, and become absolutely profane.”*

In the same letter he observes, “that he thinks it more advisable not to answer Erasmus in future. For his own sake, however,” he adds, “I will leave on record my decisive testimony, which will acquit him of a charge which he complains of as most miserably distressing to his mind, namely, that he is reckoned a Lutheran. Now, I am a most sure and faithful witness that he is still the same Erasmus only, and no Lutheran.—Christ lives; and it is my business to defend him against his enemies: and those do him great injury who accuse Erasmus of being a Lutheran.”

No circumstance in this contest with Luther proved so vexatious and even galling to the mind of Erasmus, as the decisive and avowed judgment of Melancthon. Every tongue confessed the TALENTS, the LEARNING, the MODERATION of Melancthon. To complain therefore of the heat and asperity of Luther, appeared but a feeble confutation of the doctrines which Melancthon approved and defended. For, in the first place, all men of sober reflection could easily separate the substance of an article of faith from the warmth of the polemical language by which it might happen to be supported; and, secondly, even the multitude, whose sentiments are generally directed, in the main, by the opinion and authority of others, opposed in this instance the reputation of Melancthon to that of Erasmus, aided by an impression on their minds of the indisputable superiority of the former in religious knowledge, in the integrity of his life, and in the practice of piety. Melancthon addressed Erasmus in the following strain:

Melancthon
to Erasmus. “You seem out of humour with the cause of religion, on account of the faults of certain individuals. Luther is of a very different stamp from these. The proofs are decisive: for, to say nothing of his controversy with the Roman pontiff, his opposition at this moment to a novel faction of sanguinary teachers,† at great hazard of his life, shows how thoroughly he dislikes ambition, cruelty, and rebellion. For my part, I cannot, with a safe conscience, condemn Luther’s sentiments, however I may be charged with

folly or superstition: That does not weigh with me.—Yet I would oppose them earnestly, if the Scriptures were on the other side. But most assuredly I shall never change my sentiments from a regard to human authority, nor the dread of disgrace. The discussion of the question of Free Will may prove useful to many. It will be your duty, my Erasmus, to be very cautious not to bring still greater odium upon the cause which the holy Scriptures so evidently favour. Moreover, as you have not yet condemned it, beware, lest, in attacking it with vehemence, you should wound your own conscience.”*

These sentiments and declarations do great honour to Melancthon, especially as they are the substance of his reply to a long and very artful complimentary letter written to him by Erasmus only a few weeks before. Erasmus had then just published his Diatribe, and was evidently trembling for the consequences.—“If Wittemberg,” says he, “had not been so far off, I would have gone there for a few days, on purpose to communicate with you and Luther.† I have read all your COMMON-PLACES or theological propositions; and I both love and admire, more than ever, your candid and happy genius; though I did stumble at some points, on which I should be glad to converse with you.”‡ Then, after relating how ill he had been used by many of the reformers, and had the nick-name of Balaam given to him; also what good advice he had given to the Pope Adrian, and refused both money and a deanery offered to him by that pontiff, he whispers into the ear of Melancthon these words: “Cardinal Campeggio, a man certainly of singular humanity, sent one of his agents to treat with me on many subjects, and, among other things, on the expedience of removing you to some other place. My answer was, that I most sincerely wished such a genius as yours to be perfectly free from all these contentions, but that I despaired of your recantation.—I open this secret to you, in the

* Ep. 821.

† Jortin observes, that his whole conduct shows he had no thoughts of paying such a visit; and that these were mere compliments, to pacify Melancthon and Luther. 340.

‡ This is the very book to which Luther refers, page 438, when he speaks of Melancthon’s invincible theological tracts.

* Op. Luth. Witt. II. 491.

† The Prophets, together with the Rustics.

entire confidence, that you will be candid enough not to divulge it to the wicked ones."* Melancthon condescended to take no further notice of this bait, than barely that Erasmus might depend on his good faith in whatever he should entrust to his secrecy.

The reply of Erasmus is penned in an angry spirit, though considerably bridled,

as far as Melancthon himself is personally concerned. He tells him, he had taken no great pains to induce him to forsake the Reformers, because he had foreseen he should lose his labour. He could have wished that a genius, born to improve literature, had been dedicated entirely to that service. There would still have been no want of actors in the present religious tragedy. He was far from being out of humour with Gospel doctrine, but there was a great deal in Luther that offended him; and especially his disposition to carry everything too far. "He had no doubt," he said, "of the sincerity of Melancthon; but he could not say the same of Luther."—He concludes, "If I had an opportunity of conversing with you, I would open my heart to you much more freely."†

The indisputable inference from all this is, that Erasmus, had it been in his power, would most gladly have withdrawn from the Reformers that credit which they derived from the reputation of Melancthon, as a coadjutor possessed of learning, moderation and integrity. He would have liked those excellent men better either if they had been stronger as a party, or if they had flattered him more. He saw many excellencies in them, but they were neither courtly nor docile; and as a body of men systematically connected together, he supposed they might soon crumble to pieces. On the contrary, in the existing hierarchy, though Erasmus acknowledged there was much to blame, yet he judged it both wiser and safer to adhere to a system in which there was so great a preponderancy of wealth and power, and which therefore would probably in the end prevail.—Add to this, though the ecclesiastical dignity had lately experienced a violent shock, yet that very circumstance had much contributed to render the rulers of the church less haughty and presumptuous, and more affable and con-

descending, especially towards such a character as Erasmus, whom, we have seen, they were most anxious to engage, as a supporter of their cause in the Lutheran controversy. Still further; Erasmus not only believed the Roman catholics to be the stronger party, but judged it necessary, in his circumstances, to keep on good terms with their ecclesiastical rulers. Sensible that, by his satirical publications and freethinking he had brought on himself many enemies among the clergy, he lost no opportunity of securing the good-will and protection of the pope and his cardinals. Thus; when Clement VII. was first raised to the papal throne, he congratulated him in the most flattering, submissive, and artful strain.* He said, he could not express the satisfaction it had given him to hear of his advancement to the popedom. He was precisely the man, who was possessed of the qualities, mental and bodily, which the very turbulent times required. He therefore angured something of a new felicity.—In regard to himself, Erasmus said, "he could venture to swear, with Christ as witness to his sincerity, that if his holiness did but know how he had been solicited by great princes, and enticed by his friends, to join the Lutheran conspiracy against the Roman see; also, how he had been provoked to do the same by certain monks and divines, and how steadfastly he had resisted motives of every sort; he would not think him undeserving of his protection, but would punish the author who had so often libelled him at Rome in the most scandalous manner.† This author," he said, "had picked out of his works a number of half sentences, and most impudently misrepresented them. Undoubtedly, if he could have foreseen the sectarians of the present day, he would have either suppressed many things which he had said, or written the same in a different manner. In the later editions he had left out many things, for the purpose of not giving a handle to ill-disposed persons; and would readily have altered other expressions, if any one had given him a friendly hint. On all occasions he submitted himself and his wri-

* Ep. to Clement VII. p. 788.

† Stanica, a Spanish divine, who went to Rome, and there published a book, entitled, *The Blasphemies and Impieties of Erasmus*. See Du Pin, p. 333.

* Ep. 820.

† Id. 833.

tings to the Roman see; and never should oppose its determination, even if he thought it wrong. For he would suffer anything rather than be guilty of sedition."

One cannot but deeply lament how little solicitous, throughout the whole course of these ecclesiastical dissensions, this very eminent scholar appears to have been, respecting what was true or not true. Indeed, he scrupled not to declare to his friend Botzem, that though truth was a thing efficacious and invincible, it ought to be dispensed with Evangelical prudence. "For myself," says he, "I so abhor divisions, and so love concord, that I fear, if an occasion presented itself, I should sooner give up a part of truth than disturb the public peace."*

Erasmus had dedicated to this same friend Botzem an elaborate catalogue of all his works; which he positively affirms, in a letter to cardinal Sadolet, he would by no means have done, if he had had the slightest suspicion that he had taken part with that faction which the Church had condemned.† But the accusation, he says, was unfounded.

What prodigious anxiety is here shown to be acquitted of the least imputation of any heretical connexion!

In another letter, he says, "What connexion have I with Luther, or what prospect of recompense from him, that I should join him in opposing Evangelical doctrine; or that I should take part against the Church of Rome, which I believe is not different from the true Church Catholic; or that I should oppose the Roman pontiff, who is the head of the Catholic Church—I, who should be sorry to resist the bishop of my own diocese! I am not so impious as to separate from the Catholic Church, nor so ungrateful as to dissent from Pope Leo, from whom I have experienced extraordinary favour and indulgence. Knowingly, I never have, nor ever will teach any erroneous doctrine; neither will I take the lead, or join in any tumult. Let others affect martyrdom: for my part, I do not hold myself worthy of that honour.—Do not suffer any calumnious reports, which you may hear, to render me suspected by you: Remain most perfectly assured, that nothing can be more certain, than that Erasmus always has

been, and always will be, a supporter of the Roman see, to which I am under the greatest obligations on many accounts, and to whose adversaries I am particularly studious to show my aversion."*

Thus, when Erasmus writes to a Cardinal, the papists are the Catholic Church; but when he writes to a Reformer, as Melancthon, he calls them the Popish sect, and observes, that he should dislike cruelty, even if he were the most bigoted papist.‡

This species of tergiversation throws an indelible stain on the memory of this great man; who, with a firmer temper, and purer religious motives, or in seasons of less temptation, might certainly have been much happier in his own mind, and abundantly more useful to the community.

He talked in the manner above described, endeavouring to steer between the dissentients, till nobody believed him; and till he himself would have been puzzled, I conceive, to have written a clear account of his own faith.—Yet, in one respect, he was most eminently qualified for the part which he had chosen to act: No man that ever lived, perhaps, possessed a superior neatness of expression, or a more masterly flexibility of language, when reducing to practice all the various arts of ambiguity and evasion.

It has been confidently asserted, that Luther, notwithstanding the high estimation in which he held his treatise on the Bondage of the Will,‡ departed afterwards from the sentiments maintained in that treatise, and embraced others less rigid, and less offensive to common sense and the ordinary feelings of mankind.—A diligent and careful examination of this matter has convinced me, that there is no foundation for this opinion; certainly none in that passage of his Commentary on Genesis, chap. xxvi. which has been produced in proof.—It may, however, be not improbable, that experience had taught Luther, in the latter part of his life, the expediency of being more careful to guard the pure doctrines of the Gospel against the abuses to which they are exposed from "curious and carnal

* To Card. Campeggio, 601.

† To Melancth. 820. "Si Papisticæ sectæ essem addictissimus."

‡ See page 438, and also the note (*) and Scultet. 34.

persons lacking the Spirit of Christ." So in his Commentary on Genesis, treating of the doctrine of Predestination, he makes the usual distinction between the secret and the revealed will of God, and observes, that that will of God is to be followed which we have expressly declared to us by the ministry of the word of God.* "I am the more desirous," says he, "to state this accurately, because I know that after my death many will make a bad use of what I have written, and thereby establish their erroneous and wild fancies of every kind. To be brief, they will take no notice of my repeated cautions, and will lay hold only of what I may have dropped concerning the secret will of God. Remember, then, what I now say; that with that secret will ye have nothing to do If you shall hear the call of Jesus Christ, and be baptized in his name, and shall LOVE his word, you may assuredly reckon yourself among the predestinated, and have no doubt of your salvation."† How completely do these ideas accord with the spirit of our seventeenth Article!

It is abundantly evident that Luther is here pleading against the abuse of the doctrine of the Divine prescience and predestination. For even persons of rank and distinction, he said, would talk in this wicked manner; namely, "If I am predestinated to be saved, then I shall be saved, whether I do good or evil. But if not, I shall be condemned without any regard to my works." Now if this be true, he contended, there would be no use in all that Christ had done for the salvation of mankind; no use in his incarnation, his passion, his resurrection; no use in the Prophets, the Sacraments, or in all the sacred volumes. The argument was mischievous, nay diabolical in its nature, and would lead men either into despair, or the contempt of God and his revelation. They would soon say with the Epicureans, Let us enjoy life, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. But to all such imaginations the antidote was, a true knowledge of God and his Christ. God is faithful, who hath promised. If God were not faithful to his promises, there would be an end of all our hopes of salvation. "Thus," says he, "in my treatise on the Bondage of the Will, and in other places, I have

observed that questions may be put concerning the secret or the revealed will of God. Now we know nothing of God any farther than he has been pleased to reveal himself. Moreover, what is above our comprehension is nothing to us. Deep speculations and prying into matters not revealed, can do no good: they serve the devil's purpose, and may prove our utter ruin."*

9. MELANCTHON'S JUDGMENT OF THE CONTROVERSY BETWEEN LUTHER AND ERASMUS.

In regard to Melancthon's judgment of this controversy, we have seen that Luther appealed to his Theological tracts, as containing an invincible answer to the Diatribe of Erasmus:‡ nor can there be the smallest doubt, but that the former edition of those tracts maintained the complete inability of man, in full as strong terms as Luther himself on any occasion had supported that doctrine. "The divine predestination," said Melancthon, "takes away the liberty of man. For both the external actions, and the internal thoughts, of all created beings whatever, take place agreeably to the Divine predestination. The judgment of a carnal man resists this sentiment; but a man of spiritual understanding approves it. Moreover, the mind which is deeply affected with a sense of the Divine predeterminations, will always have the profoundest reverence for God, as well as the most steady dependence on him."‡

Some alterations in the expressions which took place in the later editions of these tracts, have given rise to an opinion that Melancthon, partly moved by the arguments of Erasmus, and partly disgusted with Luther's rigid doctrines of the Will, changed his sentiments on the important subject of the Freedom of the human Will.§ To assist our judgments in this matter, several observations may be made. And first, Melancthon, in a letter to Erasmus himself, written more than three years after the publication of the Diatribe, and more than two years after the publication of Luther's answer, and lastly, after he had read both the first and the second part of the Hyperaspistes, very clearly inti-

* See Art. 17 of Church of England.

† Luth. Op. VI. 354.

* Luth. Op. VI. 353. Also Scultet. 34.

‡ See page 438. † Scultet. 38.

§ Id. 37. Also Brandt.

mates that he still continued in the same sentiments with Luther. For he says, "Though I AM IN THE HABIT OF SPEAKING OUT WHAT I THINK OF THE CONTROVERSY which you have had with Luther, yet I never loved him to such a degree as to wish to increase his vehemence in a dispute. I wish this bitter contest between you had not happened.—Perhaps he has not treated you with sufficient respect; but then, on the other hand, you have reviled him to an astonishing degree."*

Secondly; More than twenty years after the date of the last-mentioned letter, Melancthon writes thus in his defence against Flacius, who had accused him of having altered the Protestant doctrines. "I am still of the same opinion that I was when I wrote my Theological tracts; a book now in the hands of many persons; and which is, in fact, a summary of those doctrines of Luther which had been delivered by him in various commentaries and in volumes of sermons. I submitted every part of my manuscript to the judgment of our Church, and of Luther himself; and on many points I consulted him very particularly."†

Thirdly; An attentive reader of the later editions of Melancthon's Theological tracts will observe, that the author has inserted cautions against the dangerous Stoical notion of fate and necessity; and also certain distinctions respecting that degree of freedom of will which remains even in fallen and unrenewed men, who nevertheless, by mere nature, do certain external works of the law, and also exercise a discretion in regulating their ordinary concerns. Luther makes a concession nearly to the very same purpose in his *Bondage of the Will*.‡ But both these eminent Reformers are uniformly steady in asserting the great practical doctrine of original sin, and the natural enmity of the human heart to the holy law of God. "In that point," says Melancthon expressly in his chapter on

Free Will, "the human will is CAPTIVE, AND NOT FREE: NEITHER CAN IT DELIVER ITSELF FROM THIS EVIL PROPENSITY, OR FROM DEATH, ITS CONSEQUENCE. THIS SAD CONDITION THEREFORE SHOULD BE FELT AND OWNED, IN ORDER THAT WE MAY HAVE A CLEAR VIEW OF THE BENEFITS OF CHRIST, WHO TAKES AWAY SIN AND DEATH."*

Fourthly; Though it must be owned there are some passages in Melancthon's Theological tracts, both in the chapter on Free Will, and on the Cause of Sin, which appear so obscure and contradictory, that they may well give rise to a degree of doubt and hesitation respecting the real sentiments of the writer; yet there exists a letter of this good man to Calvin himself, which, in my judgment, has cleared up this point as effectually as a matter of this kind admits of illustration from history. "My hypothesis," says Melancthon to Calvin, "is this; that God is neither the cause of sin, nor approves of sin. In the next place, I admit a contingency in our present weak condition of the judgment, that the unlearned may know that David rushed into sin by his own voluntary act: and I think that the same David, when he had the Spirit of God, might have retained it; and, moreover, that in that struggle there was some action of the Will. Now though these points MAY be stated with greater subtilty, yet this mode of expressing them appears to me suited to practical purposes. Whenever we sin, we should blame our own wills; and not set up ourselves against God by seeking for the cause of our sin in his counsels." . . . He then proceeds to say, "We should make the word of God our foundation; and not oppose the promises, but believe them; and not say, We will believe, as soon as we know what are the secret decrees of God. God helps the believer; and it is through his own word that he helps effectually."—Melancthon concludes with these remarkable words: "I do not write these things to you in a dictatorial spirit; it is not for me to dictate to so very learned a person, and so very well skilled in the exercises of piety; and indeed I am satisfied that these VIEWS OF MINE AGREE WITH YOURS, but they are stated in a ruder or less refined manner, and are adapted to use."†

* Ep. 1072.

† *Defens. contra Flac. lib. I. Ep. Melan. 133.* As the first edition of Melancthon's *Common-places, or Theological tracts*, is exceedingly scarce, I have given in the Appendix a fuller account of its contents, so far as they relate to the difficult subject of the Divine decrees. See Appendix, Melancthon's *Common-places.*

‡ 435, b.

* Melancthon. *De Lib. Arbitrio*, 166, b.

† Calv. IX. *Ep. and Respons.* 174.

The pious reader will not be at a loss to draw for himself the legitimate conclusion from these facts. He will see, that in the grand Christian article of original sin, and the total inability of man, and the necessity of the renovating grace of Christ, Melancthon was as sound and as steady as Luther himself; though, perhaps, he did not on all occasions grasp his objects with the force and the distinctness of his master.—If he had altered his sentiments materially on the Bondage of the Will, or, what is the very same thing, on the propensity of the human nature to evil, it is impossible he could have written in this manner to a man who entertained the sentiments of Calvin: and we are to remember, that the letter was written so late as the year 1543.

Still, there is nothing in all this inconsistent with a conscientious dislike of the fatalism of the Stoics; or a disapprobation either of certain peculiar expressions written many years ago by Melancthon himself, or of the Stoical tendency of some of the writings of the divines of Geneva. We may add, that the animadversions of Melancthon on the Calvinistic divines, in some instances, do manifestly respect their bigotry and intolerance, rather than any want of orthodoxy in their principles. Thus when he complains to his friend Camerarius of the violence of the contests respecting the Stoical doctrines of necessity, and tells him that a person had been actually imprisoned because he dissented in opinion FROM ZENO,* we are at no loss to comprehend why he should have been understood by some persons to have had his eye on the followers of Calvin, and perhaps on Calvin himself, and to have represented them as introducing the heathen notions of fate and predestination; † nor need we wonder that he should have thought proper to soften, or totally expunge, in his later Theological tracts, all expressions on the subject of predestination, like those mentioned in page 463, which certainly are more exceptionable, because less guarded, and more liable to abuse than anything advanced by Luther on this difficult article of religion.

When the diligent and impartial student has well considered all these things, he will see what little reason there is to

represent Melancthon as having greatly disliked Luther's treatise on the Bondage of the Will, and judged it a dangerous and hurtful book, in which everything is carried too far, and in which invincible arms are furnished to libertines and unbelievers for the rejection of Revelation. As little reason will he find for the insinuation, that Melancthon, in consequence of this publication of Luther, began to separate himself from the system of that great Reformer.* How careful ought historians to be in leaving on record concise, equivocal, and incautious remarks, which perhaps at first were intended to mean but little: but which, afterwards having been exaggerated without warrant, and often copied by writers succeeding one another, at length acquire a degree of currency, capable of deceiving posterity,—and this almost without leaving a possibility of detecting the imposture.

The learned biographer of Erasmus allows that Luther's sentiments were at bottom the same with those of Augustine; but that Erasmus was unacquainted with that circumstance, † and imagined that he was only disputing against Luther, while in reality he was as much opposing Thomas Aquinas and his followers as the Reformer of Wittemberg. The same author tells us, that Luther had learnt his notions of fatalism from Augustine, and also from him had learnt to think ill of the Pelagians; and moreover, that Luther misunderstood and misapplied some passages in St. Paul's epistles, which in those days were not so fully cleared up as they have been since. ‡

The intelligent reader probably knows enough of the sentiments of Jortin to be aware of the manner in which that author would be disposed to clear up certain doctrinal passages in the writings of St. Paul; and therefore no more need be said on this head. The evidence, how-

* See Beausobre, III. 258, who, however, allows that there is no proof that Luther himself abandoned his system, whatever may have been said to the contrary. It is true enough, that in no very great length of time after Luther's decease, many of his followers, who still preserved the denomination of LUTHERAN, departed materially from the principles of their master; and I wish that in so doing it might be found they did not also lose the spirit of the Gospel.

† Jortin, 335 & 403.

‡ Id. 336.

* IV. Ep. 796. p. 923.

† Meleh. Ad. V. Calv. 43. fol. 86. 8vo.

ever, of such a writer and such a scholar may well deserve our notice, when he speaks positively to the following important fact.

Luther's "favourite doctrine was justification by faith; and not by works, moral, legal, or evangelical: but we must do him the justice to observe, that he perpetually inculcated the absolute necessity of good works; according to him, a man is justified only by faith; but he cannot be justified without works; and where those works are not to be found, there is assuredly no good faith."*

10. HOSTILITY OF ERASMUS: HIS APOLOGIES.

THE publication of the treatise on the Bondage of the Will produced an irreparable breach between Erasmus and Luther. Even Beausobre admits, that the former became the irreconcilable enemy of the Lutherans, and lost no opportunity of speaking ill of them.† Erasmus, in one of his letters, says, "Luther has written in such a way as to have left no room for friendship, and yet he thinks he has most wonderfully bridled his passion."‡

Luther, however, with a more Christian spirit, and with the hope of preventing the mischief which, through the exasperated pen of Erasmus, might happen either to the Reformation in general, or to individuals who were disposed to befriend it, ventured once more to write a conciliatory letter to the man whom he had irritated so much by his answer to the Diatribe. In this letter he confessed the infirmity of a violent temper, which was apt to carry him too far; but, in return, he received nothing from Erasmus but reproaches and reviling language. "You have written against no person," says he, "more savagely or more maliciously: and I am not so much of a child as to be easily wheedled and cajoled into good-humour." Erasmus concludes his letter thus: "I could wish you a better disposition, unless you are mightily pleased with your own. To me you may wish whatever you will, only do not wish me to have your disposition, unless indeed God should change it for you."

It is painful to see to what lengths of calumny the resentment of Erasmus could carry him, all the while professing himself to be actuated by pure Christian

motives. Had he confined the operation of his ill-humour to Luther only, whose treatment of him was certainly sufficiently provoking to a proud man accustomed to hear little except his own praises, he would have been much more excusable. But what shall we think of such declarations, as, "I hate these Gospellers; as for many other reasons, so particularly for this, that through them literature declines everywhere, and is on the point of perishing; and without letters, what is life? They love money and a wife, and care not a rush for anything else. We have been stunned long enough with the cry of Gospel, Gospel, Gospel! we want Gospel morals."* The angry writer here alludes to those priests and monks who embraced the Reformation, and, along with that, a state of matrimony.

Erasmus had sense enough to see that the Church stood in need of reformation: moreover, his satirical wit was of infinite use in exposing the immoralities of the clergy, and in lowering their credit. But he had neither the courage to stand forward himself as a reformer, nor the honesty to join those who ventured their lives in the good cause. As long as the success of these heroes seemed entirely doubtful, he appears to have treated them with considerable candour and respect,† and to do him justice, always exclaimed against attempts to extirpate them by cruelty and persecution. But, when they were become strong and numerous, and could do without his help, his pride was so deeply wounded, that he constantly showed himself their determined adversary. Yet, in his opposition to them, he found himself miserably fettered by his former and even his present connexions, and also by many things which, both in his letters and his publications, he had advanced in harmony with the sentiments of the Reformers. Hence that timidity, double-dealing, chagrin and resentment, which one laments in the conduct of this great man during the latter part of his life.

We are never, I think, so much disposed to be out of humour with Erasmus,

* Ep. 1069.

† "I fear," says Erasmus, "exceedingly for poor Luther; so much does the conspiracy work on all sides. The great men also, especially pope Leo, are irritated against him."—To Gerard Novium. 577, in the year 1530.

* Jortin, 120.

† III. 260.

‡ To Bilibald, 940.

as when he appears to triumph in the unhappy dissensions of the first Reformers.—“Fight,” says he, in a letter to Conrad Pelican, “among yourselves:

Erasmus
to Conrad
Pelican.

Zuingle and Ecolampadius against Luther and Pomeranus; and again, Balhasar against the former; and Farel against you. Shall I, at the hazard of my life, nay of my salvation, connect myself with such a discordant faction? Whatever mischief happen to you, impute it to yourselves: I always foretold that no good could come of such proceedings.”* In another place he says, “When Luther first appeared in this new character, I augured but too truly that matters would come to this pass; but I was not believed. Now, as is the case with fools, he has learnt by experience to be so moderate in his measures that he almost publishes a recantation.”† And again: “This Gospel fever, for so I choose to call it, begins to remit, and to afford a prospect of returning health. What comes from Luther now, is of such a kind, that he seems to recant his former doctrines; and thus his very disciples are out of humour with him, and are inclined to call him a heretic, and a man destitute of the spirit of the Gospel, and grown crazy by giving way to human reasonings!!”‡

What a bad spirit manifests itself in all this miserable misrepresentation!!

It was not unusual for the Protestants to select from the writings of Erasmus, and circulate among the people, such passages as favoured themselves and their cause. This procedure, while it weakened the authority of their adversary, was apt to inflame his resentment to the highest pitch. Gerard Noviomagus, who had formerly been an intimate of Erasmus, affords an instance of this sort. This reformer, disgusted with the unmanly conduct of his friend in the business of religion, exposed, in several small publications, his inconsistency and want of principle; and, in particular, charged him with having formerly maintained the unlawfulness of putting heretics to death.

The APOLOGY of Erasmus upon this occasion is one of the most exceptionable pieces among all his voluminous writ-

ings. He calls it a letter against certain professors of the Gospel falsely so named. —Under pretence of criticising the bad practices of some, “he defamed during this year,” says a very candid Annalist, “all the friends of the Reformation to a man; and this to please the emperor, who was coming from Italy into Germany.”* He himself, to avoid suspicion, had left Basil, where a reformation of the church had taken place, and was gone to Friburg.† It is not worth while to trouble the reader with many extracts from this most peevish and acrimonious treatise. He now began to maintain, that there were certain heresies, which had the nature of blasphemy and sedition; and he asked, Whether, in such cases, the sword was to be withheld from princes? It was a fault, he owned, to drag men to the fire for EVERY ERROR; but it was also wrong to contend, that NO HERETIC whatever ought to be put to death by the civil magistrate.‡ “Then as to the corrupt state of the Church,” he said, “there was in ecclesiastical institutions, as in other human affairs, a beginning, a progress, and a completion: and to pretend to reduce the Church to its first and original principles, was as absurd as to put an adult back again into his cradle.”§ To be brief, he was of opinion that if St. Paul were then alive, he would not disapprove of the present state of the Church, but would declaim against the vices of men.||

He makes an invidious comparison between the primitive Christians and these novel evangelists, calumniating the latter in every way he could devise. “The former recommended their doctrine by mildness and simplicity of manners, and by patience in bearing injuries; whereas the societies of the latter abounded with adulterers, drunkards, gamesters, and spendthrifts.” He said, “It had been his misfortune not to know a single person who had not been made a worse character by joining the Gospellers. Luther’s cause was not of the very worst kind at first, but he had raised such dis-

* Scultet. XXIX. 250.

† Sleidan, VI. 169.

‡ Op. Eras. X. 1576.

§ Id. X. 1585.

|| Id. X. 1587.

* To Conrad Pelican, 964.

† Id. 1137.

‡ To Sadolet, 1125.

turbances, that Melancthon was at this very time following him wherever he had been, as *LITE* follows *ATE*, endeavouring to restore peace and harmony.*

One might here be allowed to ask,—How could Erasmus here forget the numerous encomiums on the virtues and piety of the Reformers, which are to be found dispersed through his writings?—Also, how is it that he was not aware, that if he himself had been seized as a heretic, he would infallibly have been condemned at a tribunal of Monks, and probably would have met with the same fate from the Pope and his Cardinals if he had been caught at Rome; unless indeed the unparalleled dexterity of his address, and the flexibility of his language, might have saved him?—The answer is, Erasmus was then in a passion.

The Protestant clergy of Strasburg thought proper to reply to the indiscriminate slander of Erasmus. But as this tract is not before us, all we can say of it is, that the Reformers had very just cause for complaint. Erasmus considered his old friend Noviomagus as the real author of the work; and, in an ill-humoured epistle to Melancthon, speaks thus of him: “Formerly, one Noviomagus had a most extraordinary affection for me; but being a little intoxicated, he travelled to Strasburg, and is now there raging as violently against me as if I had murdered his father, his mother, his grandfather, and grandmother. He had subscribed his own name to four pamphlets:—and the fifth comes out under the name of the ministers of Strasburg, and is as seditious a publication as can exist.”† Upon reading the last-mentioned treatise, Erasmus became so outrageous, that he published an answer to it, addressed to the BRETHREN of the Lower Germany, which is infinitely more violent and slanderous than his preceding Apology against the pretended Gospellers. The following is a specimen of the spirit which pervades this performance. “I knew a certain person whom for more than ten years I loved as if he had been my own son; and, in return, the youth was as dutiful to me as to a father. There was in him every appearance of a good

disposition. But as soon as he had had a draught of this evangelical spirit, he began, contrary to all expectation, to be a good player at dice, a sinner up all night at cards, and a man of an elegant taste for lewd women. By and by, he began to wear a long sword in a slovenly dissolute manner, and to think of matrimony. —Lastly, he took offence at half a word, and, from being my friend, suddenly changed into a viper against me, and became as greedy of revenge as if I had murdered his mother.

“I could mention another, who is strongly attached to the same party; a man, against whom I never said a word, but have often commended him both in my conversation and my writings; a man to whom I have done some good turns; who, though he never expostulated with me, yet since his departure, has discovered the most bitter enmity towards me; and not content with wounding my character in conversation, has written a pamphlet against me, which he reads to his pot-companions. And all this because I refused to act the part of a madman like himself. Further, I was no restraint to the man; I even pleaded his excuse with the bishop: I warned him, in a letter, of the danger he had to apprehend from a magistrate. He profited by the advice; and, upon receiving a summons, chose rather to quit the place. Now, this man is one of the heads of the Gospel party!”

Thus the author goes on with one story after another.*

“In matters of business,” he says, “had found the Gospellers more unfeeling, and less to be trusted, than other people;” and adds, “that he was acquainted with some of the Roman Catholic bishops, whose sanctity he preferred to that of a thousand of the new sectaries.” He then tells us, “that he never went into their churches, but had often seen with his own eyes individuals coming from the service, and had often inquired of them very particularly what had been doing there, and whether, for example, when Ecolampadius preached, they had ever seen a single person sighing or shedding a tear on account of his sins: that the answer was, Not one;—but that they had seen many yawning and half asleep.”†

* Op. Eras. X. 1578 to 1582. *ATE* is the goddess of mischief; *LITE* the goddess of entreaty.

† Ep. Melancthon, 1301.

* Op. Eras. X. 1607 to 1609.

† Id. X. 1611.

Erasmus proceeds to ask, Why the evangelical sectaries should shrink so much at the charge of sedition, when Luther himself had maintained in his writings, that it was the peculiar nature of the Gospel to excite seditious!*— Yet this is the same man, a large portion of whose voluminous writings consists of complaints against heat and violence, misrepresentation, and want of candour!!

We must not deprive the reader of a few sentences towards the conclusion of this memorable Apology of Erasmus. He addresses the brethren thus: "I shall say nothing of the author of the book, because I am not perfectly sure who he is. But certainly it is a most empty, slanderous, and seditious publication, and as foolish as it is deficient in learning.† You, my dear friends, I conjure not to suffer the appearance of false religion to impose on your simplicity, neither to let any one bewitch you to quit the communion of the Church.—In regard to a complete reform of the ecclesiastical state, the princes will take care of that; and the thing may be done by them without tumult. In the mean time, do ye preserve the unity of the Church, and turn neither to the right hand nor to the left. Beware diligently of those, whose speech is mild but contagious, creeping like a cancer. Objections are made to the bad lives of the priests: the tyranny of the papal decrees is exaggerated: the evil practices of the monks are exposed, and promises of liberty are held forth: This is the bait; but do ye take care, lest there should be found lurking under it a steel hook, which may entangle you, and prove your destruction. What greater folly than to show your hatred to priests and wicked monks, in such a manner as to render them no better, and to make yourselves worse than they are! For there is no fault worse than heresy or schism. Be it granted, that luxury, lewdness, ambition, avarice, and every other crime, may all be found in one single priest; heresy is, however, worse than this whole aggregate of vices. In all ages, there have been many complaints as well against priests and princes, as against the morals of the people. In different periods, different vices have predominated; but vices there always have

been. In our anger against ecclesiastics, let us not forget that they are but men. Practices, which are not to be borne, will be corrected by the authority of the princes much more efficaciously than by inexperienced upstarts, who exasperate the evils by the bad methods in which they undertake to remove them. Let Christ make the reform through the medium of Charles V. an emperor eminent for his power, eminent for his clemency, and equally eminent for his religion. The co-operation of the German princes may be depended upon; and there are many circumstances which induce us to entertain a good hope that the thoughts of the pope are turned the same way.— No reformation of the Church will succeed but what originates with our rulers. The pope alone, with the emperor, can do the business; and unless appearances deceive us, Christ hath actually influenced their minds to this good work."*

It is impossible for any one, who is conversant with the writings of Erasmus, to read these passages, without feeling a disagreeable mixture of indignation and contempt.

II. INCONSISTENCY AND LEVITY OF ERASMUS.

NOT a month before he had vented his spleen in this manner against the German protestants; and, at the same time, with so much candour, had formed these sanguine expectations, from the laudable exertions of the pope and the emperor, I find the very flexible Erasmus could write as follows to a learned and eminent Reformer, whose good opinion he did not wish to lose. "God alone, my dearest Philip, can unravel the confused plot of the tragedy which is now acting every where. Ten councils may assemble together, and yet not do it; much less I.— If a MAN PROPOSES ANYTHING EQUITABLE, he is instantly ACCUSED OF LUTHERANISM, and he has no other recompense."†

The mild and affectionate temper of Melancthon could not fail to feel the influence of kind and artful expressions; and there was reason to fear, lest sometimes a bad use should be made of the answers which might be drawn from him by the insinuating address and management of Erasmus in his letters. The excellent Camerarius saw the danger;

* Op. Eras. X. 1617.

† Id. 1627.

* Op. Eras. 1629.

† To Philip Melancth. 1206.

and as the breach between the Reformers and Erasmus was every day growing wider, he ventured to caution his friend Melancthon not to write any more to a man whose unfriendly disposition was no longer doubtful.

Melancthon, though naturally timid and pacific, was yet always conscientious, and often proved himself capable of vigour and activity, as soon as the line of his duty appeared distinct, and called for courage and decision. Accordingly, he not only profited by the friendly suggestions of Camerarius, but opened his mind on that occasion respecting Erasmus with less reserve than I remember him to have done in any other part of his writings. "I will follow your advice," says Melancthon ingenuously, in his reply to Camerarius: "inoreover, you know very well that I never much courted his friendship. What little penetration have our adversaries! They are fond of the man, who has dispersed throughout his writings the seeds of many opinions, which, if Luther had not arisen, would perhaps at length have produced far more grievous disturbances, and have drawn men's attention another way. All this bitter contention concerning the Lord's Supper appears to owe its origin to him. Then, in some places, how far does he seem from disliking Arius and his party, to which we here are most firm in our opposition! Lastly, is there, in all his writings, a syllable on the subject of justification, or on the rights of governors, which is truly worthy of a Christian man? I would gladly see these topics fully handled by great writers; but let those extol HIM who do NOT KNOW HIM."*

Such had been the tergiversation and versatility of Erasmus, such the most solemn protestations of the sincerity of his faith, and so many the ambiguous and satirical effusions of his wit on occasions which could not but give offence to serious and pious minds, that it is not easy to point out the person who really loved and respected this otherwise great and venerable character. At the end of the year 1527, we find

The emperor writes to Erasmus, A. D. 1527.

the emperor himself writing to Erasmus, and telling him how great was his satisfaction to have been informed, by Erasmus's own letters, that the madness of the Lutherans began to decline. "The whole Christian world," he said, "was indebted to him for having effected that which neither emperors, nor popes, nor princes, nor universities, nor numbers of learned men had been able to bring about." Notwithstanding all this gross flattery, the emperor, in the same letter, tells him, that he had allowed the Spanish Inquisition to examine his books—but that he had nothing to fear. The emperor was fully convinced of his orthodoxy. However, if it should appear that he had made any slip, or had advanced anything ambiguous, he would certainly, upon receiving a friendly admonition, clear it up, and, by thus removing everything that could give offence to weak minds, secure immortality to his writings.*

We need not observe, that, in this letter, there was quite as much bitter as sweet for Erasmus.

It added not a little to his mortification, that, about the same time, the Faculty of Divines of the University of Paris extracted upwards of thirty propositions from his writings, and censured them in very strong terms.† His letters and his defence on this occasion, are inimitable specimens of the author's great powers of evasion and address. There is in them an artful mixture of submission, sarcasm, and menace. Yet, after all, the situation of Erasmus was such, as exposed him rather to ridicule than envy.—Perpetually calling heaven and earth to witness how good a catholic he was, till nobody believed him; despising in his heart, and even hating the Parisian theologians, he yet condescended to make an ungracious sort of submission to them, and to own his having said things in his writings without sufficient caution; and, lastly, magnifying his own merits for having always been stanch to the Church, and vilifying the Reformers for their heresy, he could not however deny, but that, in arguing against impieties, he himself might have, in some in-

* Melancthon to Camerarius, IV. 676; where, for the sake of caution, he calls Erasmus Pothinus; which, in Greek, answers to Desiderius, one of the names of Erasmus. See also Scultet. XXIX. 250.

* Erasmus, 1047.

† Du Pin. III. 240 & 335. Also Op. Erus. IX. 819.

stances, fallen into errors of an impious nature.*

Erasmus, in the preface to his DECLARATIONS, expresses, in sarcastic language, sufficiently intelligible, his very great anxiety for the dignity and reputation of the divines of the Sorbonne. In his reply to their conclusion, he complains of the injury they had done to him, by representing him and Luther of the same class, when, in fact, not any one of his propositions entirely agreed with those of Luther:† and, in his letter to Beddæ, who was the principal instigator of the processes against him at Paris, he strongly intimates, that he might be so provoked by ill usage as to revolt to the enemies of the Church. Let the reader determine his meaning; his words are these: "If I should be overcome with injuries, and revolt to the enemies of the Church, of whom will God require my poor soul, but of you? That I have hitherto persevered, it is not by my own strength, but through the Divine assistance; and, by the same assistance, I hope to persevere to the end. But who may not be worn out by such atrocious and such perpetual abuse? If that should happen, do you not see what a disturbance it may be in my power to raise? and do you never consider what an extensive mischief may be the consequence of your present measures? Erasmus is not so devoid of friends as you suppose."‡

Almost two years before this remonstrance, he had addressed the same Parisian divine in a very long exculpatory epistle, composed in a most truly Erasmian style. "What can I do with all the suspicions of mankind? There are so many myriads of condemned articles; so many battalions of scholastic dogmas; so many connexions, partialities, and hatreds; so many sects, and so many mad brains, that it is impossible to please all. Hitherto I have endeavoured to act an upright part; and you would say so, were you here. If I were so fond of glory, as some suppose; nay, if I did not thoroughly, from the bottom of my heart, abhor factions and heresies, I

might have been either allured by numerous flatteries, or entangled by the various snares that have been laid for me; or again, I might have been driven either by the furious threats and pamphlets of the Lutherans, or by the no less furious publications, detractions, and slanders of the opposite faction, to take the field on the side of the Reformers, with whom, if I had connected myself, matters would have been by this time in such a state, that the censures of divines would have had no great weight. I know you will say, I make myself of vast consequence. I answer, I could speak of myself in a much higher style if I pleased, and very truly too. I do not repent of the part I have acted in thus keeping clear of the sectarians; and I hope, through God's help, to continue in the same mind; but if ye think that I deserve to be hunted thus by a set of wicked cavillers, you must take the consequences."*

There is no end of the contradictory declarations of Erasmus. The following is a remarkable instance.—Little more than half a year had elapsed since his address to the brethren of the Lower Germany, in which he attempts to mitigate the charges against the clergy, thinks very favourably of the religion of Charles V. and expresses good hopes of the pope's concurrence in the work of reformation,† when he writes to Matthias Kretzer in substance to this effect: "That the emperor was in a state of most violent irritation: and that there were those who were throwing oil into the fire.‡ That some who wore purple gowns did much mischief by their conduct; for though they could not but know that the luxury and pride of the clergy had been the chief cause of the present dissensions, yet they lived in incredible pomp, revelling, and sometimes playing at dice all night; and not even taking care to keep their practices from the knowledge of the people. That the haughtiness, not to say the tyranny, of the ecclesiastics, was on the increase: Their wealth and their luxury were also on the increase, but there was not the least diminution of their thirst after these things." "It was not for him," Eras-

* Ep. Coll. Sorb. Theol. Hisp. Sorbon. Senat. Par. Beddæ, 1031 to 1041.

† Eras. IX. 922.

‡ Beddæ, 1039. Erasmus wished to have prevented the publication of the censure of his works.

* Beddæ, 873.

† See page 468.

‡ Meaning the pope, who, with the emperor's assistance, was endeavouring to crush the reformers. See Jortin, I. 506.

mus said, "to judge of the pope, but those who came from Italy told things which he could not hear without sorrow. How harshly had he treated Florence! As far as he could judge, the pope, by the help of the princes, and by augmenting the number of his cardinals, was aiming at the extinction of every attempt at reformation. And what was all this but to provoke God more and more."*

The writings of Erasmus abound with humorous levities,† which, by persons of piety and religion, were not always deemed inoffensive. For example, in describing the revolution which took place at Basil, in 1529, he says, "Not a particle of an image

Erasmus's account of the revolution at Basil, A. D. 1529.

is left in the churches, so exceedingly hot is the war against idols in the midst of this cold weather. The images of the saints, and even of the crucifix, have been treated with so much ludicrous insult, that it may be thought extraordinary no miracle should have been wrought on the occasion, especially as the saints of former times were very touchy, and performed plenty of them in consequence of slight affronts. They tell horrid stories of saints, who, in many instances, punished persons for using profane expressions; insomuch, that I cannot but wonder that not one out of so many should revenge himself on the authors of this prodigious devastation. AS TO THE MILDNESS OF CHRIST AND THE BLESSED VIRGIN, THAT I AM NOT SURPRISED AT."‡

Even so early as the year 1521, we find Erasmus expressing himself on religious subjects in a manner inconsistent with that gravity of character which became his age and reputation for learning; insomuch, that, for many years past, the articles of his creed had been judged both scanty and uncertain.

The levity of Erasmus so early as A. D. 1521.

Let the following confession to his friend Richard Pace be attentively considered.—"At length I perceive the intention of the Germans is to involve me, whether I will or not, in the business of Luther. In so doing, they have acted unwisely, and have rather

Confession of Erasmus.

alienated me from their cause. What good could I have done Luther by sharing the danger with him, except that, instead of one man, two might have perished? I cannot conceive why he writes with such a spirit: I am sure he brings an odium on the lovers of literature. There is no doubt but he has taught many excellent doctrines, and also given much excellent advice; and I wish he had not spoiled the good by intolerable faults. But if every syllable he had written were unexceptionable, it was not my disposition to run the hazard of my life for the sake of truth. It is not every man who has sufficient courage to be a martyr; and I am afraid, that, in case of trial or persecution, I should follow Peter's example. I follow the decisions of the pope and the emperor when they are right, which is acting like a religious man; and when they are wrong, I submit, which is taking the safe side.—And I am of opinion that even good men may conduct themselves thus, when there is no hope of obtaining redress."*

Here, at once, from his own mouth, is the solution of all the enigmatical conduct of Erasmus.—Many sincere and excellent Christians have, I believe, been as timid and irresolute as he was, but their timidity and irresolution was their pain and their burthen. They prayed for grace to help in time of need; they never made light of their infirmities or besetting sins; but, on the contrary, viewed them as the enemies to their spiritual improvement, and struggled to obtain victory over them, constantly fighting like faithful soldiers of Christ, and diligently avoiding the snares of temptation. It was the gradual unfolding of the motives which governed Erasmus, and their practical consequences, which alienated from him, in their turns, the minds of the most eminent reformers; for example, of Luther first, and of Melancthon, more slowly, afterwards.—Luther freely confesses, that his most affectionate friend Justus Jonas incessantly solicited him to treat Erasmus with respect, and to avoid all harshness and asperity in his controversies with him. "You cannot think," he used to say, "how excellent and venerable a character the old man is."† But he had the satisfaction to find that

* Ep. 1361.

† See Luther's observation, in page 458.

‡ Ep. 1171. 1188. 1223.

* Ep. 651.

† Sect. II. 81.—Luth. Respons. Hen. VIII. 495.

Jonas altered his mind upon reading the first part of the *Hyperaspistes*. "I congratulate you," said he, "my excellent friend, on your recantation in regard to Erasmus, in whose praise you used formerly to have so much to say. You now paint him in his true colours, namely, as a viper full of deadly stings. I rejoice that the perusal of one of his *Hyperaspistes* has so effectually opened your eyes."*

This long detail of the controversy between Erasmus and Luther, and of the circumstances connected with it, will not be deemed uninteresting by any student of the history of the Church of Christ, who wishes to become acquainted with the real motives of the principal actors in those scenes which, under Divine Providence, brought about the blessed Reformation.—Erasmus, Luther, and Melancthon, are unquestionably to be reckoned among those principal actors, though by no means so as to exclude several others from their right to a substantial share of the praise. The unhappy inconsistencies which we have remarked in the character of Erasmus, though extremely derogatory to his personal worth, in no wise weaken the proofs we have given of the great advantages which the cause of Christian liberty derived from certain parts of his labours. As these contributed much to unveil the tyranny, corruptions, and iniquitous lives of the clergy, they prepared men's minds for that shock which the papacy was soon to receive; a shock, however, of which Erasmus neither foresaw the probability, nor wished to be the author.—His memorable interview at Cologne with the elector Frederic, and his account of a number of propositions which he considered as axioms in the affair of Luther, took place at a most important and critical juncture.† In regard to Luther, there can be no necessity to repeat often what nobody denies; namely, that his eye was always single and steady. The frequent insinuations of the operation of ambitious motives, may, perhaps, have produced unfavourable impressions on some minds; nevertheless, all such impressions are without warrant, and cannot fail to vanish on the mere inspection of the decisive docu-

* Ep. by Aurifab. II. 353.

† See the Elector's interview with Erasmus, Ch. VI. Cent. XVI.

ments, both public and private, which are contained in this History.

Of Melancthon we may truly say, that integrity, piety, and discretion, were parts of his character; for these virtues posterity do him ample justice: at the same time, nobody, I think, who knows him well, considers him as a model either of unusual firmness or extraordinary penetration. The characters both of Luther and of Erasmus appear to me to have been very much misunderstood; and that labour is well employed which contributes to rectify erroneous judgments of this sort. The asperity and positiveness of Luther have had the effect of lowering him too much: The politeness and civility of Erasmus have contributed to raise him too high; and it is with no little concern that I am constrained to add, that the propensity of his religious sentiments—to make the very best of them—towards the Pelagian, or half Pelagian heresy, secures him but too favourable a reception with many modern divines. The Church of England reprobates Pelagianism expressly; and therefore such of its members as are disposed to applaud the comments and interpretations of Erasmus and his admirers, would do well to examine, whether, in so doing, they act consistently with their own confessions of Faith.*

CONCLUSION OF THE CONTROVERSY WITH ERASMUS.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM THE CONCLUSION OF THE CONTROVERSY WITH ERASMUS, TO THE CONCLUSION OF THE SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY.

CONCESSIONS OF LUTHER MADE TO HENRY VIII. AND DUKE GEORGE OF SAXONY. CONSEQUENCES OF THOSE CONCESSIONS. CONTINUATION OF THE CHAPTER.

LUTHER WAS not much in the habit of making concessions. It is however greatly to his praise, that, notwithstanding the violence of his natural temper, there are yet not wanting in his conduct instances of extraordinary self-government, at particular junctures, when the

* See Article IX. of the Church of England.

cause of the Gospel appeared to him to require moderate and pacific measures.

We have seen, in the last chapter, his attempts to conciliate Erasmus, and secure at least the neutrality of a man, whose avowed hostility might impede the progress of the Reformation. His treatment of Henry VIII. and of George of Saxony, are examples of the same kind.

In the year 1521, he had published a very rough and churlish reply to Henry's celebrated answer to his treatise on the Babylonish Captivity.* Erasmus had highly commended the king's book, even before he had read it; † but Luther had criticised the several parts of it without ceremony; and, in his conclusion, had said, "If the liberty I take with the king should offend any person, let him have this answer: First, I have to do with unfeeling monsters, who have despised all my best and most modest writings, and also my exceedingly humble submissions; and have grown bolder in consequence of my moderation. Secondly, I have abstained from falsehood and from bitterness; whereas the king's book is full of both. And, lastly, it is no such great matter that I should treat with contempt and severity an earthly king, who has blasphemed and profaned the King of heaven by his virulent misrepresentations." ‡

A little experience had convinced Luther, that he had done no good by exasperating a tyrant of the cruel and resentful character of Henry VIII. For no sooner had the angry monarch read the book, than he complained heavily to the elector Frederic, to the dukes John his brother and George his uncle, of the proceedings of Luther. "All Germany," he said, "was in the utmost danger from the spreading of his doctrines. Moreover, they ought by no means to allow Luther's false translations of the New Testament to be dispersed among their subjects."

Then the duke George, as might be expected, joined heartily in the censure; and told Henry, that he had punished the bookseller who had first imported and sold an impression of Luther's Testament among his subjects. §

The answer of Frederic also was timid and evasive. He pretended ignorance of such subjects; and wished everything to be referred to a general council.*

Add, that it could not escape Luther, in reflecting on the mischievous consequences of his imprudent provocation of the king of England, that Henry's urgent solicitations of Erasmus to take the field against the arch-heretic ought not to be omitted. † What could gratify the enraged controversialist more, than to see the adversary, who had treated his royal dignity with so little respect, defeated and humbled by the supposed invincible pen of Erasmus?

But another reason, more than any that have yet been mentioned, operated powerfully on the mind of Luther, and inclined this undaunted Reformer to make concessions to king Henry VIII. Christiern, king of Denmark, had taken prodigious pains, both in conversation and by letters, to persuade him, that if he would only condescend to address the English monarch in very modest language, he might be gained over to the cause of pure Evangelical truth. Luther owns that he was in a manner inebriated by these large promises, and began to waver. "Who knows," said he, "but, in a happy hour, I may gain the king of England? Certainly, I should incur the Divine displeasure, were I to lose any favourable opportunity."

Under the influence of these motives, he wrote to Henry in the most submissive style, confessing, that, at the instance of other persons, he had grievously offended his majesty by a foolish and precipitate publication. "He received, however, daily," he said, "such accounts of the king's clemency, that he could not but hope for forgiveness. He also had been told, that his majesty was not the real author of the book which had been edited against Luther under the king's name." He takes occasion to call Cardinal Wolsey the pest of the kingdom; and adds, that it rejoiced his heart to hear that his majesty began to favour the Gospel, and to be tired of those abandoned sycophants who had disgraced him. "If the king pleased," he added, "he was ready to own his fault publicly; and he trusted, that if he might be allow-

Luther's
Concessions
to Henry VIII.

* P. 333.

† Ep. to Richard Pace, 600.

‡ Luth. contra Reg. Aug. II. 347.

§ Sleidan. IV. 91.

* Com. de Luth. p. 278.

† See page 431 of this Vol.

ed to write to the king of England concerning the present state of religion, service would thereby be done to the Gospel of Christ and the glory of God."

He then entreated his majesty to consider what possible harm a man could do, who taught nothing but that we are to be saved by believing in Jesus Christ the Son of God, who suffered for us, and rose again from the dead. This was the fundamental doctrine upon which he erected all the rest; as, love to our neighbour, obedience to rulers, and mortification of the body of sin.—What harm, he asked, was there in these articles of Christian doctrine? Why was he to be condemned, neither heard, nor convicted?

His serene majesty saw how many princes, how many states in Germany, and also how many persons of the greatest wisdom, now supported the Lutheran principles; and he wished that it might please Christ, by his distinguishing mercy, to add king Henry to the number, and separate him from the dominion of the papal tyranny over the souls of men.

In this humiliation of Luther, though the purity of his motives is by no means to be suspected, and though he surrendered not a single iota of the articles of religion for which he had so long contended, yet some, perhaps, might be found among his admirers, who thought that he had gone quite far enough, either for the dignity of a leading Reformer, or the simplicity of a follower of Christ. With such, even of his sincere friends, Luther could certainly find but little pity, under his disappointment from the failure of his attempt at reconciliation with Henry; while his avowed adversaries would as certainly triumph, in the rebuff he met with from the haughty and indignant monarch.

Henry reproached him with levity and inconstancy. "It was no wonder," he said, "that he had calumniated Wolsey, when, for seven years past, he had spared no dignity, divine or human, civil or ecclesiastic. He had blasphemed the saints, treated the apostles with contempt, and despised the holy Mother of Christ. Cardinal Wolsey was peculiarly dear to him, as one who did great service to the kingdom of England in general, and was distinguished by his constant care in guarding the country from the contagion of the Lutheran heresy.—Lastly, he charged Luther with having, at the instigation of the devil, made a sacrile-

gious and incestuous marriage: in this he had committed an execrable crime: a crime, for which, had he been under the old Roman government, the Vestal nun whom he had married must have been buried alive, and he himself have been cut to pieces with stripes."*

About three months after Luther had made submission to Henry VIII. he resolved to try the effect of a similar step upon the mind of his bitter persecutor, George of Saxony.—So early as the year 1523, count Albert of Mansfield, a friend

Luther's concessions to Duke George of Saxony.

of the Reformation, had exhorted Luther to endeavour, by milder language, to moderate, if possible, the ferocity of the Saxon tyrant; and he had answered to this effect: "I am ready, provided I do not sacrifice the glory of the Gospel, to offer my bounden duty and service, as becomes a Christian, not only to the duke George, but to all my enemies; and I allow you to promise him, on my part, all the obedience he can desire, if he will but desist from committing outrages against the word of God. On the other hand, if he be determined to rage in this manner, he may rest assured that there is nothing can be mentioned to which I am less disposed, than to humour his blind, wretched, and furious passions. I could not have thought there had been in the head of this duke so much folly and madness."†

In the year 1525, Luther had again been made to believe, as he himself assures us, on the authority of many great and excellent characters, subjects of the duke George, that he might, by writing to that prince in a spirit of mildness and moderation, certainly induce him in a short time to become a warm friend, instead of a cruel persecutor, of the Gospel. Accordingly, he wrote to him in substance, as follows:

He confessed that, among others, he had treated his highness with some asperity; but that, in the mean time, he had also edited such sermons and various lucubrations of a practical and consolatory stamp, as must prove to a demonstration that he had no malevolence

* Maimbourg in Seek. 37. Sleidan. VI. 145. Coehlaus, 121.

† Ep. II. 134. 6. Com. de Luth. CIV.

towards any creature, and that the great object of all his labours, contentions, and dangers, was to do good to mankind.

It was a great grief to him to have been informed that his highness became more and more violent. On that account, he had resolved to admonish him in a respectful and an affectionate manner:—perhaps this was the last letter he should ever write to him. He called to witness God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, as far as his most secret thoughts were known to himself, and which God certainly knew, he was influenced entirely by a sense of duty, and a desire to promote the salvation of his highness.

He came, he said, with tears, and he laid his very heart at the feet of his highness, and humbly entreated him to be no longer hostile to the doctrine of Luther.

For though the duke did not believe that Luther preached the word of God, yet he himself was so fully convinced of it, that he was constrained to be deeply concerned for the state of his highness's soul; and to watch and pray for him, and not to be weary of exhorting him, if by any means he might be the instrument of delivering him from the jaws of Satan, and presenting him to Christ. He entreated the duke not to despise him on account of his low rank or meanness. Almighty God, on one occasion, had made use even of the organs of speech of an ass.—He said, he was perfectly sure that neither his highness nor any power on earth could retard, obstruct, extinguish, or oppress his doctrine. Men might rage against it, but facts had shown it would flourish, break through all obstacles, extend itself, and acquire stability. The reason was, it was not his doctrine, nor that of any human being. Nevertheless, it gave him great concern to be forced to see a prince of so many excellent endowments making horrid attempts to dash to pieces that perilous rock Jesus Christ.

He prayed God, by his Holy Spirit, to impress his highness's mind in such a manner, that this sincere and submissive letter might be an instance of what Solomon says, that 'a soft answer turneth away wrath.'

He was ready to make every concession to his highness, except the single one of giving up his doctrine. He could not do that without inflicting a deadly wound on his conscience. He begged

pardon for having ever used any hasty and improper words respecting him, and he cast himself entirely upon his highness's clemency.

On the other hand, he, from his heart, forgave the duke all the injurious treatment he had received from his highness: and he said, he would earnestly pray our Lord Jesus Christ to pardon his highness's great criminality, in having so much opposed the word of God, that even yet it had found no place in his dominions: nor did he doubt of his prayers being answered, provided his highness did but desist from persecuting the Protestants.

In conclusion, Luther intimated that he might be compelled by necessity, if the duke George persisted in his cruel and tyrannical system of opposition to Christian liberty, to implore the assistance of Almighty God against him; and his highness might then learn, at length, what a sad thing it was to fight against God. As to himself and his despised associates, they had the most entire reliance on the Divine promises.*

The excessive bigotry and prejudice of the Saxon duke appears in almost every line of the answer which he gave to the preceding address. He charges Luther with having made Wittenberg the asylum of all the monks and nuns who had robbed churches and monasteries in his dominions: moreover, he then insinuates that the nuns were reduced to a most degraded, wretched, and scandalous situation. The devil, on account of all this mischief, might be a friend to Luther; but the duke could not be so. For surely he who was sorry if any one of his very lowest rustics should lose even a cow, ought to be much more sorry, as being the servant of Christ, when he was robbed both of the souls and bodies of his own subjects!

In regard to Luther's Gospel, he said it had been the cause why the holy sacraments, the sacred Mother of God, and all the Saints, had been blasphemed. These were the genuine fruits of his doctrines.

He then proceeds to charge Luther with having revived the old reprobated heresies, and abolished all the venerable modes of worshipping God; and concludes with blackening the disciples of

* Luth. Op. II. 488. Sleidan. VI. 144.

the reformers, in every way that a prejudiced understanding and a virulent imagination could devise.*

CONSEQUENCES OF THE CONCESSIONS OF LUTHER.

LUTHER had too much fire in his composition to bear very patiently the insults and affronts of a German prince, or even of an English monarch. It appears, however, that at first he had determined to take no notice of the falsehoods and revilings of George of Saxony. "All my humble remonstrances," says he, "are lost upon him; nor shall I give him any answer. For, why should not I put up with these things: I, who am compelled to bear the furious opposition, even of my own Absaloms."†

He had likewise resolved upon silence in regard to Henry VIII.; till he found that his own submissive letter, together with the king's answer, had been translated into German, and were published in one little treatise, with a preface, in which he himself was represented as having at length openly retracted his religious principles.‡

Luther instantly comprehended the policy of the papal party. He knew they were highly gratified in being allowed to reckon the king of England the avowed champion of their cause. They represented his majesty's letter as replete with good sense and erudition;§ and they expected that the royal authority would have weight among the German populace.

It behoved, therefore, our watchful guardian of the infant Reformation to

prevent, if possible, the mischievous consequences of his unsuccessful concessions; and it was with this view that, in the year 1527, A. D. 1527.

he printed, IN THE GERMAN LANGUAGE, LUTHER'S ANSWER TO THE ABUSIVE EPISTLE OF THE KING OF ENGLAND.

In this spirited performance, the author bids open defiance, in future, to all the enemies of the pure Gospel of Christ; and expresses sorrow that he had ever been induced, in this religious contest, to try the effect of condescensions, civilities, and submissions. "His adversaries were of such a kind, that they misconstrued or perverted everything he did. When he wrote with vehemence and severity, they called him arrogant and contentious: on the contrary, when he was gentle and submissive, it was instantly said, Luther flatters, or he retracts and owns his errors."—A radical dislike of the true doctrine, he said, was the bottom of all this misrepresentation.

"The arguments of his friends," he observed, "had certainly led him to hope, that, by a mild, humble, obsequious conduct, he might be the instrument of turning the hearts of several considerable personages; for example, Henry VIII., George of Saxony, and Erasmus; but he had been utterly disappointed in all these instances. In like manner, because he had displayed a spirit of obedience before Cardinal Cajetan, that dignitary immediately concluded he was going to recant.—And it was precisely so at Worms, that the more anxiety he showed, and more pains he took, to conquer prejudice by humility and tameness, the more did the haughty spirits of his adversaries swell with pride and passion, and lift up their crests against him."

Luther then proceeds to ask IRONICALLY, whether, even now, it might not be proper for him to adopt the same lenient and pacific measures, and to dress up a sort of recantation, for the inspection of the archbishop of Mentz, the dukes of Bavaria, and Ferdinand? He trusted he might be received in their palaces, and treated with the most exquisite dainties.—"And what harm," he asks, "supposing his petition to be rejected?—No harm whatever," replies Luther, with great gravity, and laying aside all irony;—"for what has such a poor beggar as Luther to do in royal palaces? whom

* Acta. Luth. Coleh. II. 9.

† Luther alludes here to the violent and unhappy disputes which he had at that time with his brethren the reformers concerning the nature of the Sacrament. To Hausm. II. 310. In this letter he also says, "I am glad that my answer to Erasmus pleases you. I expect from him harsher language than from the duke George. The viper will feel himself seized by the throat: and my moderation, in the Bondage of the Will, will have no effect upon him. God grant I may be disappointed; but I know that man's disposition; and I know the organs which Satan makes use of."

‡ His old adversary, Jerome Emser, was the translator. See Coch. II. b. and Luth. Respons. ad. Maled. II. 433. b.

§ Coch. 127.

does he look for there? Does he now learn, for the first time, that Satan reigns in such places? Oh! foolish Luther, to seek Christ where Satan fixes his throne! What! has Christ any communion with Satan? Go, Luther, and try to find John the Baptist in splendid apartments, and among great men, clothed in purple and soft garments!!"

He insisted, he had a public character to sustain; and, on that account, he would not bear in silence to be represented as though he had retracted his doctrines: It was not true. In his most submissive letters, both to Henry VIII. and to George of Saxony, he said he had expressly guarded against any such injurious construction.

He was determined therefore, in future, to regulate his conduct by the following principles; namely, 1. In all matters where the ministry of the word of God was not concerned, he would not only submit to his superiors, but was ready to beg pardon even of children. As a private man, he merited nothing but eternal destruction at the Divine tribunal. But, in regard to the ministry, for which he considered himself as having a commission from Heaven, there was so much dignity in it, that no man, especially a tyrant, should ever find him give way, submit, or flatter. Lastly, he besought his heavenly Father to enable him to keep his resolution. His profession was to teach the word of God; and as no man ought to impose silence in that respect, so there was a necessity that the word should continually be sounded in men's ears. It was useful, for support, for consolation, for rebuke, and for the pulling down of strong holds. "In spite of kings and princes," said Luther, "in spite of the whole world, and of Satan himself, I will never, with God's help, desert my station."*

In the latter part of this treatise, Luther laments most grievously on account of the unhappy schisms which had taken place among the Reformers, concerning the nature of the Eucharist. Some who took part against him in that controversy, he says, had been his friends, colleagues, and brethren, whom he had cherished as if they had been the children of his bosom; these he now considered as secret and domestic adversaries, and he treats them with inexcusable acrimony:

but we need not here repeat what has been before observed respecting Luther's obstinacy and want of candour.* It may perhaps be thought worthy of remark, that throughout this small work, not a syllable escapes from its author, though then much displeased with the conduct both of his friends and his enemies, which indicates the Reformer to have been dispirited or fatigued, much less broken down or worn out by dangers and troubles. Towards the conclusion, he DECLARES, that, for his part, he did not depend on human means. Christ was his shield, and the rock of his defence, in storms and tempests of every sort. It was much the same thing to him, who deserted, or who stood firm to the cause. "Therefore, if any one disliked the business in which he was embarked, let him," said he, "tack about† and run away. Whatever happened, he should constantly endeavour to make the best of the existing circumstances.—Who," he asked, "supported him in the beginning of this struggle, when he stood alone? And now he desired no one to take part with him unless he did so voluntarily. It was a great mistake to suppose that he had recanted; he never had recanted, nor ever would. On the contrary, he was, by Divine grace, wonderfully confirmed in the faith, and that daily, more and more; so far was he from recanting one tittle of his doctrine;—whereas, in the writings of all his adversaries, open and secret, he saw manifest symptoms of languor and want of nerves. But, whatever might take place, his joy would constantly be proportionate to those exertions, which, on reflection, he could conscientiously affirm he had made for the welfare of the Church: and without the imputation of arrogance, he might boldly assert, that, through his instrumentality, the Sacred Scriptures were now so effectually cleared of rubbish, and so well explained and illustrated, that at no period within the last thousand years had they been more generally known, or better understood."

Luther concludes his little treatise with giving thanks to God for the extraordinary prosperity of the church to which he belonged, and for the failure of the disgraceful attempts of its enemies. He owned there were some who had forsaken the simplicity of the truth; but

* Luth. Respons. II. 493. b.—497.

* Page 408.

† "Vela vertat."

that, he said, was no new thing in the history of religion. The Jews revolted from Jesus Christ; and so did Galatia and Asia from St. Paul. It ought rather to be matter of surprise, that when the world was destroyed by the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah by fire, there should nevertheless have been found eight persons who survived the former ruin, and three righteous characters who escaped from the latter. "Let those," continued he, "who please, revolt from us: it is not in our power to prevent instances of desertion. But it is our duty, after that men refuse to listen to admonition, to express publicly our disapprobation of their conduct.

"May the eternal God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ protect us, and keep us firm in the profession of his Gospel. Amen."



CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER XIII.

1. PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION UNDER JOHN THE ELECTOR OF SAXONY.
2. NEW REGULATIONS AT WITTEMBERG BOTH IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE UNIVERSITY, THROUGH THE ADVICE OF LUTHER.
3. THE LANDGRAVE OF HESSE, AS WELL AS JOHN FREDERIC, SON OF THE ELECTOR, FAVOURS THE REFORMATION.
4. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EVANGELICAL RELIGION IN SEVERAL PLACES.
5. PERSECUTIONS.—MARTYRS.
6. SERMONS, LETTERS, AND OTHER WRITINGS OF LUTHER.
7. WRITINGS OF LUTHER, ZUINGLE, AND OTHER EMINENT REFORMERS, ON THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENT.

1. PROGRESS OF THE REFORMATION IN SAXONY.

JOHN, the new elector of Saxony, conducted the religious concerns of his dominions in a manner quite different from that of his brother and predecessor, Frederic. The latter connived at and tolerated, rather than avowed and established the alterations introduced by Luther and his associates. But the former no sooner found himself in possession of the sovereign authority, than he exercised it with resolution and activity, by forming new ecclesiastical constitutions, modelled on the principles of the great Reformer.

The natural dispositions of these two princes, as well as the circumstances in

which they were respectively placed, led to this difference of political procedure. The extraordinary prudence and moderation by which Frederic had justly merited the surname of the Wise, constantly induced him to temporize with the pope and his cardinals, and to hope for the restoration of peace and union among the dissentient parties. Educated, moreover, under the bondage of papal mystery and papal domination, of his own judgment he scarcely dared to stir a single step from the beaten path of implicit submission. Yet, on the other hand, the pious and tender conscience of this prince prevented him from resisting many of the bold innovations of Luther, though manifestly levelled against the Romish corruptions and superstitions. Add to this, he had a great reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and also a high opinion both of the knowledge and the integrity of the Reformer in interpreting them; and hence, in various instances, he not only did not oppose, but encouraged, though with secrecy and reserve, his religious plans and propositions.

Still, another circumstance of importance has not been mentioned. When Luther first ventured to withstand the pretensions of the Roman hierarchy, the points in dispute were little understood; the contest was full of danger; and it required more than even the foresight of Frederic the Wise to be able to predict the issue; whereas the battle was half won when John first assumed the reins of government. The minds of men, by study and reflection, and by numerous publications both of the controversial and of the sober didactic kind, were become much enlightened in matters of religion. The spirit of reformation was spreading in all directions; and though it might have been difficult for a prince like Frederic, who for a long time had, in general, been in the habit of sanctioning and enforcing the ordinances of the Romish church, to declare open hostilities against the pope's supremacy, his brother John, now become elector, could feel little embarrassment of this sort. Sound policy, as well as reason and justice, would dictate to the new sovereign the wisdom of making a stand, from the very commencement of his government, against the illegal and exorbitant pretensions of the Roman See.—Happily, this excellent prince was well qualified by nature for the part which he had to act at this cri-

tical juncture. For though the elector John is nowhere celebrated for his profound skill in the science of politics, yet his moral endowments and steady temper have procured him with posterity the illustrious titles of the Good and the CONSTANT. Accordingly, a character of this stamp could not fail to be convinced, that to temporize much longer with a corrupt and unprincipled hierarchy might prove fatal to the good cause. An appeal had been made to the tribunal of reason; and reason had decided already in a manner which had astonished all Europe. This astonishment was, therefore, to be roused to action, and converted into a bold resistance, at a moment when submissive and palliative methods must inevitably have afforded great advantage to the enemy. It is true, the battle was half won; but then it was not more than half won: for, in fact, there still remained, in opposition to Christian truth and liberty, an alarming combination of interested princes and prelates, who were supported by multitudes of their bigoted subjects and adherents, and who meditated no less than the entire annihilation of the infant Reformation.

How justly may we admire and adore the goodness and wisdom of Providence, in raising up means so suitable for carrying forward and completing its sacred purposes! The zeal and constancy of John, the new elector of Saxony, was as loudly called for at the present crisis, as ever the extraordinary prudence and caution of his brother Frederic had been found absolutely necessary only a few years before, for the personal safety of Luther, and the success of his early endeavours to reform a corrupt ecclesiastical establishment.

We ought not to omit to mention, that John the CONSTANT had a most excellent coadjutor in his own son, John Frederic, who with the two names of his father John, and of his uncle Frederic, seems to have possessed the united virtues of both.*

Neither should it be forgotten, that even Frederic himself, the deceased elec-

tor, had determined, a little before he died, to afford a more open and substantial support to the evangelical preachers in his dominions:* and this circumstance, no doubt, was an additional motive to his brother and his nephew to enter on the work of reformation with vigour and despatch.

2. NEW REGULATIONS AT WITTEMBERG, BOTH IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE UNIVERSITY, THROUGH THE ADVICE OF LUTHER.

THE University and the Collegiate Church of Wittemberg soon experienced a salutary renovation: a new order of public worship was provided; other churches began to be modelled after the plan of Wittemberg; and a general visitation was promised of all the churches throughout the electorate of Saxony.† John, and his son, John Frederic, showed the utmost readiness to adopt the counsels of Luther; but that zealous Reformer did not always wait for their sanction, well aware of the difficulties and delays which his plans might often meet at court, from the privy-counsellors of the prince. However, he did not neglect to transmit to the prince, in a respectful manner, the formularies of the new ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies which, with the advice of Melancthon and Pomeranus, he had drawn up, and which the reformers had actually begun to use at Wittemberg.

The sacrament was there administered to the laity, for the first time, in the German instead of the Latin language, on Sunday the 29th of Oct. 1525.‡ The regulation of the public service of the church, and the appointment of well-qualified pastors, was a matter near the heart of the Reformer. "I am entirely taken up," says he, in a letter to a worthy clergyman, "with confuting Erasmus; but I well know how much the parishes stand in need of reform. This is a heavy stone, which I am endeavouring to roll; and I will solicit the prince to lend his assistance. I am convinced that all we do is to no purpose, if regular officiating pastors are not appointed. To this day our own parish is not

First Administration of the Sacrament to the Laity in the German language at Wittemberg, October, A. D. 1525.

* This prince was only about twenty-two years of age, and had then given many proofs of a truly pious disposition. Among other things he had seen and urged the expediency, and even the necessity, of a general visitation of the Church. Com. Luth. CLXXVII.

* Page 427.

† Comment. de Luth. VII. p. 24.

‡ Id. p. 23.

settled. What must become of the rest? I am overwhelmed with their complaints daily. Satan also is at work. I beg you to visit all the parishes you can. The prince is far from being displeased with our exertions; and I have a great desire to finish this business by one effective effort.”*

The elector was so far from disapproving the new regulations of Luther, that he sent two of his counsellors to confirm them publicly, and to carry the same system to a still greater extent. The Reformer himself, however, appears to have been the leading counsellor at this important crisis. He stated, in writing, at full length, the situation of the University; how sadly it was on the decay, considered as a seminary of learning and piety; and he entreated the prince to send commissioners to fix the salaries of the professors and lecturers. He explained to him what steps he himself had actually ventured to take, both in regard to the academical lectures and the divine services. He observed, that though he might have been, perhaps, too troublesome in this business, or even shown too much distrust of the elector’s paternal care, yet he had this excuse to plead, namely, that the fruit of his conduct, however faulty or indefensible it might have been, had proved no less than the means of preserving the University from instant dissolution.

Luther with great seriousness admonished the elector to make some provision for the poor labouring clergy; and also to amend the proceedings of the ecclesiastical courts. The elector took all this in excellent part; but appears to have been considerably startled at

Augmentation of the Salaries of the Clergy.

the idea of augmenting the salaries of the clergy out of his own treasury. “That,” he said, “would be a matter of great difficulty;” and he asked Luther what he had to propose on the subject. The answer was simply this: “In the general visitation of the whole country, let there be taken an accurate account of all the ancient revenues; and if these be found insufficient for the purpose, then let the suitable payments to the officiating clergy be made from new imposts on the respective towns and parishes, which they may well bear, being now relieved

from many popish oppressions.” Likewise, to a similar inquiry concerning the augmentation of the academical salaries, Luther replied, “There is an abundance of means for this purpose from the many vacant offices; for the number of the clergy in the collegiate church of All Saints is now reduced from eighty to eighteen. All the rest are either dead, or have left their situations.”

The most experienced financier could scarcely have returned a better answer to the question.

The due application of the surplus funds of this rich church of Wittemberg had been, for some time past, an object of considerable attention and difficulty.* The elector Frederic, supported by the older members of the chapter, for a long time had resisted the abolition of private masses; and during the altercations on this point in 1523, he had even threatened the sturdy reformers with the sequestration of the ecclesiastical salaries, unless they continued to observe strictly their ancient institutions. Luther, however, in a matter of great importance, was not to be discouraged by disappointment or opposition. He pressed the late elector afresh on the same subject, with spirit and address; and as there were then three new canons, whose consciences would not permit them to comply with the papal usages, he entreated the prince to allow their stipends to be employed for the advantage of the professors and students of the University. The answer of Frederic was now in all respects gracious and favourable, and afforded a good hope that Luther’s ideas would be adopted. In fact, by connivance rather than by express directions, that prince had permitted the redundant ecclesiastical wealth to be gradually diverted into the channels above mentioned. This redundant wealth was become very considerable, from the abolition of private masses, and many other protestant innovations. But it is allowed by historians, that not one halfpenny of it was ever applied by Frederic to his own specific emolument.†

Such disinterested conduct has rendered his memory truly illustrious; and is a complete refutation of the rash aspersions of those who, either through ignorance or malice, would insinuate that this

* To Hausman, II. 300. b. To Langus, II. 301. b.

* Page 405. Also Seck. 276.

† Seck. 276.

excellent prince favoured the Reformation) from motives of avarice, and secret intentions of plundering the opulent ecclesiastics. However, the elector John, with a more enlightened conscience, and a more magnanimous spirit, not only confirmed what had been barely permitted by his predecessor during the last years of his life, but also gave the revenues of the deserted monasteries* for the purpose of maintaining the parochial clergy and the public instructors, both in the churches and the schools.† He suffered nothing to come into competition with the Reformation, as an object of his concern: and as he was undoubtedly the first prince in Germany who openly both resisted the popish doctrines and discipline, and established the new system of the Wittenberg theologian, he has been justly denominated the SECOND PARENT and founder of the Lutheran church.‡

3. THE LANDGRAVE OF HESSE, AS WELL AS JOHN FREDERIC, SON OF THE ELECTOR, FAVOURS THE REFORMATION.

THE laudable efforts of the elector and his son were much encouraged by the friendly dispositions of their neighbour, Philip, the landgrave of Hesse. These dispositions had appeared at a conference which they had had with the landgrave at Creutzberg, only a few weeks before the death of Frederic; when he had declared, that rather than be a deserter from the word of God, he would lose his wealth, his dominions, and even his life. Luther, whose active and comprehensive eye was in every corner, writes thus to Spalatinus on this occasion: "I rejoice that the prince of Hesse has had a conversation with our princes. I hope it will be to the advantage of the Gospel."§

* During the tumults and the wars with the peasants, many of the monasteries were plundered or deserted, in addition to those which by degrees had been evacuated before. Seek. 24.

† Comment. Luth. II. XXXVI. Beausobre III. 201.

‡ Mosheim. Gnodalius de Bell. Rust.

§ There is something so curious in the whole letter, that I will venture to give the Reader the substance of it. It should seem that certain mock suns, as they are termed by astronomers, had been observed in the heavens; and Spalatinus had sent Luther a drawing of the appearances, with the judg-

ment of Melancthon upon them. This excellent Reformer is known to have been addicted to astrology. Luther begins: "Grace and peace. I return you the drawings of the solar appearances. They are divine prodigies, my Spalatinus: but it is not my province to comprehend their meaning. I do not pretend to foretel the events signified by such things. That red bloody sun which appeared in the west, seems to denote the king of France; and the bright sun in the middle, the emperor. This is Melancthon's opinion: at the same time, they indicate the Day of Judgment. I rejoice that the prince of Hesse has had a conversation with our princes. I hope it will be to the advantage of the Gospel. I have here a new species of fanatics from Antwerp, who assert that the Holy Spirit is nothing more than men's natural reason and understanding. How does Satan rage every where against the Word! And this I reckon by no means the slightest mark of the approaching end; namely, that Satan perceives the day is at hand, and pours forth his final fury. MARTIN LUTHER." Ep. II. 278.

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truth will appear after a hundred years. What sort of faith is that which requires an experiment to support it? Assuredly, there is nothing of the nature of faith, where a man will not believe till he is convinced by experience. St. Paul says, 'Faith comes by hearing;' not by experience. I am grieved at the poor prince's situation; for if he will not believe what is true and right till after trial has been made, and, also, if during the trial he is determined to refuse obedience to the word of God, he may defer the important business too long, that is, till there be no room for repentance. I would have every method used to cure him of his attachment to popery, if, by the grace of God, there be a possibility of doing it. But I greatly fear all will be to no purpose; and that God will harden him, like Pharaoh, so that he will neither receive his Word, nor regard his signal providences."*

4. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF EVANGELICAL RELIGION IN SEVERAL PLACES.

THE unhappy duke George must have suffered considerable mortification on account of the increasing propagation of Evangelical truth during the year 1525. The magistrates of several of the imperial cities adopted the Reformation in form.† At Nuremberg there was a public conference, in full senate, and in the presence of many of the inhabitants, between Osiander at the head of several of the Evangelical teachers on the one part, and five leading preachers of the Papal party on the other; the issue of which was, that there should be no more sermons or ceremonies at the monasteries, and that the monks should no longer be exempted from the usual burdens of the rest of the inhabitants.‡ Hagenau in Alsace received the Divine word from Wolfgang Capito, who was a native of Hagenau, and had been called thither from Strasburg to strengthen the cause of the Protestant party. Capito administered the Sacrament on Palm Sunday, according to the Scripture method: and on Easter Sunday, without using salt, oil, or any papistical ceremony, he baptized, before a great multitude, who had flocked together to see the novelty, a child of a principal inhabitant called

Wendelinus, by the name of Josiah; the father intimating thereby, that the book of the law was found in the reign of Josiah, and in consequence the true worship of God restored, so the Holy Bible, which had been in a manner lost during the papacy, was, through the goodness of God, found again on the birth of his little Josiah, and the Scriptural doctrine of Salvation restored to Germany.* At Northusa, in Thuringia, the inhabitants met together, read over Luther's early writings on the Reformation, conferred on the several points, acknowledged the errors of popery, and determined to establish a purer church. The magistrates seconded the wishes of the people, and appointed the prior of the Augustine monastery to preach the Gospel in St. Peter's church.†

Several counties also of the empire were evangelized about the same time; for example, those of Hanau, Altenburg, and Teeklenburg. In the marchionate of Lusatia, the two elegant and rich cities of Gorlitz and Lauban experienced a similar improvement. The clergy of the neighbouring villages assembled in the city of Gorlitz, and there publicly renounced the authority and jurisdiction of their popish diocesan, and at the same time abolished many of the Romish customs and vanities. At Dantzic, one of the most celebrated parts of the North, the progress of the Gospel was astonishing. "You may learn," says Luther, "from one of the clergy of Dantzic, who is come here on the express errand of requesting the prince to permit Pomeranus to go among them, how wonderfully Christ is at work in that place. We cannot well spare him; yet in so important an Evangelical concern, we ought, I think, to give way. Who knows what God may do through HIS instrumentality? Let us neither obstruct so extraordinary a call, nor pretend to be ignorant of its meaning. If I were called in this manner,‡ I should not dare to refuse: I would go instantly!"

I am persuaded no Christian reader will be fatigued with perusing such extracts as these, or think them ill placed in a history of the Church of Christ. They introduce us into the very secret corners of the hearts of the Saxon divines, and prove beyond contradiction,

* Seck. II. 35.

† Beausobre.

* Seult. 294.

† Id. 293.

‡ Seult. 301.

‡ Id. 288, and Com. Luth. II. 12.

what was the real spirit of the Reformation at this blessed season. Infidel or sceptical historians can easily invent motives and causes which discredit religion: it is more gratifying to the hostile tempers of such men, and also gives them abundantly less trouble, to indulge their imaginations in forming perverse and groundless conjectures, than to exercise a cool and dispassionate judgment in a laborious search after truth: there is, however, a pleasure in attaining a satisfactory conviction upon a great and interesting subject, which is the inestimable reward of an honest and patient search after truth, and which is utterly unknown to the prejudiced writers of the stamp here alluded to, however brilliant may be their talents, however elegant their compositions.

In this brief review of the increase of evangelical light, we must not omit to mention what happened at Francfort on the Main. The inhabitants, through the instructions of two laborious evangelical preachers, had acquired such an insight into the corruptions and abuses of the papal system, that they assembled in a tumultuous manner a little before Easter, and insisted on the abolition of the popish mass and other ceremonies. The senate interfered, and informed the ecclesiastics of the papal party, that if they expected the support and defence of the magistrates, they must confute, by the word of God, those tenets of the evangelical teachers which maintained that the MASS WAS NOT A SACRIFICE. Finding this impossible, the papistical preachers quitted three of the principal churches, which were immediately occupied by the Reformers.

The successful labours at Breslaw of that eminent divine, Doctor Hesse, and of his assistant Moiban, have already been mentioned.* The good cause continued to prosper: most of the towns and cities of Silesia followed the example of their capital; and their excellent bishops, James of Saltza, and Balthazar of Promnitz, are recorded with veneration in the annals of the revival of pure religion, on account of their extraordinary zeal, piety, and prudence.†

5. PERSECUTIONS.—MARTYRS.

THIS glorious progress of the truth, and fall of Antichrist, did not take place

without the shedding of some blood of the martyrs.

James Pavan of Bologne having been seized in the preceding year, on account of his profession of pure Christianity, had recanted through fear of death. In the course of the present year of 1525, he became bold again in the cause of the Gospel; he preached openly on the nature of the Sacrament; and, agreeably to his own express wish, was burnt alive at Paris. He surrendered his life, in the moment of trial, with the utmost cheerfulness.

James Pavan burnt alive at Paris.

A German, named Wolfgangus Schuch, had been appointed pastor of one of the towns of Lorraine, and during his faithful ministry had abolished the mass and the worship of images and idols. His congregation were accused of disloyalty to the duke of Lorraine. The duke threatened to destroy the town with fire and sword. W. Schuch judged it his duty to step forward voluntarily, and defend his townsmen, though at the peril of his life. He composed a confession of his faith; and was on the eve of publishing it when he was suddenly cast into a filthy dungeon, and condemned to the flames. On hearing his sentence, he broke out into the 122d Psalm: and when in the fire itself he sung the 51st Psalm.

Wolfgangus Schuch burnt in Lorraine.

We are told by Abraham Scultetus, one of the most candid and credible historians that ever wrote, that the ecclesiastical judge of Schuch, and also his assessor, who was an abbot, both died of sudden deaths a very little time after: and the duke of Lorraine took pains to convince his courtiers, that nothing more was necessary for salvation than to know Paternoster and Ave Maria.*

At Mechlin in Brabant, one Bernard, a Carmelite friar, is mentioned by Luther as having been burnt on account of his open profession of the Gospel.† And at the Hague in Holland, a clergyman, named John de Backer, scarcely 27 years old, after many long and vexatious examinations, by the papistical inquisitors, merited the crown of martyrdom. The steady good sense and piety which appeared in this man during his imprisonment, and his

Bernard, a Carmelite friar, burnt at Mechlin in Brabant.

* Page 384.

† Scult. 303.

* Scult. 317.

† Ep. II. 293.

uncommon faith and patience in the midst of the flames, will call for some further notice in the Appendix.*

G. SERMONS, LETTERS, AND OTHER WRITINGS OF LUTHER.

AMIDST the new ecclesiastical establishment and regulations, which Luther, under the auspices of the elector and his son, was rapidly introducing into Saxony, he still found time for preaching the word of God, and for various useful publications. In reflecting on THIS PART of the labours of the Saxon Reformer, it may in some measure lessen our surprise, if we advert to two things, both of which are beyond dispute: First, his unparalleled industry; time with him was always a precious thing: Secondly, his vast fund of religious knowledge, the result of long and patient study of the Holy Scriptures. But, in regard to the other part, namely, how Martin Luther, who had spent so large a portion of his life in a monastery, and even now was far from being advanced in years, attained such consummate prudence and discretion for the conduct of practical concerns in worldly affairs, may be a matter both of curious inquiry and just admiration. Certainly, it is easier to account for his numerous sermons, commentaries, and theological tracts, than for his wise institutions, both in the Church and the University, where he had new offices and ranks and orders to arrange, new laws and discipline to digest; where the ecclesiastical and academical revenues were in the utmost confusion, redundant on some accounts, defective on others; and, lastly, where the distribution of the same required fresh inspections and reviews, as well as the most judicious and impartial adjustments. Pious minds, however, who believe that the hearts of men are prepared and directed by a Divine superintending agency, especially on great occasions, will have no great difficulty here. And in regard to those who are disposed to explain the course of human events by what are called natural causes, they should, in the first place, recollect distinctly what were the specific endowments of Luther, allowed by all who are well acquainted with his history; namely, a conscientious integrity, incapable

of being warped by selfish and interested considerations; a clear and comprehensive understanding, furnishing an almost instinctive view of the measures to be adopted in the most critical circumstances; a spirited and courageous temper, constantly impelling him to decision and dispatch. Then, in the second place, they may be put in mind, that whatever pains they would take to exclude Almighty God from the government of his own creation, they cannot deny that at the very period when the revealed religion was most deplorably corrupted and defiled by human devices, and when there was the greatest need of a champion to contend with Antichrist, there was actually raised up in Saxony a personage qualified in this uncommon degree to fight manfully under the banners of Christ, and to restore his Church to its genuine beauty and simplicity.

Modern philosophers, as they are called, are apt to disregard the statement of such premises as these, merely, it should seem, because they do not relish the inferences to which they lead unavoidably.

Some account of Luther's familiar exposition of the book of Deuteronomy has already been given in a letter which he wrote to the bishop of Samland.* The brief additions to that account, which I may now be allowed to make, will by no means do justice to so excellent a performance; but they will tend to illustrate the rare talents of the author, and his happy turn for interpreting Scripture. The following are, in substance, some of his very wholesome practical directions.

"Let the Christian reader's first object always be to find out the literal meaning of the word of God; for this, and this alone, is the whole foundation of faith, and of Christian theology. It is the very substance of Christianity; the only thing which stands its ground in distress and temptation: it is what overcomes the gates of hell, together with sin and death, and triumphs, to the praise and glory of God. Allegories are often of a doubtful nature, depending on human conjecture and opinion; for which reason Jerome and Origen, and other fathers of the same stamp, nay, I may add, all the old Alexandrian school, should be read with the greatest caution.

* Appendix, John de Backer. Brandt. I. 52.

An excessive esteem for these has gradually introduced a most mischievous taste among later writers; who have gone such lengths as to support the most extravagant absurdities by Scriptural expressions. Jerome complains of this practice in his own time, and yet he himself is guilty of it. In our days there are some commentators, who, wherever they find in Scripture a word of the feminine gender, understand it to mean the Virgin Mary; and hence, almost all the revealed word is made to treat of the Blessed Virgin. Wherefore we ought always to observe St. Paul's rule; not to build upon wood, hay, and stubble, but upon gold, silver, and precious stones; that is, an allegory should never be made the foundation of any doctrine, but be introduced as a secondary thing, to confirm, to adorn, to enrich a Christian article of faith. Never produce an allegory to support your sentiments; on the contrary, take care that your allegory rest on some just sentiment as a foundation, which by its aptness and similitude, it is calculated to illustrate."

The author's observations on the use of pictures and images are extremely judicious.

He tells us he was not very fond of them, and would rather that no such thing was placed in churches. Not that his sole reason against them was the fear of their being worshipped as idols; for he thinks that did but seldom happen: he had another objection, namely, the confidence which men were disposed to place in them as meritorious works, especially if they were beautiful and costly: men were apt to fancy that they had pleased God in some way by spending money in his service; whereas, in fact, the whole of what is so expended might be employed to much better purpose in relieving the wants of their brethren.

In his annotations on the 15th chapter of Deuteronomy, ver. 4, he makes some very acute and sarcastic reflections on the pretended poverty of the papistical mendicant orders. That whole system, he shows, was contrary to the religion of the Bible; which nowhere inculcates poverty and want as a profession, but rather exhorts men to remove those evils by bounty and benevolence. The papists boasted of their poverty and other sufferings, but they themselves were sleek and well fed. They said they had no homes of their own; yet they lived in palaces

more superb than those of monarchs. They talked of hunger, but they devoured the provisions of every body: they talked of thirst, but their cellars were full: they boasted of sacrificing their lives, but they were never in the smallest danger, and spent their days in habits of pleasure. It was very true that there always would be poor persons among us, and so our Lord had observed; nevertheless, men were not to be exhorted to practise a voluntary poverty. Accordingly, we find in the Acts of the Apostles, there was not one person in want among the primitive Christians. We may hence learn the nature of those monastic vows in the papal scheme, which have poverty for their object.

Luther, with great justice, blames those divines, or lawyers, who torture and twist the word of God, by endeavouring to make it bear upon particular questions before them. "You may take notice of this," says he, "in the most eminent theologians, in Augustine, and Bernard, and even in the more ancient fathers, Cyprian and Tertullian, who, in their PUBLIC DISCOURSES, handle the Scriptures perfectly aright, but are very apt to pervert it in their CONTROVERSIAL WRITINGS. Consult the writers against Arius, consult Jerome against Jovian, Augustine against the Manichees, Bernard against Free Will, and you will be convinced of the truth of my assertion!"

On Deuteronomy xviii. ver. 18 to 20, where God promises to raise up a prophet like unto Moses, and declares, that "whoever will not hearken unto the words which that prophet shall speak in God's name, HE will require it of him," Luther makes excellent reflections, extremely applicable to his own times. For example: "The furious popes and princes of the present day attempt by violence to bring heretics to the faith; and they burn, or otherwise put to death, the obstinate. What is this, but arrogating to themselves the authority of God, and attempting to make men do by force, what neither they themselves nor any man can do? By this conduct they show they know nothing of the nature of Christ and his doctrine, nor of Moses's prediction in this place."

Throughout this performance of Luther, there is a richness of matter, expressed with a native vigorous eloquence, which will infallibly lay hold of the minds of such as read for practical im-

provement in their spiritual affections, rather than to find critical speculations for the mere entertainment of their understandings. The author is very full and very severe in his observations on the practices of fanatics and enthusiasts. His mind was sore at that time, and there was great reason for it, on account of the mischievous proceedings of Munzer and the rustic malcontents in the year 1525. No man was ever a more steady and consistent enemy to mysticism than Luther. His concluding admonitions on that subject well deserve our notice, as they contain the substance of God's ordinary method of leading souls to the kingdom of heaven. "Let us," says he, "never desert the pure doctrine of the Gospel. We are persuaded that the substance of our religion consists in faith, which is the gift of the Spirit, and comes by hearing the word of God. A previous and perfect mortification of sin is not required for this purpose: though there must be a previous conviction of sin and of its malignity, to humble and prepare us for the faith of Christ. Then follows the Gospel, which gives life and strength; and through that life and strength we must contend against the evil principle which remains in the flesh, and must aim at no less than the obtaining of a perfect victory over it. But we are to use the greatest possible care, never to attribute our justification before God to any sort of works whatever, but to faith alone in the heart, by which man believeth unto righteousness.* Moreover, it becomes those Christians who are already justified, not to condemn their weaker brethren; for it is the glory of Christianity that we are directed to bear one another's burdens.† In the next place, we must remember not to permit our faith to become drowsy and unfruitful; which it certainly will do, if we neglect the mortification of the flesh. But here again we must guard against a twofold error; namely, lest we should suppose,—either that by our own acts of mortification we can certainly procure justification and the gift of the Spirit,—which is the doctrine of those insane prophets the Anabaptists;—or, that if we do not undergo certain processes of mortification, it will be impossible for us to be justified by the gift of the Spirit. Evangelical knowledge in its purity is a rare and delicate thing.

even in good and holy men. Often the very best Christians suffer through the malignant influence of the flesh, and the treacherous plausibility of works; for they are hereby led with an impetuosity of spirit to aim at external mortification and the performance of external works, rather than to press for faith and the Holy Spirit by importunate applications at the throne of Grace, in reliance on the written promises. They act as though faith and the Spirit came by works and mortification, whereas the contrary is the Scriptural order of things. This malignant mischievous propensity of the carnal disposition, which leads men to set so high a value on mortification and other performances, must itself be mortified with the utmost diligence; for it frequently imposes on very able men, and prevents them from seeing the efficacy of the word of God, which, after all, is the power of God unto salvation to every believer."

In these instructive passages, our commentator has evidently his eye on the enthusiastic pretences to mortification of Munzer and his followers.* Luther's doctrine is in perfect contrast to that of those wild fanatics; and is as sound and useful as theirs must ever prove false and mischievous. It appears to me, that one of his great excellencies as a divine, is the perspicuous and JUST ORDER in which he constantly places the several doctrines of practical Christianity, and their effects. He is, on all occasions, solicitous to show that the Christian life begins with, depends on, and is perfected through, the written Word. The law of God humbles men, and is the schoolmaster which teaches them that they can do nothing in their own strength.† Justification and peace of conscience are the gift of the Spirit, through faith in the Redeemer, without any works on our part. Hence we rejoice, and cry, Abba, Father. There is an end of servile fear, and of flying away from the presence of an angry God. There is, on the contrary, a filial access into the grace of our heavenly Father. This great internal change soon shows itself in external actions. As the heart believes, the tongue confesses;‡ and thus the Gospel is preached to others, and the kingdom of Christ is augmented.

* Page 376.

† Rom. iv. Gal. iii. Annotat. Deut. xviii.

‡ Romans iv. Annotat. Deut. xviii.

* Rom. x.

† Galat. vi. 2.

Then come the cross and tribulation, on account of the word of God; and these explore and strengthen faith, even to the full assurance of hope. The old man is mortified;* and the fruits of the new man, which are the proper proofs of the existence of faith and the Spirit, increase more and more, and show themselves in the love of our neighbour, and in an universal benignity, and disposition to peace and goodness.†

Our commentator, in his observations on the 21st and 22d verses of this same chapter of Deuteronomy, "How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken?" &c. &c. resolves an apparent contradiction, between the criterion here laid down, and what had been said before, in the thirteenth chapter. In the thirteenth chapter, it is said, "If a prophet or dreamer of dreams giveth a sign or wonder, and the sign even cometh to pass, you shall not hearken unto that prophet, when his object is to make you serve other gods:" whereas, in the eighteenth chapter, and 22d verse, the rule of judging is, "If the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken presumptuously." Luther's solution is this: When a doctrine has been once confirmed by Divine authority, or by miracles, and is received, we are not to believe an angel from heaven preaching a contrary doctrine; for God permits such things, merely to prove men, whether they love him, or not, with all their heart. But the case is different whenever a new doctrine is proposed for our assent: we ought not to give credit to it, unless it be confirmed by miracles. Having made this very sensible distinction, Luther concludes with telling us, that he had acted on these very principles in his treatment of those insane prophets, who pretended to hold daily converse with God, face to face, like Moses; and who, in general, boasted of having gifts of the Spirit beyond the Apostles themselves. He required them to work miracles, otherwise they were not to be believed. They promised they would do so. "But," says Luther, "to this day I neither see nor hear of any. Indeed, I told them with some degree of contempt, that my God

would take care that THEIR god should not do signs or miracles."*

The sermons of Luther were very numerous; but it would lengthen this history too much to produce many extracts. In one of them, published about this time, he complains, "that if good morals be preached, then men are apt to make a ladder of them, by which they may climb up to heaven; and, that in that way, through pride and a haughty confidence in their own merits, they sin more grievously than even by immoralities themselves; for that sort of pride is peculiarly odious to God; whereas he is always ready to receive the greatest sinners, whenever, in true penitence, they implore his forgiveness. On the other hand, if men are not pressed to holiness of life, impieties and dissolute manners are the consequence. The medium must therefore be observed. Good practice must be insisted on, but not trusted to for salvation. Few, (he said,) found the right road: for some led very bad lives; whilst others thought of meriting heaven by sanctimonious works, thus arrogating to themselves, as matter of right, what they ought to receive as the effect of mere mercy. What was this, but to despise the bounty of God, and to set up ourselves in opposition to it?"†

Faithful and intelligent teachers of the Gospel have always made the same complaint. The fact is, men are the same, in every age and climate, since the transgression of our first parents; and the identity of the common stock from which the human race has descended, is perhaps as clearly evinced by the manifest similarity of the depraved dispositions of the mind, as by the concurrence and agreement of those bodily marks and distinctions which are pointed out by natural historians as essentially constituting particular classes of beings. If the latter has been thought more to this purpose than the former, the advantage arises, I think, merely from this circumstance, that objects of the senses affect us sooner, and more universally, than considerations which are purely intellectual.

Most of the writings of Luther were published on the spur of the occasion, and have no pretensions, in general, to

* Rom. v.

† Annot. Deut. and Galat. v.

* Annot. Deut. Luth. Op. III. Witt.

† Tom. VIII. Alt. in Append. Seck. 32.

the character of correct and finished compositions. The author was attentive to things; and was not only regardless of words, but even accustomed to the use of scholastic barbarisms. It was on this account that Erasmus had conceived him incapable of writing with such a degree of classical purity as appears in his reply to that accomplished scholar; who, in effect, was compelled to change his opinion of Luther's talent for Latinity. On ordinary occasions, the Reformer certainly neglected his style. His mind was absorbed by objects infinitely more momentous. But he appears to have been roused to some attention in this respect, by having to combat Erasmus; and, accordingly, he evinced on that occasion a considerable acquaintance with polite literature.

Having already given an account of the concessions which Luther made by letters, both to Henry VIII. of England, and to the duke George of Saxony; and having also commended the self-government of the writer on those occasions, and his truly Christian motives, little more need be said in regard to those publications.* Perhaps the writing at all to such haughty and malevolent adversaries was not in itself a thoroughly judicious measure; and perhaps it might have been expected from the good sense and experience of Luther, that he should have foreseen the harm, or at least the little benefit, which was likely to accrue from it. It is to the excessive ardour of his temper that we are usually to ascribe the practical errors of the Saxon Reformer. So, in this instance, it is as certain that honest zeal for the progress of the Reformation was the motive of Luther, as it is, that pride, rancour, and superstition, dictated the contemptuous answer of Henry. A spirit not dissimilar, the reader will have observed, pervades also the abusive answer of George of Saxony, though he was, in general, a much better character than the king of England.

Whoever carefully compares those letters which contain the unsuccessful submissions of Luther, with that animated performance, by which he hoped to repair his error, will be convinced how much more he was in his natural element, when battering fairly and openly the strongest holds of his adversaries, than when tampering with bigoted Ro-

man catholics, in fruitless negotiations and concessions.*

Luther, a short time before he ventured to administer the Lord's Supper in the German language, had had the precaution to compose and print a very useful little book, containing thirty-eight German hymns, with their appropriate tunes, for the express purpose of conveying and fixing in the memories of the common people, a deal of religious instruction in a very concise and agreeable manner. The subjects were,—parts of the catechism; leading articles of belief; prayers and thanksgivings: in fact, the book was a summary of Christian doctrine, expressed in very neat and elegant German metre; and so well managed, that the harmony and modulation of the voice agreed with the words and sentiments, and tended to raise the correspondent affections in the minds of the singers. On this account the author has been called the true Orpheus of Germany; and to his praise it is added, that he applied his knowledge of musical numbers and harmonies to the excitation of the most pious and fervid emotions in the soul.†

In the preface of this little work he supports the duty of church music, on the authority of David and Paul; at the same time he puts us in mind, that, in singing praises, we should have our eyes on Christ alone. "He had subjoined the suitable tunes," he says, "to show that the fine arts were by no means abolished through the preaching of the Gospel; but that, in particular, the art of music should be employed to the glory of God; though he knew this sentiment was contrary to the romantic ideas of some teachers, who were disposed to allow nothing but what was purely intellectual."

The letters which our Reformer, in the exercise of his paternal care, wrote to the several pastors and congregations of the infant Evangelical churches, are numerous, and many of them replete with excellent matter. Of one of them, addressed to his Christian brethen at Antwerp, we must take some notice; first, because it affords a striking instance of Satan's activity, in raising up false teachers, whenever his kingdom is in peculiar

* See page 476, for the account of it.

† Chytræus in Scultet. 315. Seeck. Index, III.

danger from remarkable revivals of Christian truth; secondly, because it contains the writer's refutation of the calumny of having represented God as the author of sin; and thirdly, because the good annalist Scultetus speaks of this letter in the highest terms.* The most important parts of it are in substance as follows: "He had been informed," he said, "of the rise of some very dangerous spirits at Antwerp:† and he believed it to be his duty to give his Christian brethren a little honest advice. He hoped they would take his friendly admonitions in good part; and also, being thus forewarned, would look well to themselves. The object of these false teachers was to confound and perplex, and to draw men from the light into darkness. Some of the articles of their faith were as follow:

1. Every man had the Holy Spirit.
2. The Holy Spirit signified neither more nor less than men's reason and understanding.
3. That all men were believers.
4. That there was no hell nor eternal punishment; and, That the body only was condemned.
5. That every soul would possess eternal life.
6. That natural reason taught us to do to our neighbour as we would he should do to us; and that to be so disposed was faith.
7. That by concupiscence men did not sin against the law, unless their wills were consenting.
8. That he who had not the Holy Spirit was incapable of sin, because he was devoid of reason.

"Now," said Luther, "there is not one of these articles, except the seventh, which merits the smallest attention; and ye will do well to treat both the doctrines, and those who maintain them, with contempt. One of these teachers came to me; and a more inconsistent, impudent, petulant, lying spirit I never saw or heard to speak. There is one point which he insisted on with the utmost pertinacity; namely, that God did not permit sin, because such permission could not take place without the will of

God: for who could compel the Almighty to permit sin?"

The author then proceeds to this effect: "I have no doubt but the man will falsely accuse me to you, as though I had said that God has absolutely a pleasure in the existence of sin, for its own sake. To which charge I answer, that the representation is injurious and false. What I do maintain is this: That God has forbidden sin by the most express precepts; and that this part of his will is both perfectly clear, and also necessary for us to know. But how it happens that he should permit men to sin, and that they should consent to the perpetration of sinful actions, he has not thought proper that we should know; otherwise he certainly would have opened these matters to us, had it been his will that we should have been made partakers of his secret counsel. St. Paul himself disapproves of these curious inquiries; 'Nay but, O man, who art thou, that replest against God?'"

In conclusion, he exhorts his brethren not to listen to those contentious and troublesome spirits, who would harass their minds with profound speculations concerning the secret will of God. "Is it not enough that the commands of God have no ambiguity? God detests sin. That is sufficient for us; but how sin comes, and why he permits it, these are points which we should leave with Him. A servant ought not to inquire after his master's secrets, much less to know them; still abundantly less does it become a poor miserable creature to pry into the mysteries of the Divine Majesty, his Creator. See then that ye hold to what is useful and necessary; and avoid futile, trifling, contentious points, that tend nothing to edification. Once more; Avoid everything that is above your comprehension, and rest in the plain precepts of God. To learn Christ and his commandments aright, even though a man does nothing else, requires a whole life."*

During these incessant labours of this indefatigable servant of God, his life was attempted to be taken away by poison. A Polish Jew, a doctor of medicine, came to Wittemberg, having agreed to do this business for

An attempt
to poison
Luther,
Feb. 1523.

* Annal. 1525.

† These dangerous spirits have been just mentioned before in a letter of Luther's, at page 481, in the note.

two thousand pieces of gold. Luther describes him as a man of wonderful cunning and versatility; and as capable of committing any crime. The doctor and his accomplices were seized, and carried before a magistrate; but they refused to make any confession; and Luther entreated that they might be set at liberty, rather than be examined by torture, according to the custom of those times. Nevertheless, he expresses his entire belief that he was the very man who had been pointed out to him by the letters of certain friends. He says, "he answers their description in all respects; and that every circumstance also concurred to identify the person of the Jew, and prove his guilt."*

7. WRITINGS OF LUTHER, ZUINGLE, AND OTHER EMINENT REFORMERS, ON THE NATURE OF THE SACRAMENT.

THOSE labours of Luther, which he employed in the Sacramental controversy, can afford but little satisfaction to Christian readers. We are compelled, indeed, in reviewing them, to recognize that zeal and fervour, and conscientiousness, which ever marked the character of this great Reformer; but, alas! all these excellent qualities were in this instance sadly sullied, by a LAMENTABLE obstinacy and perverseness of temper: † Lamentable—not merely as displaying defects of an eminent Christian;—for where shall we find perfection?—not merely as leading this eminent Christian to act inconsistently, and in direct opposition to his general principles of toleration and mutual forbearance in all things not essential;—but lamentable, as very materially affecting the success and progress of the Reformation itself, by disuniting its leaders, and preventing a fraternal communion among them.

For some time past the leaven of contention had been deeply at work, and

was now exerting its mischievous operation with greater strength and less secrecy. The absurd argumentation of

Carolstadt had given Luther a great advantage in the Sacramentarian dispute; but such able and learned divines as Zuingle and Ecolampadius were not to be overawed or silenced, either by the talents and knowledge, or by the au-

thority and violence of Luther. As they were in a good cause, and were convinced both of the nonsense and of the non-necessity of having recourse to such a doctrine as that of consubstantiation in the interpretation of Scripture, they resolved to oppose it with firmness and perseverance.

Luther, in his treatise against the Celestial Prophets,* had endeavoured to expose the novel ideas which had been broached by Carolstadt on the nature of the Eucharist. About the same time, or a little sooner, Zuingle published his sentiments on this subject, in a letter addressed to Matthew Albert, the pastor of Ruetlingen, who, as he had been informed, was then engaged in discussing the question with one of his brethren.

He opens his mind at once, expressing his apprehension, that either many persons most sadly mistake the matter, or else that he himself makes a greater mistake than they all; and further, that unless the just interpretation of Scripture throughout, and unless common sense and piety itself deceive him, divines had all missed their aim for a long time: but that he could not pretend, in the short compass of a letter, to enter into the history of the error now so prevalent. He intimates that Carolstadt had circulated among the people an ill-timed little pamphlet of three pages, intitled, *ON THE EXECRABLE ABUSE OF THE EUCHARIST*, in which there were many things that pleased, and some that displeased him. There was truth in the pamphlet, but it was delivered in a way rather to offend than to edify: Carolstadt had not rightly explained the matter. Moreover, Zuingle adds, that the same author was reported to have prepared another pamphlet, still much less to the purpose, in which, by his unreasonable scoffs and sneers, he had degraded the subject: the people were already sufficiently alarmed with the novel ideas concerning the Sacrament, and such a mode of treating it seemed as if calculated on purpose to increase their aversion. †

The epistle to M. Albert appears to have been the first effort of the pen of Zuingle in the Sacramentarian controversy. Large extracts from the writings of the several combatants, who engaged in this contest, cannot be necessary in

* Amsdorf, II. 270. b. G. Spal. Id.

† Pages 408 and 419.

* Mentioned in page 412.

† Op. Zuing. II. 153. Scult. 234.

our times :—This, from Zuingle, it may be observed, furnishes an additional testimony to the truth of the account before given of the ungovernable spirit of Carolstadt.

Luther, in his treatise against the Celestial Prophets, answers Carolstadt's arguments against the real presence. He does not pretend to understand how the bread is bread, and, at the same time, the body of Christ; but insists on the necessity of adhering close to the words of Christ.

Bugenhagenius Pomeranus published a letter, both in German and in Latin, against the NOVEL ERROR of the Sacramentarians;* in which he contends, that the argument of Zuingle, drawn from the words 'The flesh profiteth nothing,' is a mere DREAM of the imagination, when those words are adduced to show that 'This is my body,' means, This SIGNIFIES my body. "The evangelists," he says, "never use the word is in that sense; and, moreover, that the expression, 'The flesh profiteth nothing,' is not to be understood as applicable to the flesh of Christ, but to that carnal construction which the disciples of Christ were disposed to put upon the words of their master." Zuingle on this occasion answers smartly; "You say, that in arguing thus I do but DREAM. Be it so. I consider even this as a concession in some degree: for those who see nothing in my argument must be COMPLETELY ASLEEP."†—Zuingle's reply to Bugenhagenius is dated Oct. 1525.

But this excellent and learned Reformer had composed and published, some months before, in the course of the same year, a very elaborate commentary on true and false religion; in which he not only treats on all the great points both of natural and revealed theology, but also on the controverted questions between the papists and protestants, and, among others, on the meaning of the Eucharist. He undertook this work, he tells us, at the express desire of several learned and pious characters both of France and Italy; and though he attacks the corruptions, idolatry, and avarice of the papacy in the plainest and most animated language, he boldly dedicates the treatise to Francis I. of France. It was, he said, a most

Christian book; and Francis's title was that of 'His most Christian Majesty.' Moreover, the people of France were of old celebrated for their religion: Lastly, there was, great intercourse between France and Germany; and as the Germans had begun to open their eyes to evangelical light, the author felt it his duty to contribute to the restoration of those salutary beams in the neighbouring country. Men had been long in Egyptian bondage; and, in spite of the pointed admonitions of Christ and his apostles, had been so foolish as to serve more absurd false gods than any which the heathen nations ever served: for what nation, he asks, ever worshipped a poor mortal man just going to expire, as the modern nations had worshipped the Roman pontiff? Or when did kings and emperors FALL DOWN to adore the only great and good God? To KNEEL had by them been esteemed sufficient. Who ever kissed or embraced the feet of Christ, except particular persons from extraordinary affection? whereas, on the contrary, no one is admitted to speak to the pope without first kissing the shoe of this god. Thus, he adds, as a punishment for our sins, we have been so long blind to this abominable idolatry.*

This performance of Zuingle, including an appendix on the Eucharist, consists of very nearly two hundred folio pages, and is a noble monument of the author's piety, learning, and intellectual powers, as well as a decisive proof of the blessed recovery of Christian truth in Switzerland at that time. It was scarcely possible but that a writer of this stamp should be conscious of his own strength. Accordingly, Zuingle, notwithstanding his moderation and pacific disposition in general, concludes his aforementioned letter to Bugenhagenius with an animation and confidence bordering almost on menace or defiance. "Himself and his brethren the Swiss divines," he said, "were not in habits of controversy; neither, as yet, had they mentioned by name any one person of the many who had formed erroneous judgments on the Eucharist and other popish tenets. But," continues he, "if either you or any other be determined at all events to have a contest with me, I certainly deprecate the thing exceedingly; yet if it cannot be avoided, I shall, under the shield of

* It is addressed to John Hesse, the excellent pastor of Breslaw. Hospin. II. 64.

† Zuingle ad Pom. Respond.

* II. De Ver. et Fals. Rel. 158.

truth, and under the inspection and auspices of Christ, fight so as not like one that beateth the air. Moreover, I do exhort you and all others to abstain from that very bad custom of abuse. We ought to investigate the truth by Scripture and by reasons, and not by tribunitial clamours. We shall have plenty of enemies, and plenty of outcries against us, even though we conduct ourselves with the greatest possible moderation. Will the Roman See be silent? Will those princes be silent who are ashamed of the Gospel? Let us then follow after truth in its utmost purity. I do not think Antichrist can be completely subdued, unless this error of consubstantiation be rooted up; and, as the truth has broken in upon us, we should not suffer ourselves to be led by human authority.

While Zuingle was thus opposing at Zurich the Lutheran tenet of consubstantiation, Ecolampadius was employed in the same manner at Basil; and, to say the least, displayed equal learning, piety, and moderation. A full year before, he had preached a sermon on the Lord's Supper, which had made a great impression on the minds of the people, and was become the topic of general conversation. It was at this moment that the modesty and diffidence of Ecolampadius yielded to the entreaties of his friends, who were pressing him to publish his sentiments on the Sacramental controversy. Accordingly, he edited his celebrated treatise *ON THE GENUINE MEANING OF OUR LORD'S WORDS, 'THIS IS MY BODY;'* which drew from Erasmus that memorable eulogium on its accuracy and solidity, "—that it might deceive the very elect:"* and this he repeats in his letters even to Bedda and to the bishop of Lingen.

The senate of Basil were so much alarmed on the appearance of Ecolampadius's book, that they directed the sale of it to be suspended, till its contents should have undergone an examination. Erasmus was one of the censors on this occasion; and his report, as it is perfectly in the character of the man, will amuse the reader. "Mighty lords," says he, "at the instance of your Highnesses I have read the publication of John Ecolampadius; and, in my opinion, it is a learned, eloquent, and elaborate performance. I should be disposed to add, it is a pious performance, if anything could

be pious which opposes the JUDGMENT AND CONSENT OF THE CHURCH."*—Ecolampadius traces the papistical tenet of the REAL PRESENCE to Peter Lombard; and contends, that every one of the fathers had held that the words, 'This is my body,' were not to be taken literally. He dedicates his work to his brethren, the Christian divines throughout Suabia.

Of these divines, an assembly of fourteen met together at Hall in Suabia, and concurred in a reply to the sentiments of Ecolampadius. Brentius, however, is believed to have been the chief author of this composition. These good ministers maintained, that as the words of God, spoken on the occasion of the brazen serpent, namely, 'Every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live,' conveyed to the image of brass a healing efficacy, so the words used in the celebration of the Eucharist, 'This is my body,' caused the body of Christ to be united to the bread.†

Ecolampadius was in no wise intimidated by the joint efforts of the confederate divines. He replied to them immediately; and asserted, that the arguments which they had produced tended to establish his own opinions. Zuingle animadverted with great severity on the rude manner in which, he said, they had treated that most harmless of men, Ecolampadius. He allowed it was a season when the press teemed with boisterous publications; but he most solemnly affirmed, that he had not seen any one in which there was so little to commend as in this of Brentius. Throughout the whole work there was a force put upon the Sacred Scriptures: there was also in it an unmeasurable haughtiness; and, lastly, the confederacy itself of the authors was novel and indecorous. To these fourteen persons, he said, he could oppose two hundred; for almost the whole world, either openly or privately, differed from them in sentiment. Yet these dictators had ostentatiously signed their names to a summary of doctrine on the Sacrament, which they had scarcely so much as explained to their own congregations. Their performance contained very little,

* Hospin. II. 57. Urstis. Chron. Bas. in Gerdes. Hist. Evan. Reform. II. 295. Or in Jortin's Appendix, XXXIV.

† This book is intitled *Syngramma Suevicum, de Verbis Cænæ*. Dupin. Scult. 250. Hosp. 60.

* See the note in page 458.

except this slanderous accusation,—that those who differed from them were deluded by Satan;—a manifest proof of their own diabolical spirit! In regard to Ecolampadius, Zuingle affirmed, that he was a model of piety and erudition; and, moreover, that many of those fourteen divines had derived from him what knowledge they had of languages; and that therefore their ungrateful and disrespectful conduct towards their instructor, was unworthy of the Christian character, and merited not only rebuke, but execration. Men might praise such writers as much as they pleased, but they would be beaten on this subject as often as they appeared in print. He could easily, he said, have restrained this effusion of resentment; but to see the heavenly doctrine attacked in such arrogant language, was more than any one ought to bear with patience.*—These observations of Zuingle are far from being conciliatory; nor was it probable that a man of Luther's temper should pass them over in silence.

The Strasburgians, however, were very laudably employed in endeavouring to repair the breach, which was growing wider and wider, between the Lutheran and the Helvetic churches. They even sent over Caselius, their professor of the Hebrew language, to Wittemberg, for the express purpose of promoting union and brotherly love among the contending parties. The answer with which this learned professor was charged by Luther to return to the protestants at Strasburg, will at once prove both the nature of Caselius's commission to Wittemberg, and also that lamentable state of contention and irritation which at this juncture impeded the progress of the Reformation.

Luther admitted, that nothing was more to be wished than peace and harmony. He had done, he said, everything in his power to promote that end. The adversaries knew, in their consciences, that they were the first movers of the contest. It did not become him to be silent forever, while Zuingle and Ecolampadius, by their successive pamphlets, raised such disturbances;—unless indeed he was to give up his ministry and the cure of souls. It was not to be borne that they should continue to talk, cause confusion among his people, and weaken his authority, and that notwith-

standing he must give way and hold his peace.

It had been said, he ought to abstain from railing. But how was it possible for him to confute or contradict, without condemning errors? and yet the language which was unavoidable on such an occasion, they called railing. He wished to know whether these extraordinary modest persons were or were not guilty of railing, when they traduced him and his friends in their books, under the denomination of FLESH-EATERS, worshippers of a God that could be eaten or turned into bread, deniers of the redemption by the cross. Such was their modesty; and thus were himself and his friends slandered. Hitherto, he had patiently submitted to this treatment; whereas his opponents could not bear to be told, that they erred in their interpretation of Scripture. He therefore informed them explicitly, that he would endure all this no longer.

He proceeds to say, he did not approve of the advice of the Strasburgians, that good Christians should be directed not to meddle with the question concerning the REAL PRESENCE, but should be exercised in the word and in faith. "In the VERY words themselves,"* he said, "was implied the presence of the body and blood; moreover, the attention of the common people had been so much roused by the dispersion of the numerous pamphlets of the Sacramentarians, that it could not now be diverted from the subject. They ought to have been silent at first: it was now too late to aim at silence."

In effect, either one party or the other, he said, must be considered as the ministers of Satan. There could be no medium. What agreement between Christ and Belial? He would be glad to have peace, but not at the expense of that peace towards God, which is purchased for us by Jesus Christ.

He therefore earnestly besought his brethren, by Christ Jesus himself, and by everything in Christ that was dear, to avoid this pernicious error, and to cease from seducing the souls of men, to the very imminent danger of their salvation. Of their commendations of the holiness of Ecolampadius and Zuingle, and their respective churches, all men must rejoice to hear: at the same time, Luther

* II. Zuingle and Theob. Bil.

* This is my body.

warned them of the lengths to which Zuingle was disposed to go in the article of Original Sin; and he added, that he was so much disturbed by the sentiments contained in their letter, as not very well to comprehend what they meant either by the term Church or Holiness.

In conclusion, he admitted that the Sacramentarians, if they persisted, might do much mischief, but WOULD NEVER CONQUER. He lamented that Zuingle had taken so much offence at one of his expressions, namely, "that what he wrote MUST be true;" because this captious spirit, he conceived, was a proof that Zuingle harboured against him some secret grudge: and lastly, he asked upon what grounds THEIR BOASTING OF THEIR EXPERIENCES and of the witness of the Spirit was to be allowed, if Luther was to be denied the privilege of asserting in his turn, with equal confidence, what he knew to be true.*

The papal party beheld these dissensions among the reformers with infinite satisfaction. "How dangerous," said they in triumph, "was it to desert the parent Church! Doubts, difficulties, and contentions, must be the inevitable consequence!" Moreover, as Luther's doctrine of consubstantiation was much less offensive to them than that of the Sacramentarians, it was natural that they should, in this instance, prefer the protestants of Saxony to those of Switzerland. We are told indeed that the papists not only relaxed in their opposition and animosity to the former, but that they even praised them, exceedingly esteemed them, and almost heartily forgave them all the mischief they had done.† Spalatinus himself expressly informs us, that the rulers and inquisitors of Belgium gave a decided preference to the principles of the Saxon Reformer.

Nothing, however, could be further from the mind of Luther than any species of compromise with the Roman hierarchy. Between him and the papists, there was not merely one, but many gulfs, which were absolutely impassable. The Sacramentarian tenet would have added another;—whereas Luther unhappily made that the foundation of a permanent dissension among the Evangelical brethren.—What blindness of under-

standing, what obstinacy of temper, what uncharitableness of judgment; yet, in the same man, what integrity of principle, what reverence for the Scriptures, what sensibility of conscience!—In one word, what an assemblage have we here of contradictory motives and qualities, at once contributing to influence and direct the conduct of this extraordinary character!!*

Luther was so much pleased with the little treatise of the fourteen Suabian ministers, that he procured a translation of it into German; and also wrote a preface to it, by which he gave great offence to the Swiss divines. He calls the tenets of the Sacramentarians, novel dreams; and ridicules them for having had recourse, in the space of only one year, to six different expositions of the concise expression, 'This is my body.'‡

In the year 1526, the mind of Luther appears to have been excessively agitated by the Sacramentarian controversy. "I am challenged," A. D. 1526. says he, "by Ecolampadius; and I meditate an answer, if I had but leisure. It grieves me to the heart to see so great a man ensnared by frivolous arguments. May God have mercy on him!"

Again: "This Sacramentarian pestilence makes havock, and acquires strength in its progress. Pray for me, I beseech you, for I am cold and torpid. A most unaccountable lassitude, if not Satan himself, possesses me, so that I am able to do very little. Our ingratitude, or perhaps some other sin, is the cause of the Divine displeasure: certainly our notorious contempt of the word of God will account for the present penal delusion, or even a greater. I was but too true a prophet, when I predicted that something of this kind would happen."‡

To another friend he writes thus:

"If I had not known, from experience, that God in his anger did suffer men to be carried away with delusions, I could not have believed that so many and so great men would have been seduced by such trifling and childish reasonings, to support this pestilential, this sacrilegious heresy.—I ask what argument is there in this; 'Christ is at the right hand of

* Scult. 252. Luth. Ep. II. 302.

† Levater in Scult. 255. Hospin 63.

* Pages 408, 408, and 418.

† Hospin. 65.

‡ To Hausman, 319, 320.

the Father, therefore he is not in the Sacrament.' Again, 'The flesh profiteth nothing, therefore the body of Christ is not in the Sacrament.' Yet these are their best arguments. Surely it is madness to be moved by such levities, in opposition to the simple indisputable word of Christ, 'This is my body!'"*

In a like strain he addresses a faithful minister at Augsburg:

"Grace and peace. May Christ preserve you! Our ingratitude and contempt of the divine word is the cause why God has permitted Satan to rage in this manner. I have often foretold that our ingratitude would be punished with wars and divisions among ourselves. Do you be firm, and keep together your little flock. I am all on fire to profess openly for once my faith on the Sacrament, and to expose the tenets of our adversaries to derision IN A FEW WORDS; for they will not attend to an elaborate argument. I would have published my sentiments long ago, if I had had leisure, and Satan had not thrown impediments in my way."†

With these views and impressions, Luther preached and published at Wittenberg a sermon on the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ. The object of his discourse was,—to avoid all prolix and intricate argumentation, and to state briefly to the people his own sentiments on the Eucharist, and the Scriptural proofs of them; which he conceived to be so clear and convincing, as to preclude all controversy or contrariety of opinion.

In the former part of this address, Luther observes, that, within the last two years, there had arisen six, if not seven dissentient sects; all of which however agreed in this common sentiment, that the body and blood of Christ was not present in the Sacrament. "The great cause, the very fountain of their error," he said, "was this; they did not strictly adhere to the words of Christ. In these, there was no ambiguity whatever; but men gave way to their own roving imaginations; and supposed, that in believing the presence of Christ in the bread and wine, their adversaries conceived the body of Christ to be extended in every direction throughout the whole world, in order that every person living might take and eat of the same individual body.

Factionous spirits," he said, "always acted in this way. They first formed to themselves an opinion which was purely imaginary; and then they tortured Scripture to support that opinion.

"The true believer," continues Luther, "asks himself this question: What is it to me how Christ becomes present in the Sacrament? My business is, to believe Him who cannot lie. The words are quite clear; a child may understand them. There is not the slightest ambiguity in such words as, To take bread, To give thanks, To break bread, To give bread, To command, To eat, To drink, This is my body.—What incredible and unceasing pains have been taken to cast an obscurity over these luminous and perspicuous terms, and to make them signify just what every one has fancied in his dreams!"

"But it is absurd to suppose the body of Christ to be in more than a hundred thousand places at once.—

"This is not more absurd than the diffusion of the soul through every part of the body. Touch any part of the body with the point of a needle, and the whole man, the whole soul is sensible of the injury. If then the soul be equally in every part of the body, and you can give no reason for it, why may not Christ be every where, and every where equally in the Sacrament? Tell me, if you can, why a grain of wheat produces so many grains of the same species: or why a single eye can fix itself at once on a thousand objects, or a thousand eyes can be fixed all at once on a single minute object.

"Take another example: What a feeble, poor, miserable, vanishing thing is the voice of a man! yet what wonders it can perform—how it penetrates the hearts of multitudes of men! and yet not so as that each person acquires merely a portion of it, but rather, as if every individual ear became possessed of the whole. If this were not a matter of experience, there would not be a greater miracle in the whole world. If then the corporeal voice of a man can effect such wonders, why may not the glorified body of Christ be much more powerful and efficacious in its operations?"

"Further; When the Gospel is preached through the exertion of the human voice, does not every true believer, by the instrumentality of the Word, become actually possessed of Christ in his heart?"

* To Stifel, 319, 320. † To Dr. Frosch, id.

Not that Christ sits in the heart, as a man sits upon a chair, but rather as he sitteth at the right hand of the Father. How this is, no man can tell; yet the Christian knows, by experience, that Christ is present in his heart. Again, every individual heart possesses the whole of Christ; and yet a thousand hearts in the aggregate possess no more than one Christ. The Sacrament is not a greater miracle than this.

“But it is also said, that there is no use in the actual presence of the body of Christ.—

“You may as well say, there is no use in Christ’s being born of a virgin; there is no necessity that Christ should be a Divine person; there is no necessity that God should send his Son from heaven to undergo a cruel and ignominious death. God is omnipotent: Sin, death, and Satan, are all in his hand: and He, no doubt, could have devised a different method of justifying sinners;—He had only to speak the word.

“The answer,” said Luther, “to all such speculations, is this: If God, in his revelation, has described anything to be necessary, let all created beings submit in silence. Christ uses plain words, ‘Take, eat, this is my body;’—whatever Christ says, I am bound to believe, and without wavering.”

He then proceeds to ridicule the various interpretations which had been given of the words, “This is my body.” “One, namely Carolstadt, says, the word **THIS** does not mean the bread; and therefore he understands the expression in this way, ‘Take, eat, for **THIS** is my body,’—that is, he supposes the Saviour, at the time of speaking, to point towards his own person. Another, for example, Zuingle, changes the plain meaning of the verb **IS**, and, with Ovid’s art of metamorphosing, interprets it by the word **SIGNIFY**. Then, in the third place, Ecolampadius insists on a still different mode of understanding these few words, ‘This is my body:’ according to him, the words **MY BODY** signify the figure or the representation of my body.

“Let us lay aside,” said Luther, “all such contemptible reasoning; let us simply adhere to the express declaration of Scripture, and believe that the body and blood of Christ are present in the bread and wine. Not because Christ is present nowhere else with his body and blood; since he, together with his body and

blood, exists most perfectly and completely in the souls of true believers; but because it has pleased him to assure us where and how we may apprehend him, and become actually partakers of himself.

“The great use of the Sacrament,” says our author, in the second part of his discourse, “is, that the **FAITHFUL COMMUNICANT** may not only believe that the body and blood of Christ are there present, but that Christ himself is thereby given to him **AS A FREE GIFT**. He is therefore to preserve a lively attention to the injunction, ‘Take, eat, this is my body, which is given for you;’ for these are the very words which give strength to his faith. There are two positions in the Sacrament, both of which are the objects of the true Christian’s faith. The first is, the real presence of the body and blood of Christ; and this the papists profess that they believe;—the second is, that the body and blood of Christ are freely bestowed upon us, without any merits of our own; which the papists do not believe. Now our adversaries, the Sacramentarians, place all the virtue of the Eucharist in a mere commemoration of the death of Christ; and they contend that the bread and wine are no more than symbols by which we make it plain to others that we are Christians: Whereas our doctrine is, that, in receiving the bread and wine, our Lord freely bestows his body and blood, and that we appropriate these to ourselves, and become actually possessed of them for the remission of our sins. Thus Christ becomes ours; and poor miserable sinners are hereby delivered from the dread of death and hell, and become children of God, and heirs of a heavenly kingdom. And it is for these great ends and purposes that we come to the Lord’s table.”*

The explanations of Brentius, who was the representative of the fourteen Suabian divines, could not be materially different from those of the preceding discourse, because Luther expresses the most unqualified approbation of that performance. Brentius observes, that the presence of Christ is effected in the Sacrament, through the power and efficacy of the **WORD**; by which power and efficacy, to use the very expression of Augustine,—the element of bread becomes **A SACRAMENT**, and the **WORD** itself acquires a **VISIBILITY**; that is to say, Just

* De Euchar. VII. 335.

as Christ is present in his Word, in the same manner he is rendered present, and is offered to us in his Sacraments. And again; In the very same manner by which Christ gives us his body in the Eucharist, he presents us with all his Gospel, through which not only his body and blood become present, but the whole power of God, the whole Godhead itself, together with all the Divine excellencies. Surely no man can be so impious, as to deny, that by faith we may eat the flesh and drink the blood of Jesus Christ. St. John says, 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;' meaning that these things are so to the faithful. Now if the faithful do eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, that flesh and blood must be present; for if they were not present, they could not be eaten or drunken. The author goes on thus; "The bread of the Sacrament, as far as it is ordinary bread, we handle, break, eat, and grind with our teeth; but the body of Christ we receive through the power of these words, 'THIS IS MY BODY:' so that,—as it hath been well observed, —'what we eat enters the stomach, what we believe enters the mind.' Nevertheless it must be remembered, that though it is by faith that we eat the body of Christ, and drink his blood, this does not deprive the bread of the presence of Christ; or, in other words, though it be true that we SPIRITUALLY eat the body of Christ, yet we are not on that account to deny that we become partakers of that body in receiving the bread of the Sacrament."^{*}

Let us now turn for a few moments to Ecolampadius himself, who, with a pious and Christian view to peace and union, drew up what he calls his confession on this subject.

"I have no hesitation," says he, "to own that the body of Christ is present with the bread, in the same manner in which it is present with the Word itself, by which the bread becomes a Sacrament, and the Word becomes visible." And again: "Those express themselves well, and in a truly religious way, who say that they come to the Lord's Supper, even to eat the body of Christ. Also, Those talk profanely and contemptuously, who say that they obtain nothing there except bread and a sign of their Christianity: for such persons do hereby

demonstrate their infidelity. A believer considers himself as treated like a traitor, if he is represented as having eaten the Sacrament only, and not the thing itself, which the Sacrament implies; although it be true that he receives the former with the mouth, and the latter with the mind of faith."

This is a very material part of the confession of Ecolampadius, who concludes with observing, that he did not see how he could depart from it, even so much as the breadth of his finger.*

The history of the controversy of the Sacramentarians is prolix and voluminous; and in our days by no means worth the time and trouble of a diligent perusal. My object is, to select and condense just so much of it as will teach us lessons of caution and moderation, at the same time that it may gratify an innocent and laudable curiosity. For these were but the BEGINNINGS of that strife and contention, which continued for a long time afterwards to afflict and divide the protestants, and obstruct the progress of Christian truth. The churches but recently reformed were torn to pieces between Luther and Zuingle. "Some characters," says the pious Scultetus, "deserted JERUSALEM, and went back again to BABYLON: others waited in suspense for the result of the disputations of the leaders in theology: good men grieved; and bad men laughed; while the papists, throughout Italy, France, and Germany, raged with fire and sword and cruel edicts against those who, because the Scripture affirms the body of Christ to be in heaven, denied the existence of it in the bread of the Sacrament."

Yet after all, upon a review of the evidence now before us, a dispassionate student of this controversy will probably be disposed to say,—How easily, with the assistance of a little mutual candour and moderation and Christian forbearance, might the whole dispute in this stage of the contention have been settled, or at least suspended, and complete concord restored among the Evangelical brethren! For though, on the one hand, the Lutherans had certainly been too much inclined to maintain the corporeal presence and corporeal manducation of the body of Christ, in the gross sense of those terms; and, on the other hand, the Zuinglians had on

* Hosp. 59, 60.

* Ep. Zuing. and Ecolamp. III. 129.

some occasions justly rendered themselves suspected of an intention to deprive the Sacrament of all its spirituality, and to reduce the ordinance to a mere commemoration of the person of Christ, it does not however appear, that any such striking and specific difference of sentiment between the Saxon and the Swiss divines had hitherto been insisted on, as should have made it necessary for either of the parties to require from the other a distinct and humiliating retraction, much less to persevere in an unchristian hostility. In fact, these learned and excellent men, on both sides, seem to have been ignorant at first of the true state of the question, and also of the sentiments of each other. Then, during the heat and violence of their opposition, mole-hills became mountains: novel fancies arose concerning the Sacrament, which had never been thought of in the commencement of the dissensions, and which were invented purely to support arguments that had been once incautiously advanced; and these for a long time afterwards afforded materials for vain and unedifying disputation.

The very learned and zealous reformer Martin Bucer, who had adopted in general the opinions of Luther, and had had several conferences with him in 1521, was inclined, in the Sacramentarian contest, to take part with the Helvetian divines: he displayed, however, great moderation in stating his own sentiments, and was one of those who sincerely laboured to compose the dissensions among the Evangelical ministers, both by his candid construction of the declarations of the Lutherans, and also by his kind and rational exhortations to Christian fellowship. He informs us, that he considered Brentius as well qualified, by his superior judgment and learning, to influence the good clergy of his neighbourhood; and that with this very view he had by letter entreated him to reflect on the mischievous effects which this contention would produce on weaker minds, particularly if faithful ministers of Christ were to be wantonly traduced and reviled for their difference of sentiment in non-essentials. In this same letter he put Brentius in mind, that it was absolutely impossible for him and his friends, consistently with piety, to pull to pieces such a character as that of Ecolampadius, who had deserved so well of them, and of the glorious Gospel of Christ. Bucer then subjoined a very simple ac-

count of that idea of the Sacrament which he said was professed by himself, and also by his clerical brethren at Strasburg. "Our belief," says he, "is this, That according to the doctrine of St. Paul, as often as we eat the bread and drink the wine of the Sacrament, we show the Lord's death till he come; that is, that we consider, confess, and declare, that Christ offered to his Father on the cross his body and blood for our redemption; and doing this with a true faith, we know that our souls are really fed, refreshed, and strengthened, by the flesh and the blood of Christ." - - - Notwithstanding the veneration in which Zuingle was justly held by the reformed churches, as they are called on the continent, I do not remember so neat, so concise, so unexceptionable, and, on the whole, so truly a Scriptural account of the nature of the Eucharist, in all the voluminous writings of that learned and excellent reformer.*

The name of Zuingle is transmitted to posterity with the highest encomiums on his candour and moderation. Not to deny the just foundation of this praise, there are however two circumstances which have, I think, contributed to make the historians and memorialists more liberal in bestowing it. 1. The excessive and ungovernable asperity of Luther, of which his enemies always take the advantage, and his friends are always ashamed, never appeared more conspicuous than in the Sacramentarian controversy; and it could not fail to prove serviceable, though indirectly and by way of contrast only, to the reputation of Zuingle. 2. The language of Zuingle is infinitely, I had almost said, nearer, than that of Luther, to the language of a person educated in modern times,—of one, for example, who has learnt how to cur DEEP, and yet to shelter himself under polite terms and respectful acknowledgments. Luther is often abusive, but never means more than he says,—often a great deal less. He frequently calls a man a fool or an ass in general, when he only intends to charge him with inconclusive reasoning, in some one instance at that time under consideration. Zuingle understands the art of pulling to pieces much better than Luther; and, I observe, he is never so much in earnest for that purpose, as when he has first artfully prepared the mind to give credit to

* Scultet. xxvi. 51. Hospin. 66.

his accusations, by praising most liberally the conduct of his adversary, in points where it was in vain for him to withhold his approbation.

We have already observed with how little of a true spirit of conciliation Zuingle, in his letter to Theobald Bilicanus,* criticised the publication of the Suabian divines. He afterwards addressed Luther himself on the same subject, to this effect: "We are sincerely concerned that you should commend this performance of the Suabian ministers. As a precedent, it is bad. In this way, the doctrine of Christ must be subjected, not to one tyrannical pontiff, but to myriads of little tyrants. Brentius has picked up, out of the streets, a number of petty bishops, and formed a synod of them: then, without any other support, he has condemned, as erroneous, the sentiments of Ecolampadius respecting the opinions of the Fathers on a certain point. Now Ecolampadius was his preceptor; and, moreover, Brentius has neither sufficient learning nor sufficient experience to enter into the spirit of those ancient writers. Surely, my Luther, this is setting an imprudent and most mischievous example. Every crazy brain will be producing a tumult in the Church, and exclaiming, This is error! This is heresy! We are grieved to find you commend this book, because we feel sensibly for your reputation, which cannot but suffer by your thus praising a composition that is empty and contemptible in every point of view. If one looks into it for eloquence, one finds nothing but rude and hasty expressions, without any solidity or consistence; at the same time there appears such a visible confusion and anxiety about words and sentences, that there seems to have been some danger lest the author's store of language should have been exhausted before his book was finished. Then, as to the arguments, nothing can be more feeble; and as to acuteness, a duller production was never seen: and, on the whole, it is so ill put together, and so little adapted to convince, that one is at a loss to conceive what it was that induced the author to try his strength on such a subject. For if his object was illustration, do not you see that every point he undertakes to handle, becomes, under his

treatment, more obscure than it was before!"*

Plenty of passages of a similar stamp might be produced from the writings of Zuingle; but this is laid before the reader merely to show that there were other very excellent and eminent Christians as well as Luther, who, when unhappily heated by controversy, could make use, if not of as hard words, yet of quite as contemptuous and provoking a strain of expression as any which can be found in his most exceptionable and acrimonious writings.—These things are recorded in history as lessons of caution; not as examples for imitation.†

In the former part of the year 1527, the mind of Luther seems to have been irritated by this controversy to the very highest degree. He gave himself seriously to the work, and produced in the month of February or March, a most elaborate treatise, in the German language, on the words, 'Take, eat, this is my body,' AGAINST THE FANATICAL SPIRITS OF THE SACRAMENTARIANS.

Luther is much irritated by the Sacramental Controversy. A. D. 1527.

The words of our Lord, 'Take, eat, this is my body,' he maintained, were express, and incapable of two meanings. Yet the Sacramentarians denied the presence of Christ's body and blood; and dreamt, that, in the Eucharist, the bread and wine were merely signs and symbols of the Christian profession. Moreover, they modestly accused those who differed from them in sentiment, of idolatry, and of worshipping a God that had been baked, and was made eatable, or turned into bread; and also drinkable,

* II. Zuing. Exec. 327. b.

† I have particularly noticed this publication of the Suabian ministers by Brentius, because Hospinian, who in general is sufficiently prejudiced in favour of the Swiss divines, freely acknowledges that there was no great difference between the opinions of Ecolampadius and those contained in the Syngramma of the Suabians; and further that Brentius, in an epistle to Martin Bucer, and also in his Exposition of Chap. vi. of John's Gospel, both which were written for the purpose of explaining more distinctly the sentiments of himself and his clerical brethren, had expressed his ideas of the Eucharist in such a manner, as to agree entirely with the confession of Ecolampadius. Hosp. 62.

or turned into wine. Such was their blasphemous language!

They also accused the Lutherans of being the cause of this controversy. "But who," said he, "incited Carolstadt to begin the contest? Who compelled Zuingle and Ecolampadius to write on this subject? Have they not done what they have done, voluntarily? We would gladly have been quiet, and even yet wish for quietness; but they show themselves averse to peace. Indeed, in words they do exhort men to peace and harmony; but their practice proves they delight in sowing discord incessantly.

"They lay no stress on any one thing except their Sacramentarian tenet. Devoid of every Christian grace, they pretend to the sanctity of martyrs, on account of this single opinion; and further, they allow no man to be a Christian who does not agree with them in this same sentiment. 'Such a man,' they say, 'has no knowledge of the Scriptures, neither does he possess anything of the Spirit;'—of such prodigious importance is it become at present to talk about BREAD AND WINE. They would persuade one, that this was the great, the only concern of the Holy Ghost; when, in reality, it is a delusion of Satan, who, under the pretence of love and concord, is raising dissensions and mischiefs of every kind.

"The Sacramentarians," said Luther, "call loudly upon us for Scriptural proof of the real presence: that is, they bid us prove that there are in Scripture such words as 'This is my body;' whereas this, and no other, is the reading in every copy of the New Testament, throughout the world. But where," continued he, "shall we find the words, 'This signifies my body,' 'This is the sign of my body?' or that the word *IS* means the same as the word *SIGNIFIES*? Yet they dare to conclude, with the utmost positiveness, that these last words are really Scriptural. Now I do affirm, that it is an invariable rule in Biblical criticism never to leave the obvious or literal meaning of the words of Scripture, unless we are authorized by the passage itself, or, at least, by an analogical argument, founded on some uncontroverted article of faith.—Such is the real state of the question; and I call God to witness, that I have not the least wish to defame Zuingle, and still much less Ecolampa-

dus, a man on whom God has bestowed many excellent gifts." Luther proceeds to the following effect:

"The Sacramentarians think it implies a contradiction to suppose that Christ should sit at the right hand of God, and that his body should, at the same time, present in the Eucharist. The answer is, The Holy Scriptures teach us that the right hand of God is not in any particular place circumscribed with bounds, as though there existed a golden seat or throne in some distinct apartment. Hence, the right hand of God, the arm of God, the face, the essence, the Spirit, the Word of God, are all one and the same thing: namely, God himself, who exists every where, and supports everything by his Divine energy.—In the next place, Christ was in the world, walked about in the world, and yet the whole Deity was essentially and bodily in him. But how can these things be? How can God in Christ be entirely and essentially in the womb of Mary, in the manger, in the temple, in the desert, in towns, in houses, in gardens, in the fields, on the cross, and in the sepulchre, and yet be in heaven in the bosom of the Father? No doubt this is a great miracle; nevertheless, if it be incontrovertibly true, according to the Catholic faith, that the Godhead itself is always really and essentially present in the person of Christ, the conclusion must be, that Christ is present every where, both in heaven and in earth.

"When Christ took our nature upon him, it is not to be so understood as though he descended from heaven as a man descends by a ladder or a rope; for before that wonderful event took place, he was present every where. God is present every where, and in every creature. Mark well, however, the distinction between Christ and any created being. Of the last it may be said, God is there, or in that being; but you cannot say that being is God. Whereas, in regard to Christ, God is not only present in him as in every creature; but *HE* is the true God. The Godhead dwells in him bodily; God and man are one Christ.

"These things, I allow, confound all human wisdom and comprehension. They are to be apprehended by faith, through the instrumentality of the Word of God. Nevertheless, the ubiquity of Christ is a complete refutation of that fundamen-

tal objection of the Sacramentarians; namely, That Christ cannot be in the sacrament and in heaven at the same time: AND THUS WE TAKE THE SWORD OUT OF THE HAND OF THE OSTENTATIOUS GIANT GOLIATH."

To help the imagination on so difficult a subject, Luther observed, that God might have many methods, which he had not condescended to lay open to us, whereby two things might be in the same place at the same time, or one thing might exist in another, without any gross corporeal sort of union, like that which the Sacramentarians supposed. The Scriptures spake of children being in the loins of their parents. Trees and fruits also existed in seeds and kernels. There was likewise positive proof that Christ came to his disciples through doors which were shut. There was not wanting, he added, an express testimony to the ubiquity of Christ. 'No man hath ascended into heaven, except he who came down from heaven, the Son of man, who is in heaven;' which words plainly demonstrated, that Christ's body was present both in heaven and on earth, and, in fact, every where, at the very same moment.

Our author takes notice of another argument of his adversaries, upon which they laid great stress; namely, 'The flesh profiteth nothing.'—John vi. Ecolampadius ventured to call this passage his IRON WALL. Luther replied, "I think IT IS A WALL OF MERE PAPER; or, perhaps, I may admit, the paper is a little tinged WITH AN IRON COLOUR. In this passage of Scripture, our adversaries take for granted that THE FLESH means the flesh of Christ: whereas I affirm, that whenever Christ speaks of his own flesh, or of his own body, he invariably adds the little word MY, or some word of the same import: for example, the several passages run thus,—'My flesh,—my body, is meat indeed.' 'Whoso eateth MY flesh.' 'Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man.' - - - Now, as it is not said MY flesh profiteth nothing, but only THE FLESH profiteth nothing, they will have enough to do to prove that flesh, in this verse, means the flesh of Christ. For there is a great difference between the flesh of Christ, and other flesh; and I call upon them to prove that the word FLESH means Christ's flesh, when it is said, The flesh profiteth nothing. And thus this whole argument, namely, the

IRON WALL of Ecolampadius, FALLS TO THE GROUND.

Zuingle would argue, that to eat the flesh of Christ could do no good, because, 'that which is born of the flesh, is flesh.' On the contrary, I maintain that the flesh of Christ originates from the Holy Ghost, and is therefore holy in its nature, and comes under that expression of our Lord, namely, 'THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT, IS SPIRIT;' which words prove that the body of Christ is not ordinary flesh, but spiritual flesh; for the Scriptures do not speak in this manner of any other person.

The manducation by the mouth is corporeal; that by the heart is spiritual, that is, by faith. But observe, when we are said to eat or drink spiritually, we do not mean that we eat or drink what is, in strictness, real spirit, or a spiritual substance; for then it would be impossible to eat and drink spiritually the flesh of Christ; because that flesh, wherever it be, and whether it exists in a corporeal or a spiritual essence, or whether it be visible or invisible, according to circumstances, is real, natural corporeal flesh, and capable, whenever God pleases, of being touched, handled, seen, and heard; capable also of being born of a woman, and of dying on the cross. But it is denominated spiritual flesh, because, as aforesaid, it originated from the Holy Ghost, and because we ought to be partakers of it in a spiritual manner.

In using the Sacrament, the corporeal manducation, if unaccompanied by the spiritual, is ruinous to the communicant; because, as St. Paul says, 'he eats unworthily, and is guilty of the body of Christ.' Deeply impressed with these views of the Sacrament, Luther paraphrases our Lord's celebrated address to his disciples, John vi. in the following manner:

"Ye, my disciples, take offence at my words, but ye do not understand them. Ye are thinking of the ordinary processes of corporeal eating and digesting meat, such as is bought in the shambles. These thoughts are carnal and deadly. It is not flesh of this kind which I tell you ye must eat: ye must have spiritual, and not ordinary flesh. My words must be taken spiritually, and as spoken of spiritual flesh. ALL my words are spirit; and therefore the flesh, and the eating, and all the other things of which I speak, are Spirit, and are to

be understood spiritually, and to be used spiritually. For it is the Spirit that quickeneth: the flesh profiteth nothing.”*

The historian having furnished his readers with these materials, leaves it now to the pious and diligent student of the ecclesiastical reformation, to make his own reflections on the state of the parties concerned in the Sacramental controversy. Doubtless he will lament the bad spirit which was gaining ground at a great rate on both sides; and will also turn with disgust from the metaphysical jargon concerning substances, essences, and attributes, which began now to be introduced and much insisted on by the Lutherans, for the purpose of maintaining their doctrine of the omnipresence of the body of Christ. Luther probably never thought of having recourse to such abstruse and intricate speculations in religious inquiries, till, in defending his ideas of consubstantiation or impanation, he found himself hard pressed by his opponents. No man's natural temper was ever more averse than his to a sophistical or an unintelligible way of argumentation; yet his treatise against the Sacramentarians, which we have just reviewed, compels us to own, that, along with many excellent and beautiful reflections on the spiritual nature of the Sacrament, he certainly mixed a deal of scholastic puzzle and confusion; and that, notwithstanding what has been asserted to the contrary, he himself unquestionably, in the year 1527, taught publicly, and enforced with uncommon earnestness, the ubiquity of the person of Christ, considered as a human being.†

* Op. Luth. VII. Hospin.

† Maclaine in Mosh. II. 199.

CHAPTER XIV.

FROM THE CONCLUSION OF THE SACRAMENTAL CONTROVERSY, TO THE PERSECUTIONS OF THE REFORMERS, AFTER THE FIRST DIET OF SPIRES.

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1. STATE OF PARTIES.
 2. DIET OF AUGSBERG IN 1525.
 3. SUSPICIONS OF THE PROTESTANTS.
 4. DIET OF SPIRES.
 5. THE REFORMATION IN HESSE BY THE LANDGRAVE.
 6. LUTHER'S SENTIMENTS RESPECTING WAR AND DEFENCE.—HIS LABOURS.
 7. PERSECUTIONS OF THE REFORMERS.

I. STATE OF PARTIES.

THE avowed and unequivocal support afforded to the Reformation by the new elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse, did not produce all the good effects which might have been expected from the wise and vigorous measures adopted by those illustrious princes, in the best of causes. Their example, indeed, was followed by all the most enlightened princes and states of Germany; and, in consequence, an improved union, more solid, and better cemented than ever, took place among THESE. But the rest, who, under the cautious and ambiguous conduct of Frederic the Wise, had hitherto shown themselves averse to an open rupture, so soon as they clearly perceived that the Reformers designed to withdraw themselves from the Romish communion, and reject the jurisdiction of the pontiff, instantly took fire at the very idea of such a basis of peace and concord. Some of them had stood neuter during the violence of the religious differences; and others had even joined the Lutherans in their complaints against certain abuses of the established church; but none had ever once dreamed of entirely deserting the religious system of their ancestors; and, as matters were fast advancing to a crisis, they now thought it high time to make an open declaration of their attachment to the established hierarchy, and of their zeal and readiness to promote its interests.

Thus the discordant princes of Germany arranged themselves into two distinct parties, each of which seemed reso-

lutely determined to adhere to its peculiar tenets.

But there was this essential difference between the patrons of Popery and Lutheranism. All the measures of the latter were in principle purely defensive; whereas the former meditated the complete extirpation of their adversaries. Foiled in argu-

ments repeatedly, they seemed to have given up the contest in that way, and to have expected better success by having recourse to slander. The late Rustic war in Germany had afforded them a pretext for this purpose. They represented the Lutherans as bad subjects in general, and as the prime cause of that late rebellion, and of the bloodshed.—Moreover, though the rebels had been severely handled at Mulhausen,* yet fresh commotions were apprehended from the operations of the licentious doctrines of Munzer; therefore the electors of Mayence and Brandenburg, with the duke Henry of Brunswick and his uncle Eric, had had a conference at Dessau; where they made no secret of declaring, that the only radical cure of the evil would be to free the nation from the Lutheran heresy, and from those who protected it. This interview of the enemies of the Reformation gave rise to much suspicion and anxiety in the mind of the landgrave of Hesse, especially as, with a view to the distracted state of the country, he had recently requested a friendly meeting with his father-in-law, the duke George, and had received a surly answer, "That before anything could be done to the purpose, all the late innovations in religion must be effectually done away."

These proceedings had so little ambiguity in them, that the Lutherans, about this time, began to deliberate seriously how they might best evade the blow with which they were threatened by a powerful and bigoted confederacy. They retorted the accusation of having been the cause of the rebellion of the peasants, and justly ascribed those sad events to the cruel, persecuting spirit of the nobles and dignitaries of the church. Various conventions of the princes were held in different places. At Salfeld, in particular, they came to this resolution, "That it became them, as Christian princes, to

do everything to promote the glory of God, and to conform their practice to the revealed word. That, by this word, the true doctrine of Justification, through the mercy of God by faith in Jesus Christ, was now once more revived; and that, for this great benefit, eternal thanks were due to Almighty God." The proxies transmitted their resolution to the duke George, and at the same time animadverted severely on what had passed at the late assembly at Dessau.*

2. DIET OF AUGSBURG IN 1525.

MEANWHILE, mandatory letters from Charles V. to his brother and representative, Ferdinand, dated Toledo, May 24, 1525, calling for a diet of the empire, increased both the discontent and the alarm of all those German princes who favoured the Reformation. The letters breathed nothing but the execution of the edict of Worms, and destruction to the Lutherans. He directed the diet to be held at Augsburg, on the next Michaelmas day; and privately, in a milder tone, requested the elector of Saxony to be present. But this prince, at the instance of the landgrave, resolved upon a previous measure, admirably calculated to defeat the violent designs of the papal party. This measure consisted in forming a SPEEDY ASSOCIATION with all the moderate and well-disposed states of the empire; such as the elector palatine, the elector of Treves, the margraves of Brandenburg, the dukes of Luneburg, Pomerania, and Mecklenburg, the princes of Anhalt, the imperial cities of Nuremberg, Strasburg, Augsburg, and of Ulm and Magdeburg; the object of which association should be, to concur in representing to Ferdinand the imminent danger there was at this time of exciting fresh and more formidable riots and seditions, by any attempts to execute the edict of Worms; and how abundantly more wise and safe it would be, at the present moment, to come to some distinct determination and settlement respecting the religious differences.

The principal states of the empire agreed in the same sentiments; and even Ferdinand himself at length confessed the necessity of adopting pacific measures in the concern of religion; and al-

Essential
difference
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* See page 417, 418.

* Arch. Weim. p. 42. Add. 1.

lowed the princes to send to the diet such of their theologians as they judged best qualified, by their knowledge and discretion, to prove useful advisers in the ensuing deliberations.*

Accordingly, the elector of Saxony and the landgrave instructed their deputies to represent to the diet, That their masters complained heavily of the harsh terms in which the imperial mandate for calling the diet was

expressed:—that, in fact, the late rebellion of the peasants, which the princes had suppressed at the hazard of their lives, was to be imputed to such ill-timed and provoking severities;—that divine truth could not be extinguished in the minds of men by force;—that much greater evils than any which had yet happened would be the infallible consequence of the attempt, besides the despoite done to the word of God;—that those decrees of Nuremberg, which respected the reformation of religion, ought to be observed; and that, in a matter where the salvation of men's souls was concerned, the utmost care should be taken not to harass tender consciences, by increasing instead of diminishing the present evils;—and, lastly, the deputies were ordered to oppose the execution of the edict of Worms with all their might.

Further, the elector of Saxony, well aware under how much odium he laboured from the papal ecclesiastics, on account of the reformation in religion which he had authorized at Wittemberg, directed his theologians to prepare in writing, ready for the diet, a brief but comprehensive answer to the principal objections of the opposite party: and such a memoir is found among the Archives of Weimar, neatly executed in the German language by the pen of Melancthon.

What follows is a specimen of the author's manner of treating the subject. The question is, Whether we are guilty of the sin of schism, in preaching certain doctrines, and abolishing certain usages, not only without the leave of the bishops, but in direct opposition to their injunctions? For, as they can say nothing against our doctrine, they have no way left to condemn us, but by object-

ing to our want of authority from the ecclesiastical rulers.

They argue, 1. The bishops, and no one else, possess any jurisdiction in the church.

2. They urge the infallibility of the church;—and therefore it is not possible there should have existed, for so many ages, the errors and idolatries which we have abrogated.

3. They put us in mind, that to obey is better than sacrifice;—we ought, therefore, to have been obedient to our superiors; Also,

4. To have shown a charitable regard for tender consciences. And,

5. Not to have raised civil wars by licentious innovations.

Melancthon rests the defence of the Reformers upon the following facts and principles:

1. Every minister of the word of God is bound, by the express precept of Christ,* to preach the leading doctrine of the Gospel, namely, justification by faith in Christ Jesus, and not by the merit of human performances. Whereas, nothing is more certain than that men have been drawn from the cross of Christ, to trust in their own works, and in a variety of superstitious vanities.

2. God has forbidden, under the most heavy punishment, every species of idolatry and false worship: and of this class are the sacrifice of the mass, masses for the dead, invocations of the saints, and such like; which things, though manifest blasphemies, it is notorious, have been taught in the church of Rome, and represented as sharing, in their efficacy to salvation, with the merits of our Redeemer himself.

3. The pope and bishops neglect their duty; exercise an usurped authority even over emperors and princes; and, under the pretence of serving Christ, apply the possessions of the church to the service of their tyrannical purposes.

On these grounds the author argues, That the clergy, from the very nature of their vocation, have an unquestionable authority to preach the truths of the Gospel; and, moreover, are called on the louder to do this when the bishops are plunged in ignorance and luxury, and when they answer the admonitions and

* Arch. Weim. p. 42. Add. 1.

* Matt. x. 32.

remonstrances of the Reformers only by anathemas and persecutions.

That the pope, the cardinals, and the clergy of Rome, did not constitute the Church of Christ, though there did exist among them some who were real members of that church, and opposed the reigning errors. That the true church consisted of the faithful, and of none else, who had the word of God, and by it were sanctified and cleansed.* That St. Paul had predicted there would come Antichrist, sitting in the temple of God: and, that the Reformers were not guilty of schism, either because they had convicted Antichrist of his errors, or because they had made alterations in some external ordinances. That the unity of the church did not consist in such things; and that whoever maintained that it did, ought in every way to be most strenuously opposed.

That to the charge of disobedience, the answer was easy: The pope and his bishops had exacted an unlawful obedience; that nothing short of giving up the word of God would content them; and that by their excommunications, and other persecutions of the reformed clergy, THEY THEMSELVES had at length stirred up the late rebellion in Germany.

Lastly, the author confirms his reasoning by quoting precepts of Christ himself, and by producing pertinent examples from the history both of the Christian and the Jewish church. "The great doctrinal point," says he, in conclusion, "is that of faith in the merits of Christ, independently of human works, as the ground of acceptance before God. Rather than give up this, we must suffer persecution, and every species of disturbance."

In the same memoir, Melancthon touches upon another question; namely, Whether the princes had done right in authorizing the reformations which had been made in their colleges and monasteries, contrary to the edicts of the emperor and the pope?

"The whole," says our author, "turns upon this single consideration, Whether the novel doctrines, as they are called, be or be not true? If true, the princes ought assuredly to protect them. The princes are no more under obligation to obey the higher powers in their tyranni-

cal mandates, than Jonathan was to kill David, or Obadiah the prophets."*

Such were the concise arguments by which the first Reformers defended themselves from the charge of heresy and schism.

It is to the exertions of these excellent men, conducted with so much spirit, wisdom, and moderation, that we are to ascribe the mild

Mild proceedings of the papal partisans.

proceedings of the papal partisans at the diet of Augsburg. —In fact, that assembly did not meet till the month of November, and from the advanced state of the season, and other causes, was but thinly attended. The diet was prorogued till the third of May of the next year, to be then held at Spires; and in the

Diet to be held at Spires, A. D. 1526.

mean time, they entreated the emperor to take measures for calling a council, and to favour them with his presence in Germany; but so far from directing the edict of Worms to be enforced, they satisfied themselves with repeating the evasive decree of Nuremberg, which, in general, enjoined the clergy to introduce no novel doctrines, but to preach the pure Gospel as it had been understood always by the great body of Christians, to consult for peace and harmony, and do all to the glory of God. It does not appear that Ferdinand discovered any reluctance to subscribe the terms of the RECESS. The most violent and the most inveterate adversaries of Luther could not but see the danger and the folly of all attempts, under the present circumstances, either to banish, or take away the life of a man who was so much admired and beloved by his countrymen; and to whose extraordinary discernment, industry, and courage, not only Germany, but also many other parts of Europe, were under the greatest obligations.

3. SUSPICIONS OF THE PROTESTANTS.

THIS appearance, however, of lenity and moderation was deceitful, being founded not in any solid principles of justice or religion,

Suspicious of the Protestants.

but merely in the temporary fear of tumult and sedition. —Even during the sittings of the late diet, the ecclesiastical princes had shown themselves much elevated with the recent

* Eph. v. 26.

* 1 Kings, xviii. 1.

victories over the rebellious peasants, and, in consequence, more disposed to violent and sanguinary measures. Thus the present calm was considered, by the more judicious and thinking protestants, only as a prelude to a tempest, shortly to be raised by all the great powers of the established hierarchy, for the purpose of crushing effectually, not only the Saxon reformer and his petty adherents at Wittenberg, but every German prince and state, whether civil or ecclesiastical, which had dared to oppose or dissent from the communion of the Roman church.*

Moreover, there were other reasons, besides those that have been mentioned, which would naturally fill the minds of the protestants with disquieting suspicions and apprehensions. So embittered was the court of Rome against what they called the Lutheran heresy, that in every treaty which the pope had of late concluded with foreign powers, the absolute destruction and extirpation

Additional reasons for suspicion.

of all Lutherans was a specific article.—For example, the ninth article of the treaty made by Clement VII. with the emperor, after the battle of Pavia and the capture of Francis I., runs thus: "Because religion, much more than any temporal concern, is near the heart of the Roman pontiff, and because the good faith of his holiness has been called in question, the emperor, the king of England, and the archduke Ferdinand, engage to take up arms with all their might against all disturbers of the Catholic faith, and against all persons who shall revile or injure the pontiff; and further, the aforesaid princes take upon themselves to punish all such offenders against his holiness, in the same manner as if the offences had been committed against their own persons."†

In the autumn of the very same year, this precious pontiff, whose thoughts, it seems, were so deeply and so entirely exercised concerning the advancement and protection of pure religion, deserted Charles V., and made a treaty with England and France, the primary object of which was declared to be, that the contracting parties should

Clement VII.'s treaty with Francis I.

effectually withstand the brutal ferocity of the Turks, and also suppress that most pestilential heresy of the Lutherans; for that there was as much danger from the latter evil as from the former, the said heresy having secretly spread itself to a great extent, and done much mischief to the Christian faith.*

In the famous treaty of peace, called the Treaty of Madrid, by which Francis I. recovered his liberty, it is expressly stated, that the emperor and the king are induced to make peace, that they may be able to extirpate all the enemies of the Christian religion, and especially the heresies of the Lutheran sect. The pope, they say, had often admonished and much solicited them to attend seriously to this important duty. It was, therefore, to satisfy his wishes that they had determined to entreat his holiness to give directions for a general council of the deputies of the kings and princes, to meet at a fixed time and place, then and there to consult on the most effectual method of carrying on the war against the Turks, and also of suppressing heresy.†

Treaty of Madrid.

How vigilant and indefatigable was this pontiff in rousing the adversaries of religion, and endeavouring to make them active and resolute in persecuting the little flock of true Christians, wherever they could find them! Among many of his epistolary admonitions and exhortations written for this purpose, there is one even to the Parliament of Paris. He had been informed, he said, that impious heresies had begun to creep into France; and that the parliament had wisely interposed, by choosing commissioners for the detection and punishment of the offenders. He entirely approved, and by his authority confirmed, the steps they had taken: it was a common concern: the mischief was general, and was to be ascribed to the malice of Satan, and the fury of his impious agents.

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Pope's letter to the Parliament of Paris.

* Rymer XIV. Sleidan VI. 145.

Cardinal Wolsey is supposed to have persuaded Henry VIII. to adopt this measure, as at that time he was much out of humour with Charles V. who, the cardinal believed, had prevented his being chosen pope at the last vacancy.

† Sleidan VI. 146. Also, Recueil des Traités, tom. II.

* Comm. de Luth. II. XV. 4.

† Palav. II. 13.

Not only religion, but also governments, kings, princes, nobles, all ranks and orders, were on the brink of destruction. It was a time when the common safety called for unanimous exertion. He promised that, on his part, no care or labour should be spared; and it was THEIR duty, he told them, to enter into the same views with their whole heart, and preserve their country from that calamitous infection, which infallibly attended the dissemination of this contagious heresy.*

Another source of anxiety and alarm to the protestant confederate princes, was the steady co-operation of Charles V. with the pope's tyrannical designs.

Charles V.
concurrs with
the Pope,
A. D. 1526.

Charles, by mandate from Seville, March 1526, directed his lieutenant-general Ferdinand, and the rest of his commissioners, to admonish the

members of the diet, who were about to assemble at Spire, to make no resolutions which were either contrary to the Christian faith, or to the ancient usages. He himself had already abrogated the late decree of Nuremberg, which had enjoined an examination of Luther's writings; and would shortly concert measures with his holiness, respecting a general council. The resolutions of those partial assemblies, he said, had done no good, but had rather confirmed the licentious vulgar in their errors; and that the diet would do well to regulate all their proceedings by that standard which had been settled by their own common consent. He complained, that doctrines which had been condemned were still taught, holy men were reviled, and seditions encouraged.†

This imperial mandate was intended by Charles V. for the public eye; but besides this, he caused private and secret instructions to be delivered to Henry duke of Brunswic, the general purport of which, as it soon became matter of notoriety, affected the minds of the good protestants with much greater concern than any public document could do, because it seemed most clearly to demonstrate the extreme hostility of the emperor's disposition towards any species of reformation.—The duke was commissioned to visit several such princes of the empire as were known to be perfectly untainted with Lutheranism; for exam-

ple, the archbishops of Cologne and Bremen, the bishops of Munster and Minden, the elector of Brandenburg, and several others. He was directed to show his instructions to some of them, to deliver civil messages from the emperor to others, and to make them all acquainted with how much grief his imperial highness had heard of the daily increase of the Lutheran heresy, which had already given rise to so much bloodshed, devastation, and blasphemy. The duke was to add, that the steady adherence of these princes to the ancient religion had afforded the emperor the most lively satisfaction; and that his highness intended very shortly to advise with them in person, concerning the best remedies to be used in this most destructive distemper. He was then to declare, on the emperor's part, that he should not permit any other of his concerns to interfere with this: and lastly, he was to exhort the princes to persevere in the faith, to unite themselves with all the Anti-Lutherans, and, in one connected body, to resist with effect, and finally to suppress, the cunning and deceitful arts, as well as the violent and seditious outrages, of this mischievous faction.—Charles concluded his instructions emphatically with saying, "That he should not be wanting in his endeavours to promote the good cause;—that he heartily thanked those who had hitherto shown their zeal and fidelity, and he would not fail to reward their services liberally."

The precise manner in which these secret communications came to the knowledge of the Lutheran princes does not appear; but as copies of the memoir were sent to several other princes besides Henry of Brunswic, we need not wonder that its contents were soon divulged.

This secret memoir, there is reason to believe, contributed to produce some important consequences.—1. Distrust and animosity among the princes of the empire. In particular, Effects of the duke of Brunswic instructions. the duke of Brunswic suspected of having calumniated the Lutheran princes, and of having endeavoured to poison the emperor's mind, by instilling a belief that the reformers made proselytes by using force; and moreover, that they were the real cause of the late rustic rebellion. 2. An entire despair of the emperor's justice and impartiality in any future attempt to adjust the religious differences. He lent

* Sleidan VI. 140.

† Id. 148.

his ear to slanderous reports, and afforded the accused no opportunity of justifying themselves. 3. It proved, that beyond all doubt, a treaty had been concluded against Christ and his sacred word. The landgrave, on the occasion of this conviction of his mind, declared solemnly, that he would rather lose his life than be forced in this manner into poverty and exile. 4. It showed the urgent and increased necessity of a counter-treaty, for the purpose of confounding the machinations of all the adversaries of Christian truth and liberty of conscience.

Undoubtedly the pope and the emperor were most to be dreaded, as the great engines of ecclesiastical tyranny and persecution; nevertheless, it was now become sufficiently clear, that there existed also within the German empire, many powerful agents, who were completely disposed to concur with those wicked despots in their destructive and sanguinary designs against the infant reformation.*

For those very purposes, a secret treaty against the elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse was discovered to have been made at Mayence, under the auspices and management of the duke George. Luther, whose vigilance and industry were unexampled, both acquired a knowledge of this conspiracy, and wrote a little treatise for the purpose of exposing the authors of it. It was however thought better to suppress the work; and at present there remain only some fragments of it in the German edition of Luther's Works.†

In a letter to Spalatinus, he alludes to these things in the following manner: "You can scarcely believe what mischief

Satan is plotting at this moment, through the medium of the bishops, with the duke George at their head. Shortly, in a little book, which is at this very time in the press, I purpose to give you a specimen of his iniquitous proceedings. If the Lord do not prevent the accomplishment of the designs of these men, you will have to say, that the late rebellion and slaughter of the rustics was but the prelude to the universal destruction of Germany. I therefore seriously beseech you, join your prayers with me to the Father of mercies, that he may be pleased to confound the wild and insidi-

ous devices of these men; especially of the duke George,—a deplorably lost character, I do fear. Let us beseech God, either to change his heart, or to remove him from among us, otherwise he will not only continue to rage like a wild beast, but, through the instigation of the prelates, will show himself a perfect Satan. It so torments the man that Luther is not yet put to death, he can neither sleep nor wake; insomuch that there may be some reason to fear he will be worn out by the excessive anxiety of his mind on this very account.—Gracious God! what a load has our good prince to sustain! not merely as elector of Saxony, and an avowed friend of the Reformers amidst numerous hostile princes, but also on account of the wicked machinations of some of his own familiars and intimates, persons of rank and consequence. I have abundance to tell you, concerning plots and evil counsels; but I dare not commit them to writing."*

The real state of the Reformation in Germany may be collected from such documents as these, infinitely better than from many chapters filled with the imaginations and refinements of the most acute politicians. The curious student of ecclesiastical history will now see what just cause the protestant princes, especially John the Constant, elector of Saxony, and Philip, the landgrave of Hesse, had for apprehending the most imminent danger to their dignity and property, and even their lives, from the fury and barbarity of papal superstition; and how necessary it was become to form a well-connected, defensive alliance, which might prove some protection and security against the impending storm. The diet of Spires was at hand; and if the anti-papal princes should have met there without previous communication of sentiment, confusion, reserve, and imbecility, must have been the consequence, instead of unanimity, courage, and strength. No time was therefore to be lost; the present moment seemed critical in the highest degree. Actuated by such views and principles, those resolute and spirited protestants, the elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse, met at Torgau, and there agreed upon a treaty of

Real state of the Reformation.

Luther alludes to the secret treaty.

* Ep. II. 313. b. This, as far as I know, has never been before translated from the Latin.

* See page 506.

† Tom. III. 520.

mutual defence, in opposition to the tyranny of the ecclesiastics. Their next step was to invite others to join in the alliance; and in a few weeks afterwards, at Magdeburg, they met together again, and again subscribed the same treaty, with the addition of a considerable number of princes, who followed their example.

The Magdeburg treaty, as it is called, does honour to the cause of the Gospel, is worthy of the courageous Christian characters who joined in it, and, as it seems to have been the foundation of the famous league which was afterwards formed at Smalcald, we shall give the substance of it here.

The federalists begin with praising God for his extraordinary providence, his grace, and his unspeakable mercy, in having bestowed upon them his sacred word, which is the only true comfort, the real food of the soul, and the greatest treasure in the world. They then proceed to relate the numerous and powerful machinations with which to the present moment they have been disturbed, especially by the clergy and their adherents, whose object it was to deprive the people of the use of the Holy Scriptures, and of those comforts which the Scriptures afford to the heart and conscience. They express a hope that God will continue to them this great blessing of the Bible. They were ready to have repaired to the late diet at Augsburg, there to treat concerning religion and harmony, but were prevented by the advanced season of the year. They had now the same intentions in regard to the diet of Spire. They were convinced, they said, by the information which they received from all quarters, as also by the various meetings and discussions which had recently taken place, that factions were forming, leagues and treaties entered into, and money collected; and all this, in the intention of maintaining by force the old abuses, of extinguishing the truths of Divine revelation, and of waging war against those princes and rulers who felt themselves bound in duty and conscience to profess and protect the Gospel in their dominions, and who injured no person living, nor committed any acts of violence whatever. Impelled therefore by their own consciences and a sense of their duty to God, it was for the reasons above mentioned, that, without meaning to offend

any one, they had mutually agreed upon a plan of pure defence against the war and violence with which they appeared to be threatened; and they hereby engaged to unite and exert every power they possessed against all those, who, under any pretence whatever, should attack them on account of their religion.*

4. DIET OF SPIRES.

THE diet did not assemble at Spire till near the end of June 1526, but was unusually well attended. All the electors, except one, namely, that of Brandenburg, were present.

The elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse, during the deliberations of the members, appear to have preserved a steady attention to the very prudent project which they had recently formed; judging, it would seem, that they should serve the Lutheran cause more effectually by strengthening their TREATY OF DEFENCE, than by long arguments and debates on points of religion, before an assembly which contained so many bigoted ecclesiastics and selfish politicians. Accordingly, they took occasion to address the deputies of Strasburg, Nuremberg, and Augsburg, on the subject of mutual defence. They were convinced, they said, of their love of the Gospel; and there could be no doubt of the machinations of the prelates and other agents of the pope at the present time: Ought not therefore an association or an alliance to be formed on this principle, namely, that if any one should be brought into difficulty or danger on account of religion, the federalists should support one another? They added, that as they had a good opinion of the cities of Frankfort and Ulm, it might be proper to ask them also to join in the confederacy. To this the deputies replied, They had no express instruction on that subject, but they promised to be particularly careful in reporting the proposal to their masters.

Several of the Lutheran divines† were present at this diet, and were heard in explanation of the doctrines of the Reformers; but not without much troublesome though ineffectual objection on the part of the papal princes, under the pretext of avoiding commotions. Ferdinand

* Seck. II. 44. Ad. II.

† Georg. Spalatinus, and Johannes Agricola.

also made a smooth and plausible harangue to the deputies of all the states of the empire. "Himself, his brother the emperor, and the house of Austria, were bound to them by the ties of affection." He therefore warned them not to be led astray by the persuasions of certain persons; and finally exhorted them to exhibit a disposition to obey their lawful sovereign. But these mild terms, it is to be observed, were not used by Ferdinand till near the conclusion of the diet; when he had found, by experience, that neither himself nor the imperial ministers, nor the bishops, had been able, by their menaces, to overawe those resolute and determined Germans.

At the opening of the diet, the emperor's representative informed the members, it was the pleasure of his imperial highness, that in the first place they should proceed to determine the best method of securing the Christian religion, and the ancient usages of the church;—then how they should punish offenders, and compel to obedience such as forcibly resisted their injunctions; also, how they could unite their mutual and effective efforts to procure the execution of the edict of Worms, which was now of five years standing. Upon this, the diet selected a committee, composed of bishops, secular princes, and leading senators, who should propose regulations for the adjustment of the religious differences. But the emperor's representatives interposed, by saying, that it would be most to the purpose for them to read to the diet the instructions which they had received from their master; this would best ensure obedience to him, and prevent that loss of time which the committee might otherwise spend on subjects to which their authority did not extend. They then read the emperor's mandate from Seville, as given above, at page 507.

Most of the deputies answered in writing, That it had been fully proved to the pope's legate, in a former diet, that it was then absolutely impossible to execute the edict of Worms, through fear of the commotions which would arise: That now the attempt was become abundantly more difficult; because the religious disputes were daily increasing, especially about ceremonies and abuses: That the emperor, were he present, would form the same judgment.—Moreover, in regard to the promise of a general coun-

cil, that promise was made by the emperor when in treaty with his holiness; but that, since the date of the emperor's letters, the pope had changed sides, and ordered his forces to act against his imperial majesty. What prospect then could there be of a general council? Under such circumstances, it was their opinion that the emperor's leave should be asked to call a provincial Germanic council; that either delay, or an attempt to execute the edict of Worms, was unspeakably dangerous; and that therefore if his imperial majesty did not approve of the expedient of calling such a council, he should be entreated to dispense with the execution of the aforesaid edict, till a general council could be called. Such, they said, had been the plan of the last diet of Nuremberg, and that since their intended convention at Spires had been interdicted by the emperor, the expectations of many of the states had been disappointed, and the disposition to tumult and civil war much increased. That, in fact, the rebellion of the peasants might have been avoided, if attention had been paid to the representation of the grievances which the country suffered from the ecclesiastics. That in those districts where a reformation had taken place, the disturbances had been slight, and presently quieted. That they had made no changes whatever in that true and holy faith which was founded in Christ, and his eternal immutable word; neither had they rejected any ceremonies, but what were contrary to the Scriptures. Lastly, they observed emphatically, That in a state of discord, uncertainty, and anxiety, respecting their own condition, men could not be much disposed to contribute their money liberally to the assistance of others.

After this, the deputies, in a distinct memorial, ventured to point out certain practices, which they thought called for alteration or entire abolition. In every town, they said, the poor inhabitants were burdened with what were denominated mendicant monks. These stripped men of the comforts of life; and, in many cases, procured legacies and estates to be devised to them by dying persons. These things were mischievous to the last degree, and called loudly for correction. The ecclesiastics, also, ought no longer to enjoy those immunities, for the granting of which the reasons now

The answer
of the Deputies.

A distinct
memorial of
the deputies.

no longer existed. Also, the number of holidays ought to be lessened; the distinction of meats abolished; and, above all, the free course of the Gospel should not be impeded.*

Such bold and prudent remonstrances as these must have given the pontifical partisans an insight into the steady character of the German reformers. In particular, the elector of Saxony most strictly enjoined his counsellors to beware of the corrupt arts of the bishops, and to stand inflexibly firm to the cause of the Gospel. It was, however, chiefly through the numerous suffrages of the towns and cities, and especially those of the higher Germany, that the reformers acquired so considerable an ascendancy in this diet.†

The leading ecclesiastics, who, as Father Paul acutely observes,‡ had no other aim but the preservation of their own authority, maintained, that now, during the discord between the emperor and the pope, it was impossible to come to any decisive conclusions respecting the religious dissensions; and that therefore that business had better be deferred to a more favourable juncture. No doubt they conceived, that, as dignified ecclesiastics; both their authority and their revenues would be more effectually supported by the pope acting at a future time in concert with the emperor, than by the emperor alone in the present circumstances.

The members also of the select committee before mentioned differed so exceedingly among each other, and the opposition to any reformation was conducted with such prodigious heat and acrimony, that there seemed to be an end to all sober deliberation. Spalatinus's observation on what he saw at this diet is, that "Christ was extremely odious to the Pharisees." He adds, that neither the elector nor the landgrave were allowed to have their own chaplains in the churches; and that on this account these princes caused sermons to be preached in the vestibules of their hotels, where many thousands of people were collected together to hear the doctrines of the Gospel.§

Disgusted with such violent and unprincipled proceedings, and seeing no

prospect of an amicable conclusion, these good princes and their adherents meditated to withdraw themselves from the diet, and return home.

Ferdinand instantly took the alarm, convinced that, if the assembly should break up in their present state of animosity and exasperation, without making any decree, all Germany would be in a flame. He had moreover received recent information, that the Turks had advanced into Hungary, and also that France, England, and the pope, were in treaty against the emperor. In this critical conjuncture he wisely determined to recommend moderation and harmony to the contending parties; and at length, by using gentle and soothing language, with the assistance of the archbishop of Treves, he seems to have prevented a most mischievous rupture in the diet, and to have produced among its members a more pacific and practicable disposition. The difficulty still remained, to determine in what terms the decree, or THE RECESS, should be expressed, so as to be sufficiently respectful to the emperor, and yet perfectly consistent with what had been proved, after long and warm altercations, to be the sentiments of a great majority of the deputies. At last, the Reformers suggested the following expedient, which was consented to by the whole assembly: "That the welfare of religion,

Electors of Saxony and Landgrave of Hesse disgusted.

and the maintenance of the public peace, made it necessary that a general, or at least a national council, should be called, to commence within the space of a year; that the emperor should, by a solemn address, be requested to procure such a council; and that, in regard to ecclesiastical concerns and the edict of Worms, the princes and states should in the mean time, till either one or the other sort of council was called, undertake so to conduct themselves in their provinces, as to give to God and to the emperor a good account of their administration."*

Thus terminated, in a manner more advantageous to the Lutherans than they could have expected, the diet of Spire. The resolution of THE RECESS, it is true, was but evasive; yet such were the existing circumstances, that a truce of this sort answered all the purposes which the most zealous friends of the Reformation

Terms of the Recess.

* Sleidan, 119. † Ibid. 148. ‡ P. 34.

§ Comm. de Luth. Add. III. p. 45. Maimb. II. 9.

* Sleid. 150.

could desire. Their divines preached and wrote with greater confidence, and less molestation; and the anti-papal dispositions increased both in strength and numbers. It was natural that those who already had rejected the Romish superstitions should proceed more vigorously, during such a season of liberty, in digesting and maturing their new systems of ecclesiastical government; and also, that several princes or states, who through timidity or danger had hitherto with reluctance continued in close communion with the establishment, should now grow cold in the cause they had long disliked, or perhaps renounce at once, if circumstances permitted them, that corrupt communion, and adopt the new model of worship and church government already made to their hands in the electorate of Saxony. And such, we are told, were the real effects of the ambiguous decree of the diet of Spire in 1526.*

We have not yet mentioned how much the beauty and excellence of pure evangelical principles showed themselves at the diet of Spire, in the exterior conduct of the Lutheran princes. The landgrave of Hesse, about a week before the meeting of the diet, represented to John Frederic, the son of the elector, how necessary it was, that those, who pretended to be advocates for reformation of doctrine, should themselves be careful to exhibit examples of good moral conduct in their own families. He entreated the young prince to state this matter seriously to his father; and thereby prevent the debauchery, and drinking, and other vices, which usually took place at such public seasons, among the domestics and servants of the great. "How dreadfully scandalous," said he, "and how injurious, are such practices, to the cause of the Gospel, and of the word of God! The princes ought to set their faces most earnestly against these inveterate and impious abuses; and by so doing, they would acquire both signal advantage and honour. Nay," added he, "they must do so, unless they mean to bring on themselves the worst of evils, and even the loss of their own souls." The elector received the admonition like a good Christian, and enjoined his whole retinue to observe the most laudable re-

gulations. And thus these good protestants and their families, who have been reviled by papal historians for breaking the Roman catholic rules concerning fasts and meats and drinks, during their residence at Spire, were in fact adorning their profession, by temperance, soberness, and chastity.*

Whatever be our religious principles, provided only they be near our hearts, we find they infallibly direct our practice. Thus every true Roman catholic lays immense stress on the doctrine of transubstantiation. And agreeably to this faith, the Swiss historian Hospinian informs us, that John Faber, vicar of the bishop of Constance, was at the diet of Spire, and there, with many tears, conjured the assembly, if they did nothing else, at least to take special care that Christ himself, and of course all the salvation by Christ, was not taken away from them, by trampling on his body. This attempt, he said, was now in the contemplation of those men who denied the REAL CORPOREAL PRESENCE of Christ in the Sacrament. The same historian observes, that the popish divines were well aware that the doctrine of the real presence is the very foundation of their religion; and that if it be once taken away, there is an end both of their dignity and of their gain.†

5. THE REFORMATION IN HESSE BY THE LANDGRAVE.

THE ardent temper of Philip, the landgrave of Hesse, was a remarkable contrast to the cautious, dilatory disposition of the late elector of Saxony.

Unmoved by the pressing solicitations of the duke George his father-in-law, and also of his mother Anne of Mecklenburg, the landgrave, immediately upon his return from the diet of Spire, earnestly endeavoured to carry forward the reformation which in some degree was already begun in his dominions. Melancthon, who had been consulted on this occasion, attempted to check the fervour of this prince, by a letter full of good sense, yet savouring a little of the natural timidity of the writer.‡ He advised him by all means, in the pre-

Reformation in Hesse.

* Laur. Mosh. 666. Helmstad. Ed.

* Com. de Luth. Ibid.

† Hosp. II. 42. b.

‡ Gerdes, II. 165.

Pious behaviour of the Lutheran princes at the diet.

sent critical times, to proceed by gradual advances, and never to lose sight of the grand distinction between things essential, and things in their very nature indifferent. The preachers on the side of the Reformation, he said, were often as quarrelsome as the papists themselves, if not more so on some occasions; and frequently the difference was about mere trifles. A public teacher should not only inculcate faith, but also the fear of God, and universal charity and obedience to magistrates. He dreaded a civil war, and would rather die than live at such a time. The Romish ecclesiastics instigate to war: why do not the rest exhort men to gain a knowledge of the subject, and in the mean time to keep the peace? "Your highness," continued Melancthon, "I am convinced, might do a great deal with the princes, if you would exhort them to take pains to understand the several points in dispute, and endeavour to terminate the ecclesiastical contentions."*

The landgrave, not quite satisfied with the lukewarm advice of Melancthon, and anxious to have the pure Gospel of Christ taught in all the churches under his jurisdiction, appointed an ecclesiastical synod to be held at Homburg, in the month of October, 1526, for the express purpose of determining the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the Reformation. Moreover, in this important business he was assisted by a French divine of excellent character, named Francis Lambert, who first composed a summary of pure evangelical doctrine and of the errors of the church of Rome, then published his propositions, and afterwards boldly presented himself before the synod and a great multitude of Hessians, as an advocate and defender of the system which he had submitted to the general inspection and judgment. The landgrave and his chancellor were present, and allowed perfect freedom of discussion; but as no material opposition was made to the propositions of Lambert, and as they were completely Lutheran in their purport, it may be sufficient to conclude this article with a brief account of their author.

"There is no doubt," says Luther to Spalatinus, "of the integrity of Lam-

bert: we have witnesses who heard him preach both in France and at Basil; and they all give the man a good character. He is of a noble family, but has been a Minor friar during the space of twenty years, and is now a poor persecuted exile for having been faithful to the Word of God. At present he is with us at Wittenberg; and though we have no want of lectures, we shall endeavour to employ him. He pleases me in all respects; and I am satisfied he is one who deserves a little help from us in his poverty: but you, who know that I live at the expense of other persons, must also know that I have not an income to support him. It might not be amiss for you to persuade the prince not to lose this good man, but in Christian charity to afford him some small assistance till he can support himself, either by his own industry, or by what he may receive from his relations."*

Another author of unquestionable veracity describes this same Frenchman to be a person who excelled in piety, genius, and learning, and who was able powerfully to convince gainsayers, and stop their mouths. During his residence at Wittenberg, he wrote comments on the Prophets, on Solomon's Song, and the Gospel of St. Luke, and dedicated them to the elector.† He seems to have agreed with Luther in all the fundamental points of religion. In his twenty-second proposition at Homburg, he thus speaks of faith and justification: "We are not justified by a mere historical faith; but by a real lively trust in God,—and this without any works of obedience even to the law of God: much less then are we justified by any works of our own contrivance. Such a faith, however, is always fruitful, and produces a willing obedience: it also makes a man free; yet not free so as to be absolved from obedience to magistrates. Neither can it possibly be, that a faithful soul should abuse true Christian liberty. The man who does abuse it, is not in possession of true Christian faith."‡

Under the auspices of an adviser like Lambert, we need not wonder that the new system of doctrine and discipline, which the landgrave promoted in Hesse, had all the principal features of the Re-

* Ep. II. 121.

† Chytraeus, XII. 346.

‡ Scult. xxvi. 28.

* Lib. III. 16. Ep. Melancthon.

formation in Saxony. Soon after the synod of Homburg, he ordered the monks and nuns to leave the monasteries; and by means of their revenues he founded several hospitals, and also an university at Marburg. He directed the images to be taken out of the churches, and appointed faithful ministers in each of them; and among his various new institutions, he remembered to fix the poor exile Lambert in the professorship of divinity of Marburg, where the good man died at an advanced age, in the year 1530.*

6. LUTHER'S SENTIMENTS RESPECTING WAR AND DEFENCE.—HIS LABOURS.

DURING these transactions, and while the labours of the reformers were crowned with such signal success, Martin Luther, who was never behind any of them in zeal, industry, and exertion, exhibited to the world a brilliant specimen of the purity of his principles, and of his entire submission to the injunctions of the Gospel. We have already seen that the accession of the landgrave to the Lutheran cause had considerable influence in Germany. The gentle, pacific decree of the diet of Spire is a proof of this; and so is the commencement of a defensive confederacy, and the progress made in that prudent measure. But it was not without difficulty, it should seem, that this bold and enterprising prince, in the vigour of youth, and conscious of the goodness of his intentions, could be restrained within the limits of defensive operations. John the Constant, however, under the direction of a sounder discretion, and probably of a more scrupulous conscience, checked this hasty disposition to take up arms, and in the mean time consulted Luther on the momentous practical question of RESISTANCE. As this very circumstance evinces the high estimation in which our Reformer was then held as a sage divine and an honest casuist, the reader will do well to consider, whether the answers which he gave on this occasion correspond to the opinion undeniably prevalent at that time, respecting his superior wisdom and integrity. The following judgment of Luther was conveyed to the elector through the medium

Luther's sentiments on resistance.

of his chancellor Pontanus.—“That the elector of Saxony had no superior but one, namely, the emperor; and that therefore he was justified in defending his own subjects, and also in repelling any violent acts of his adversaries among the princes.—That if the ecclesiastical princes, or their allies, should pretend to have the emperor's orders, the elector was not bound to believe them; that he had a right to presume such orders to be surreptitious; for that Charles V. was in Spain, and that his letters to the elector breathed nothing but kindness and peace.—That if the edict of Worms should be made the pretext, the answer should be, It was notorious that that edict was fabricated without the consent of the princes, and against the consent of the leading ones; that the prelates, and they only, had concurred in it; that it had in fact been abrogated by the decrees of Nuremberg and of Spire; that therefore all attempts of the princes and States to execute the said edict, were unjust, and might be resisted with a good conscience.”

The nice and delicate question remained still to be answered.—What was to be done, supposing that the emperor should avowedly arm the adverse party with his authority?—A puzzling question this; and which probably has never yet received, nor can receive, a better answer than that which Luther gave to it:

Nice distinctions by Luther.

“That the elector and his friends would still be at liberty to protest and remonstrate; that in that way the rights of the princes might be preserved, and the fraudulent practices of their adversaries detected; and that in every event, TIME WOULD BE GAINED BY THIS STEP:—and lastly,” says Luther, “God will take care of the rest.”

He then deprecates, in the strongest terms, every idea of commencing an offensive war, or any war otherwise than against aggressors, agreeably to the grand rule, “They that take the sword, shall perish by the sword.” Lastly, he concludes with these remarkable words:

“If the landgrave will not act consistently with these principles, but will at all events have recourse to arms, it will be better for the elector to dissolve the alliance at once.—But not so, in case force should be used against the elector,

* Scult. xxvi. p. 31. Chytr. 346. Comm. dc Luth. II. XIV.

or the landgrave, or their allies; they will then have a right to repel force by force.”*

There is no part of Luther's character which appears to have been less understood, or more misrepresented, than that of his quiet peaceable disposition as a citizen, and in general a member of civil society. From the strong language which he often uses against popish abuses and corruptions, and from the vigorous efforts he made to correct or reform them, he has been too hastily pronounced to be a man of a turbulent and seditious stamp.

There is however an abundance of testimonies produced in various parts of this volume, which must prove satisfactorily that there is no ground whatever for such an opinion; and moreover, that directly the contrary is the truth: but these testimonies have been almost entirely either suppressed or disregarded by modern historians.

The same valuable memoir on the question of RESISTANCE contains another piece of admirable advice which Luther gave to the elector; namely, That his highness would do well, seriously and in writing to admonish his clergy of their neglect of duty, and to tell them, that this was so very great, as to have compelled him to take the matter into consideration himself: that the salvation of men's souls, as well as the peace of the community, in these times of dispute and contention, imperiously required him to ensure better instructions from the pulpit: And, as a clear proof that these were the sole objects of his present monition, he should content himself with earnestly entreating them to promote among his subjects pure evangelical doctrine, and to cultivate a spirit of tranquillity and concord; but that if, after all, they should fail to do this, he would no longer run the hazard of tumults in his dominions; he would no longer bear their neglect and opposition to the Gospel, nor any longer be a partaker in their guilt.†

At the conclusion of this wise counsel, Luther adds a remarkable clause, to this effect:

“I have persuaded myself that such a step on the part of the elector may be

useful, by demonstrating to mankind the purity of the motives of the reformers, and by affording comfort afterwards to their own consciences, in the reflection that they can say, truly,—‘Nothing, which was not directly opposite to the word of God, was left untried for the prevention of a rupture with the superior clergy.’”

It may not be improper in this place to give a brief account of Luther's sentiments concerning the war with the Turks. The Hungarian ambassadors had been at the late diet of Spire, to solicit assistance against them; but through the excessive folly and presumption of Lewes

The war with the Turks.—Luther's sentiments.

II. king of Hungary, Solyman, who was then invading his kingdom at the head of 300,000 men, obtained a decisive victory in the plains of Mohacz, on the 29th of August 1526, only two days after the recess of the diet. In this fatal battle the flower of the Hungarian nobility perished, with upwards of 20,000 men; and Lewis was drowned in his flight.* The victorious Sultan, after overrunning Hungary, penetrated into Austria, and even besieged Vienna. This progress of the infidels was truly alarming; and an indistinct notion prevailed, that the reformers thought it wicked to fight against the Turks. In such circumstances it became the duty of a man who possessed the power of directing the judgment of so many thousands of the inhabitants of Germany to speak plainly, and to rectify such misconceptions as might prove injurious to the safety of his country. The duty of a Christian soldier was a point which Luther had deeply considered; and in forming conclusions on the subject, he constantly rested with an implicit obedience on what he conceived to be the Divine will, as revealed in Scripture.

It was in the year 1529, when the enemy was even at the door, that our author published in the German language, a little tract, for the purpose of rousing his countrymen to take up arms in the common defence.—In this performance he chides

Luther exhorts the Germans to oppose the Turks, A. D. 1529.

severely the common people, who, he understood, had shown themselves so ignorant and barbarous as to express

* Comm. de Luth. XVIII. 3.

† Id. XVIII. 4 & 5.

* Dupin. Robertson.

wishes for the success of the Turks; and at the same time he blames the preachers for having dissuaded their congregations from being concerned in this war, and for representing the profession of arms as unlawful. It was painful to him to find himself calumniated as the cause of the present irruption of the infidels, as he had been also of the rebellion of the peasants; but there was no ground whatever for the charge. He did not deny, he said, that formerly he had maintained, "That to fight against the Turks was to fly in the face of God himself, who was visiting us for our sins; and that this was one of the positions which had been selected from his writings, and condemned in the bull of Leo X. But, he asked, what were the existing circumstances at that time? The dignity of magistrates and governors was oppressed, and held in no estimation; and the pope exercised an usurped domination over all the princes. He affirmed that he himself was the first who had opened men's eyes on that subject,—to the great satisfaction of the late elector Frederic. In fact, the war with the Turks was then the war of the pope; it was an offensive war, and a war founded on no good principle: it was made a pretence for exhausting Germany of its money by the sale of indulgences: and neither penitence nor amendment of life, —without which it is vain to hope for success in war,—was so much as thought of. Moreover, it was at the same time pretended to be the peculiar duty of Christians to take up arms against the infidels; whereas he scrupled not to profess an opinion directly opposite. He conceived, that the duties of men, considered as Christians, consisted in things of a very different nature; and that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world. Still less had the pope and the clergy to do with wars; and no success could be expected, where bishops and priests neglected their proper functions, and gave attention to military concerns. He had been told on good authority, that Francis I. well deserved his late defeat at Pavia, for having made an alliance with the pope, and taught his army to view the contest in which they were engaged as the cause of THE CHURCH, and to use the word CHURCH as a watch-word.

Further; had there really existed, at the time above mentioned, any threatening symptoms of war, Luther said, he

would have taken care to have made his meaning more clear and distinct. At present, the circumstances were very much altered: the war was become strictly defensive; the enemy had no just ground for waging war at all against the Christians; and their objects were purely plunder and murder. Such an invader might be resisted with a good prospect of success, even by Christians with the emperor at their head. But then the Christian soldier ought seriously to turn to God in prayer, both public and private, and no longer lay stress on processions, private masses, and invocations of saints. The emperor also should not wage the war, to gratify ambition and a thirst for glory, but consider himself as the leading prince, and as placed in that situation by Almighty God to discharge well the great duty of conducting the defensive operations of the people. All the princes ought to view the matter in the same light, and no longer contend in the diets for precedence, or consume their incomes in luxury. These, also, said he, are the points upon which the pope's legates ought strenuously to insist at the meetings of the diets, instead of squabbling with Luther about fastings and the marriages of the monks. —There appears throughout this little work much of the author's native candour and vigour of mind, and of his reverence for the written Word.*

It was to be expected, from the active spirit of Luther, that he should employ to some important purposes that precious interval of tranquillity which the church enjoyed after the diet of Spire.—The regulation and improvement of the liturgies and rites of those churches which had embraced the new doctrinal system of the reformers, was an object well worthy the serious attention of that able pilot who had safely conducted his vessel through so many shelves, and rocks, and tempests. He proceeded in this business with the utmost caution and modesty: he published the new mode of administering the sacrament, adopted in the last year at Wittemberg; but in his preface he says, "Far be from me the affectation of requiring other persons either to follow our example, or to alter any good formularies at

Regulations in the Saxon churches by Luther.

* Comment. de Luth. II. LII.

present in use. The plan here proposed has its merit; but I am in no wise prejudiced in its favour to the exclusion of others." In the next place he provided homilies to be read by such ministers as had not the gift of preaching,—a very necessary precaution, while evangelical knowledge was at so low an ebb. He also recommended the study of the Latin tongue throughout the dominions of the elector of Saxony, that there might be men capable of instructing foreign nations; lest, like the Waldenses in Bohemia, they should not be able to communicate Christian information to any who did not understand the language of their teachers. Further; the catechising of youth was one of Luther's favourite objects: then the exposition of the creed, of the Lord's prayer, and of the ten commandments, he insisted on as of the highest moment; and thus, by the use of moderate and conciliatory methods, though the advances towards perfection were gradual, the public order of religion, through the indefatigable labours of this eminent servant of God, in no great length of time, wore a new aspect in Saxony, to the unspeakable benefit of that country.*

One of Luther's publications, in the year 1526, was an exposition of certain

His expositions of certain Psalms.

to serve a peculiar good purpose, beyond the instruction which it might afford to his countrymen in Saxony.—He

inscribed the work to Mary of Austria, the relict of Lewis king of Hungary, whose miserable death in flight we have mentioned above.† This princess was the sister of Charles V., and of Ferdinand, who succeeded to the kingdom of Hungary. Our author had conceived hopes she would tread in the steps of her sister, the queen of Denmark,‡ and that family afflictions might, under divine Providence, operate in a similar manner to her spiritual good.—In his dedication, he tells the queen, that with much delight he had heard of her good will to the Gospel; and had purposed to entreat her to promote with all her might the cause of God's word in Hungary, and to protect the innocent from the persecutions which, he understood, they suffered from the powerful and tyrannical prelates; but

that having now heard the sad story of the king's death, he should content himself with suggesting to her mind some consolatory reflections, drawn from the best and truest source of comfort, the sacred Scriptures.—With his usual frankness he takes occasion to explain to her the nature of the evangelical cause, which he himself had now supported for some years past; as also the iniquity of that bitter hostility which he had experienced from the Roman See. With a dignified elevation of style, he vindicates the courageous, the innocent, and, in general, the truly religious character of John Huss; and, lastly, he reminds the princess of the instability of all human power and grandeur, and exposes the vanity of placing any hope or confidence in these. In fact, there seemed to be very fair ground for apprehending that Mary might have become an exalted ornament of Christianity. In the year 1530, she was present at the diet of Augsburg; and, while there, would not be hindered from hearing evangelical discourses. Moreover, she boldly admonished her brother, Charles V., not to suffer himself to be duped by his clergy, as her husband Lewis, and her brother Ferdinand, had been. Alas! prosperity afterwards severely tried the soundness of the religion of this princess, as it has done in thousands of other instances. Being called to the administration of the government of the Low Countries, which had long been the scene of most barbarous papal persecutions, she avoided the suspicion of Lutheranism, and is said to have returned back to the profession of popery. It is however recorded to her praise, that she conducted herself with singular prudence and moderation. So mild and pacific were the principles of Mary, that when Charles V. delivered over to his son Philip the care and management of his Belgian provinces, he recalled his sister into Spain; suspecting that her councils would rather obstruct, than promote the objects which he had then in view. It is remarkable, that a kind Providence should have favoured this emperor with the instructive warning of having had two sisters who listened to the precious invitation of evangelical religion: and it does not seem improbable, that the consideration of the dealings of God with his female near relatives should have made some useful impressions on his mind in the latest scenes of his life.

* Com. de Luth. II. XX. † Page 515.

‡ Page 376.

Mary had a favourite chaplain, named John Henckell, a man of excellent principles, one who favoured the Lutheran cause, and was present with the queen-dowager, at the diet of Augsburg, in 1530.*

Erasmus, of whom it is now unnecessary to say that he grew daily more and more hostile to Lutheranism, wrote to this good divine a long letter, penned with all that ambiguous prudence, guarded artifice, and malignant insinuation, which have fixed the most indelible stains on the character of this eminent scholar. The composition is a perfect master-piece in Erasmus's way. It has been well criticised by the pious Seckendorf, who pronounces this epistle as meriting most peculiar notice, "if there be any one that does so in all the large volume." Erasmus had heard of Henckell's propensity to the Reformers, and particularly of the good opinion which he had conceived of Luther. He writes to him with a manifest intent to undermine as much as possible, and even blacken the motives of the Saxon divine; and it must be owned that he executes his purpose with the most consummate address. Indirectly, Erasmus extols himself, abuses the monks, describes the evils which prevailed in the church before the commencement of the Lutheran controversy, and laments pathetically the faults on both sides. He equally disapproves of the cruel persecutions of the Romanists, and the vociferations of the upstart preachers, many of whom, he says, were persons of a contemptible and infamous character:—They talked of Gospel doctrine, but where, he asks, were we to look for Gospel fruit? He owned he had formerly conceived some good hopes of Luther; but, says Erasmus, I speak from knowledge, when I say, he suffers himself to be played upon, by vain, empty persons, who are incapable of advising him on the most trifling subject.† He boasts, that he foresaw the religious differences would end in sedition; thus malignantly joining the cry of the papists, in laying to the charge of the Lutherans the late rebellion of the rustics. He then congratulates himself on his own good management,

* Splatinus's Account. Com. de Luth. II. XXII. 6.

† Persons, who could not teach him how to boil a cabbage. Eras. Op. III. 911.

in having kept clear OF THE FACTION, notwithstanding that he had been abused by the papists, and flattered by the protestants. Before he concludes, he plainly shows, that at that very moment, with the pen in his hand, he was smarting under the recent lashes he had received from Luther's answer to his Diatribe. But, "charity," said he, "hopeth all things; and therefore he would not give up the hope that good would still arise from the evil; especially as in some places, he artfully observes, there were springing up Gospel preachers of a different stamp from those he had just mentioned; preachers, who loved the truth, but hated tumults; who adorned their doctrine by a life of integrity, and by mild agreeable manners, and who looked upon the character of a teacher of the Gospel as inconsistent with that of a buffoon."

Thus does Erasmus, with the most consummate address, point out and praise a sort of middle path in religion, and at the same time, with a delicate adulation, insinuate that his friend Henckell, to whom he was The object of Erasmus. then writing, was among the few persons who were actually treading that path. The events which followed, justify the historian in observing, that such systems of refinement and mediocrity are, in effect, perfect chimeras; that the Cross of Christ must be undergone by those who mean to glorify God, to preserve a good conscience, to rebuke, by their lives and conversation, the evil practices of the world, and to promote the salvation of mankind. Erasmus during many years was employed in his nugatory scheme; and while he courted the favour of the great, and secured himself from the danger of persecution, he promoted not one of those peculiar truths of Christian doctrine, on account of which the good Reformers suffered grievously from the tyranny of powerful princes and prelates.

It would detain us too long to make copious extracts from the discourses which Luther about Extracts from Luther's Sermons. this period, amidst his multiplied occupations, still found time to compose.

1. On the epithet, "Wonderful," applied to Christ in Isaiah ix., he makes these observations: "The man whom HE chooses to make truly godly, he causes first to feel himself almost a

despairing sinner; whom he chooses to make wise, he first makes a fool; whom he chooses to make strong, he first renders weak: he delivers to death the man whom he means to quicken; he depresses to hell whomsoever he intends to exalt to heaven. . . . This is that WONDERFUL KING, who is nearest to those from whom he seems to be the most remote."

2. On the council in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, he takes notice, that the whole multitude of the disciples seemed to stagger at the Divine promises, and would have rashly rejected the doctrine of justification by faith only, had not two or three of the apostles stood in the way, and boldly maintained that fundamental article of Christianity: That even Peter himself relapsed, in part, into the same error of self-righteousness; an error, says he, "which is always pullulating afresh, and which afterwards, under the papacy, became strong and influential. So little dependence is to be placed on councils, and so necessary is the aid and direction of the Holy Spirit, that men may adhere steadfastly to the word of God."

3. In another Discourse, he enters more fully into the grand question concerning faith and works, and repeats what he had now taught for years in Germany.—A few sentences may here suffice. "Satan," says he, "himself sometimes teaches the necessity of works, and introduces even good things, in order that men, by relying on their specious good deeds, may be diverted from the faith of the Gospel. I cannot insist on this too much; for ye will find after my decease, this artifice will be practised in a manner which ye do not at present suspect. Never suppose that by your works ye are made Christians. Christ is proposed to us in a two-fold character: first, he makes us sons of God; this is done by the word alone, exclusive of any work: If it is his will to become yours, then you will become his; and he will save you by his blood and passion. Satan hates this doctrine, and false teachers never preach it. Secondly, Christ is proposed as our example. If his word be in my heart, I am in possession of the great commandment, that is, charity; nevertheless, he does not expect from me, as a depraved creature, the fruits of charity, but through a new spirit, imparted to me by the hear-

ing of his word, and by believing on him."*

Anxious for the extension of evangelical knowledge, the pious elector of Saxony had instituted a theological lecture at Wittemberg, with a salary of two hundred florins. Melancthon, the lecturer, scrupled to accept the salary, alleging that he had not leisure to discharge the duty properly: nor could his scruples be removed, but by an explanatory letter from the elector himself, written to him at the instance of Luther, who ventured to tell the prince, that were he to give Melancthon the proposed salary GRATIS for a year or two, he would well deserve it, having already, during two years, read very laborious and very useful lectures on the Scriptures without any salary at all. "The knowledge of the Scriptures," said Luther, "is much called for in every country; and therefore I would gladly promote a lecture of this sort. But there is no need to encroach too much on the time and strength of the lecturer: a lecture of this kind, even once in the week, might answer the purpose."

Anecdotes like this, might seem of little consequence, if anything can be said to be of little consequence, which illustrates the simplicity, the integrity, and the disinterestedness of the first Reformers.

Another instance of Luther's kind and generous attention may deserve to be noticed.† He interceded with the elector in favour of certain Franciscan monks, of the monastery of Wittemberg, who were reduced to a state of extreme indigence. "This neglect is not your fault," said he to the prince: "but there are among your courtiers those who ought to have mentioned to your highness the situation of these poor creatures. It is a disgrace to the Gospel; and who knows but there may be among them some one who shall judge us all at the last day."‡

Numerous are the proofs of the gentle steps by which the Reformation was conducted in the electorate of Saxony, notwithstanding all the slanders of Erasmus, and the fictions of the papal historians.§

* Convn. de Luth. II. XXII. et XXIII.

† Seck. II. Ad. 64. a. & b.

‡ Alluding to I Cor. vi. 2.

§ Such as Cochläus, Maimbourg, Pallavicini, &c.

Indeed, if real Christians have, on any occasion, been active in promoting revolutions by violence and iniquity, all we can say is, their evidence of belonging to Christ's little flock must, at that particular season, be deemed very slender and suspicious. The maxims of the Gospel are widely different from those of the world in general, or even from those of conceited theorists and lofty pretenders to philosophy. It is, however, but too true, that the visionary notions of the latter have been much celebrated in our days; though, happily, it is at length pretty well understood, not only that they are unsupported by facts, but even confuted by the practice of the very persons who professed to adopt and defend them.

7. PERSECUTIONS OF THE REFORMERS.

THE blessed calm which the church enjoyed after the diet of Spires, must not be understood to have extended beyond those provinces and districts which were under the jurisdiction of such princes and governors as were favourable to the propagation of Christian truth and liberty. In Bohemia and Hungary, Ferdinand, now king of both countries, raged against the Lutherans with all the fury which papal ignorance and superstition, exasperated by opposition, could inspire. The rigour of the persecution in Bohemia may be inferred from a single instance. A person, named Nicolas Tornar, and a widow of sixty years, named Clara, suffered death in the flames with Christian fortitude, merely because they denied their belief in the corporeal presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

In Germany also, two remarkable instances of martyrdom are recorded. 1.

John Huglin, minister of Lindau, was directed by the bishop of Constance to recant the Christian faith; and on refusal was treated precisely as John Huss had been, that is, degraded in the most abusive language, and then delivered over to the secular power. This man, while he was preparing for the fire, sang several songs of praise with the utmost cheerfulness. 2. Peter Spengler had nothing laid to his charge, except that he had been heard to lament the blindness of the papists, and to exhort their clergy to read their Bibles. By stealth he was hurried away to Friburg, delivered over

to the council of regency at Ensisheim, and by them condemned to be held under water till he was dead.*

At Munich, the capital of Bavaria, George Carpenter was burnt alive in 1527, because he refused to subscribe to the Romish corruptions. This sufferer, when some of his pious brethren requested him to give them, while in the flames, some sign of the firmness of his mind, answered in these memorable words, "Let this be looked upon by you as the most certain sign of the steadiness of my faith; that as long as I am able to open my mouth, or even to mutter, I will never cease to praise God, and confess the name of our Redeemer:" and it is said, the man kept his word.†

George Carpenter of Munich.

But one of the most affecting stories of this kind is the martyrdom of Leonhard Casar, in the same year 1527. He was born in Bavaria; and having begun to preach the Gospel, he was summoned to Passau, to answer for his conduct; and there, by imprisonment and menaces, was at length induced to recant, and was dismissed to his parish, and allowed to officiate again. Leonhard, however, was so upbraided by his conscience, and inwardly ashamed of his unfaithfulness, that, in about six months he quitted his station, and visited Wittemberg and other places where evangelical liberty flourished. After two years absence, hearing that his father was at the point of death, he ventured to return to his own country, where the minister of the village betrayed him; and Leonhard was carried to Passau, and there imprisoned during ten weeks before he underwent the least examination. At length, when reduced to a very weak condition, he was called upon to answer hastily a variety of questions, read to him by the famous Eccius of Ingolstadt, who had been sent for on purpose to interrogate, confound, and overawe the poor heretic. His own relations earnestly solicited him to retract; but finding THAT in vain, they begged he might be allowed to have an advocate, and also a month's respite to recruit his feeble, debilitated frame. All was refused by the popish rulers; and Leonhard was brought publicly before a solemn tribunal of the bishop and a number

Leonhard Casar.

* Scultet. XXVI.

† Acta Mart. in Scult. XXVII.

of canons, with Eccius among them. Then it was, that the persecuted prisoner, armed with Divine strength, rose more formidable to the powers of darkness, than, if, through infirmity, he had never been guilty of a former lapse in denying the faith. His adversaries peremptorily ordered all the proceedings to be carried on in Latin, for the purpose of keeping the multitude in ignorance. But Leonhard scrupled not before the whole audience to speak German repeatedly, and to defend the doctrines he professed with prodigious spirit and animation. He was frequently interrupted by the official of the court, and told that he was not brought there to PREACH. The grand protestant doctrines were the articles he maintained. "Faith alone," said he, "justifies: works are the evidences of faith; but in the act of justification, works are as distinct from faith as heaven is from the earth. The mass is no sacrifice; neither is there any sacrifice for sin, except the blood of Christ." He refused to enter into any dispute about transubstantiation; and contended, that it was enough to insist on the words of Christ, and to believe, that faithful communicants become real partakers of his body and blood.

This good martyr wrote from his prison to his friend Stifelius, at that time chaplain to a lady of distinction in Austria, in strains of the most unaffected piety, thanking God who had honoured, as he called himself, his most unworthy servant, and the greatest of sinners, with such an opportunity to confess his precious name, blessed for ever. He entreated his dear brother in Christ to pray for him, that he might remain steadfast to the end.* Much pains were taken to procure his release and dismissal. Noblemen of the first distinction, even the elector of Saxony himself, interceded with the potentates of Bavaria, but all to no purpose. The popish hierarchy proceeded to degrade him, and then gave him up to the civil magistrate; but not without first going through the usual mockery of praying that his life might be spared. His mournful relations, entirely against his own wishes, made their last effort to obtain the poor favour, that their kinsman might be allowed to die by the sword instead of the flames. But the stern duke of Bavaria, instigated no

doubt by his priests, issued a peremptory mandate "for committing the incorrigible heretic alive to the flames."

The man's patience, and constancy in prayer, the ardour of his soul, and his confidence towards God, are described as beyond belief.

When the dreadful moment came, and he was placed on the pile, he said, "O Lord Jesus, partake in my sufferings; support me, give me strength;" and, lastly, as soon as the fire began to burn, he cried out with a loud voice, "Save me, Jesus; I am thine!" and soon after expired. Luther was vehemently affected with this tragedy; and professed himself ashamed, as he had done on former occasions, that he had not yet been thought worthy of martyrdom. "Oh," said he, "that I might witness such a confession, and suffer such a death! but God's will be done! Oh, ye persecutors, if ye thus thirst after blood and carnage, why do ye not turn your arms against the Turks? For after all, ye cannot oppress the cause of God. I gave you Gamaliel's advice when I was before the emperor at Worms: but all is in vain."†

To their common friend, Stifelius, he speaks thus of the death of Leonhard. "Oh wretched me!—how far below this man am I! I am a wordy preacher, he a powerful performer. May Christ grant that we may be enabled to imitate this holy character!"‡

CHAPTER XV.

FROM THE PERSECUTIONS, AFTER THE FIRST DIET OF SPIRES, TO THE VISITATION OF THE ELECTORATE OF SAXONY.

1. LUTHER'S TEMPTATIONS.
2. NARRATIVES OF BUGENIAGIUS AND OF JONAS.
3. DISTINCTION BETWEEN DEEP RELIGIOUS CONCERN, AND CONSTITUTIONAL MELANCHOLY.
4. LUTHER'S QUARREL WITH GEORGE OF SAXONY.
5. VISITATION OF THE ELECTORATE OF SAXONY.

I. LUTHER'S TEMPTATIONS.

BUT Providence had designed trials for Luther, more calculated to humble

* Ep. II. 329, by Aurifaber.

* Alt. III. 792. In. S. p. 85.

† Ep. II. 355.

and subdue his spirit, and to perfect the strength of God in his weakness, even than martyrdom itself. The uncommon success with which his labours had been crowned, the celebrity of his character, the favour of princes and nobles, and the admiration in which he was held by all the professors of evangelical truth, were circumstances which had a strong tendency to exalt him in his own eyes, especially when the native firmness and intrepidity of his temper is taken into the account. In fact, how-

The natural propensity of Luther's mind.

ever, this extraordinary man had never been without a thorn in the flesh,* which proved an effectual counterpoise to all his attainments and all his successes, and prevented him from being "exalted above measure."—What was the nature of that thorn in the flesh, which disturbed the tranquillity of St. Paul, it may not be easy to form even a probable conjecture; but in regard to Luther, his case may be understood without much difficulty by those who are conversant in his writings, and who themselves have, in some degree, tasted of the grace of God in the Christian life.—It was not a propensity to carnal gratifications, but to a PECULIAR species of spiritual pride and self-righteousness. I call it peculiar, not because many of the very wisest and best of Christians have not felt the same evil from age to age, but for the purpose of distinguishing it from that more common, and more dangerous sort of pretension to spirituality, which leads the mind to boast of its attainments, and to rest in an antinomian security. Persons of this latter stamp are usually careless and easy; and in the end, frequently prove altogether unsound. Those of the former, rarely or never do so; and for this reason—there is in their character, at bottom, a profound humility, together with a quick and lively sense of the evil of sin. Their defect properly consists in unbelief. The fulness, the freeness, the extent of the loving-kindness of God in redemption, is veiled from their eyes: they cannot believe that God is so plenteous in goodness and mercy, as in Scripture he is represented to be; and hence, as a consequence of this blindness, proceeds that PECULIAR sort of self-righteousness, so destructive of evangelical comfort. They are too wicked, they

think, to be saved just as they are: they must make themselves, at least SOMETHING better before they are entitled to mercy. Thus, notwithstanding all the real humility of this character, there is in it still some mixture of pride, which is only to be subdued at the CROSS of Christ, where the true penitent sinner at length learns, that the very way to frustrate the mercy of God is to mix, in the great concern of justification, any of his own petty performances with the merits of the Redeemer.

In the mean time, the malicious policy of Satan is, to let alone the spiritually proud antinomian; that is, to leave him pleased with his own attainments and regardless of personal holiness,—while he buffets, with all his might, the poor Christian soldier of Luther's opposite temperament. Here, by his artful temptations, he works secretly upon what is called in Scripture, the OLD MAN; and by false imaginations and plausible reasonings, endeavours to reduce the soul to despair, to hide from it the consolations of the Divine promises, and to drive the distressed sinner into a state of legal bondage, or even into Atheism itself. In the active scenes of Luther's life, in the distress of his external persecutions, in the heat of his controversies, in his wars with the papacy, or even in his pacific employments of preaching and writing comments on the word of God, little or nothing of this sort appears:—it is in his closet, in his conversations with his intimates, with his parish priest, or his wife, or when his fellow-labourers vex and irritate him by their opposition; or, lastly, when his own health and spirits are broken down by incessant toils, and cares, and watchings; these are the seasons when IN PRIVATE we may expect to see the Saxon hero of the Reformation, more or less, according to circumstances, in a state of imbecility and confusion of mind, or even of fear, anxiety, complaint, and tribulation.*

But be it remembered that, extreme cases excepted, there is in the public deportment of Luther no material difference to be observed. He thinks, he reasons, he writes, he preaches, precisely in the same manner.† Nay, he knows how to give the very best spiritual advice to

The policy of Satan with an antinomian.

* 2 Cor. xii.

* Narratio Pomerani, II. 337.

† Ibid. 341. b.

those who apply to him under afflictions similar to his own. He even sometimes jests with such persons, with a view to do them good, when he thinks their case calls for encouragement to cheerfulness; and yet internally, he is perhaps much disposed to blame himself for having gone too far in that way. It is recorded, that on one occasion, he cried out, "People conclude from my ordinary, gay conversation, that I walk on beds of roses and on nothing else; but God knows what I daily feel."* All this may appear strange and contradictory to those who have not been conversant with such things: The solution is, CHRIST, THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, both protects its members from delusion, and at the same time disciplines his ablest servants by afflictions; and though sometimes the thorns in the flesh, called messengers of Satan,† may cause great tumult and distress in the souls of faithful ministers of the Gospel, such trials shall not ultimately avail, either to the subversion of doctrine, or the declension of godliness.

That great defect in meekness, which is constantly to be deplored in the character of the Saxon reformer, as it, doubtless, gave the tempter a great advantage over him, so did it require the very discipline and chastisement here described. By a strong and piercing understanding, Luther had discovered the revealed remedy of our fallen nature, and enforced the use of it with almost unexampled wisdom and energy; nevertheless, this great physician fails to apply, in his own malady, the efficacious medicines he has so often prescribed with success to others.

Early in 1527, we behold that high unconquered spirit, which had stood calm and secure amidst the rage of popes and princes, lie prostrate under the pressure of internal temptation. An infectious disorder prevailed at Wittemberg, and the elector ordered the academics to retire to Jena; but Luther thought it his duty not to desert his flock. At the same time he severely, but justly, rebuked several, who when in health had altogether neglected the Sacrament, and now in the hour of danger eagerly pressed for the administration

of it, even at the peril of the minister's life.

In the course of this year, he suffered much, and for a considerable time together, from bodily complaints, and thereby became extremely debilitated afterwards; but it does not at all appear that he was attacked by the prevailing epidemic: that disorder however was in his house for many months, and his wife was at that time pregnant.—No wonder, therefore, that he should describe his spirits as weak and agitated, and often oppressed with fears and perturbation. Then it was, that Satan seems to have taken the advantage, to inject his fiery darts into the mind of this devoted servant of God, at a time when almost every object appeared grievous and alarming to his irritable imagination. The dilapidation of the ecclesiastical revenues by the avarice and rapacity of the noblemen,* who took advantage of the excessive good-nature of the elector, was one serious affliction to the mind of Luther; who, in regard to his own personal condition, was perfectly disinterested, and was only anxious, that through the means of judicious and economical regulations, there might be sufficient funds for the improvement, extension, and new foundation of various protestant establishments. Then the opposition of the Sacramentarian reformers gave him sensible uneasiness; † though in this he certainly ought to have confessed, that his chief suffering arose from the mortification of his pride, and that he had no very material reason to complain of want of respect on the part of those godly persons, namely, Zuingle, Ecolampadius, and others whom he ought joyfully and cordially to have received as brethren and fellow-soldiers, fighting the same cause of a persecuted Gospel. It is true that Zuingle, in the course of controversy, could sometimes use language sufficiently bitter and contemptuous; but Luther ought still to have remembered, that he himself had been in that respect the aggressor to a most vexatious degree;—he did indeed remember it, and with many tears, as we shall see by and bye;—but it was his duty to have owned his fault long before, and not merely in his chamber to a few private friends, but openly to all the

Causes of his affliction.

The great defect of Luther's character.

Luther severely afflicted in mind.

* Narratio Pomcrani, II. 337.

† 2 Cor. xii.

* Com. de Luth. XXIX. 3.

† Id. XXXII. 4.

world, and to have repaired the breach both by candid acknowledgments, and by ceasing from the strife. But Luther did neither one nor the other. On the contrary, Zuingle, the leader of the Sacramentarians, though ordinarily by no means disposed to spare Luther, generously admitted in one of his publications, that his adversary was not, in any essential point, deficient in evangelical light: and moreover, that at a time when there was not a single person to be found who should dare to brave the danger, he had boldly stood forward the first champion of the Gospel; and was the faithful David, raised by the Lord, to come forward and meet the great Goliath of Rome.* That Zuingle then and his associates did not agree with Luther in the tenet of consubstantiation, while they sincerely and earnestly desired to unite with him in the bonds of the Gospel, and to honour him as the father of the Reformation, ought to have been no object of discontent or distress to his mind. I gladly seize again the opportunity to convince my readers, that I have no desire to conceal the blemishes of the Saxon Reformer. He possessed uncommon excellencies; but they were stained with faults by no means inconsiderable. It is perfectly right that we should in this manner thoroughly examine the characters of men of real holiness; that we may distinguish them from the fictitious perfectionists of the Stoics, and learn to give the praise to that God who is justly jealous of his own glory.

Encomium
on Luther by
Zuingle.

Let us now listen to Martin Luther discovering the secret weakness and distress of his soul; and let us keep in mind that this is the very same man who was every day bidding open defiance to the greatest powers of Europe, both civil and ecclesiastical, and voluntarily hazarding his life for the sake of Christian truth and liberty.

Extracts
from Lu-
ther's Let-
ters.

"My sins have brought upon me the heavy wrath of God. It is not enough that the pope, the emperor, the princes, and bishops, should aim at my life, but my religious brethren also must torment my spirit. My sins, and all the powers of death, Satan and his angels, rage without ceasing. And what

Luther's
distress of
mind.

is my hope?—I say, if Christ should forsake me, I am undone. But he never will forsake such a poor miserable sinner. Mine enemies are mighty; and add affliction to affliction, now that I am under the Divine chastisement. But enough; let me not be querulous or impatient under the rod of Him, who smites and heals, who kills and makes alive. Blessed be his holy will! When the world and the prince of the world hate me in this manner, it is surely some proof that I belong to Christ. The critical situation of my wife increases my anxiety; and I am quite alarmed at what has just now happened to another pregnant lady, one of our neighbours, whom you know. She has been carried off rapidly by the prevailing epidemic. My present trials are great; but the All-powerful One has done great things for me. May Christ, whose pure doctrine I have taught and openly avowed, be my rock and my fortress! Amen."*

"It so pleases God, that I, who have been accustomed to comfort others, do myself stand in need of consolation. I have but one prayer, and I beseech you join me in it;—that whatever Christ may be pleased to do with me, he would preserve me from ungratefully rebelling against him, whom I have hitherto preached and served with so much zeal; though at the same time I have offended him by many and great sins.—I still hope he will forgive me, and say, 'I am thy salvation.'"

†

"There is nothing that my sins do not deserve; but nevertheless I have comfort in the thought that I have taught the Gospel of Christ in godly sincerity, to the salvation of many souls. This galls Satan; and he would destroy me, together with the word itself. While others are called to the stake by the cruel tyrants, I suffer internally in spirit from the prince of this world. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ perfect me in his holy will! Oh! how precious and delightful is the secret contemplation of that will!"

‡

"I am still under the malice of Satan, who continues to buffet me. Pray for me. I have now languished for nearly three months, yet not so much in

* To Jonas, II. 343. b.

† To Amsdorf, II. 344.

‡ To Agric. II. 347.

* Op. Zuing. II. Exec. 359.

body as in mind, and am still far from well."*

"So may Christ comfort you," says Luther to his beloved friend Hausman, "as you comfort me. I thank my God, that Satan with all his wonderful craft, and all his powerful exertions, hath not yet been able to gain his will upon me. This is no ordinary temptation; and so skilful is that WICKED ONE in perverting the Scriptures, that my own knowledge of the sacred writings fails me on this occasion; I stand in need of the help of my friends, and I am thankful for their consolatory communications. I open my case to you in this manner, that you may pray the more earnestly for me, and may also yourself in like circumstances, if ever they should happen, be aware of the depths of Satan."†

In the midst of his humiliation and confession of sin, we find Luther repeatedly taking comfort, as holy David did, from a consciousness of the integrity and purity of his motives. Thus to his friend Melancthon: "Pray for me—I am a miserable abject worm of the earth, distracted with sorrow. But as this is the good will of the Father of mercies, glory be to him, whatever be my sufferings. In regard to myself, there is but one thing on which I lay any stress; namely, that I have ever taught the word of God in its purity; and on no occasion corrupted the truth, either through a love of glory, or of gain."‡

To another friend he says, "Be serious in your prayers for me, that Christ may not leave me destitute; for I am utterly without strength. I am sensible that I stand in need of temptations, that God may be glorified in me, and that I may be humbled; and I have still a good hope that Christ will accept me, though I have listened and do listen too much to the devices of Satan. It is astonishing how he can transform himself, not to say into an angel of light, but into Christ himself. I am compelled to own his power; for he is outrageous in his attacks upon me. But Christ has faithfully preserved me, and will preserve me unto the end."§

2. NARRATIVES OF BUGENHAGIUS, AND OF JONAS.

THE truth of the history of Luther's extreme sufferings in the course of these temptations, does not depend entirely on the descriptions contained in his own letters to his friends. Bugenhagen of Pomerania and Justus Jonas were present during one of the most severe attacks, and were so much affected by what they saw and heard, that they thought fit to record in writing some of the most material circumstances.

It appears, however, clear, that intense distress and agitation of spirit had laid hold of our Reformer, more than six months before that very remarkable seizure which they described. For he writes Luther's letter to Jonas, A. D. 1526. thus to Jonas on the 26th of

December 1526: "Oh, my Jonas, pray for me; sympathize with me in the agonies I undergo. The temptation is sometimes less, but returns again with greater fury. May Christ never forsake me! May he chastise me as a son, but not punish me as a rebel: May I be strong in faith, even unto the end!"*

Now the narratives of Bugenhagen and Jonas relate to what happened on the sixth of the succeeding July, when the mind of Luther must of necessity have been much broken down by the length and accumulation of his afflictions.—To transcribe the whole might detain us too long; but some remarkable parts of it may well deserve notice.

Their account is this; namely, that about eight o'clock in the morning of Saturday the sixth of July,† Bugenhagen was alarmed at being hastily sent for by Luther. He found him, however, in conversation with his wife, and looking just as usual. It seems he had that morning experienced a most tremendous temptation, entirely of a spiritual nature; and was seriously apprehensive, that if the hand of God should again be so heavy upon him, he could not survive the attack. On the whole, he suspected he was about to die; and retired privately with his friend Bugenhagen, the parish minister, into his chamber, and there, in secret, committed everything to God, and solemnly confessed his sins;

* To Stifel. and to Jonas, II. 353, 354.

† To Agric. II. 358. ‡ Ib. 356.

§ To Brisger, II. 359. b.

* Ep. II. 321.

† Narrat. Poin. 335. et seq.

and then, says the writer, my MASTER entreated me, his PUPIL, to give him a word of consolation from the Scriptures. Afterwards he recovered so far as to be able to go out to dinner, and make the company cheerful, as he always did. But in the evening he was suddenly seized with a fainting fit; and cried out, "Oh! Doctor Jonas, I am sick; bring me water, or whatever you have, or I am gone." Jonas in a fright snatched up some cold water, and threw it freely over him. At that moment Luther was the very picture of death; but presently after, he began to pray most intensely: "If this be my last hour, O Lord, thy will be done! O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger; chasten me not in thy heavy displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord.—I would willingly have shed my blood in the cause of thy word—but perhaps I was unworthy of that honour; thy will be done: only may thy name be glorified, whether by my death, or my life."

Then, in the most solemn manner, he recommended to the blessing of God, the ministry of that sacred Gospel, which had hitherto been committed to his charge. Upon which, Bugenhagenius, almost senseless from deep and anxious concern, interrupted him, by saying, "Among your other prayers, my doctor, let this be one, that it would please God to continue your life for the good of us poor creatures, and of many others." "To die," replied Luther, "would be gain to me, but . . ." and then, without finishing the sentence, he thus seriously addressed Justus Jonas and Bugenhagenius. "The world delights in falsehoods; and it will certainly be said, that I recanted my doctrines in the hour of death. I desire, therefore, you and Bugenhagenius to be witnesses of this my confession of faith:—I am perfectly satisfied that the doctrines which I have taught, concerning faith, charity, the cross, and the sacraments, are verily agreeable to the word of God. I was led by Providence, and not voluntarily, to act the part which I have acted in the ministry. Many have blamed me for having been deficient in moderation; however, in some instances, there was in me no want of moderation but what may be justified; and most assuredly I have never intended harm to any person whatever. On the contrary, I have always wished to promote men's sal-

vation, even the salvation of mine enemies."

After this, Luther gravely stated to the same persons his objections to the Sacramentarians; calling God to witness the sincerity of his heart, and lamenting with tears the numerous sects that arose, and neither spared the flock nor the Word of God.—"What a bustle," said he, "will they raise after my death!'" AND THEN, WITH DEEP SIGHS, AND A VAST EFFUSION OF TEARS, HE CONFESSED HOW INTEMPERATE HE HAD BEEN AT TIMES IN HIS LANGUAGE; and appealed to HIM WHO KNOWS ALL THINGS, that in THIS HE HAD GIVEN WAY to the infirmity of the flesh, thereby endeavouring to shake off the burden of his afflictions; but that his conscience did not reproach him with having harboured any ill-will."

"Be ye my witnesses, however," said he, turning his face towards his two friends, "that, on the subjects of repentance and justification, I recant nothing of what I have written against the pope. I feel that to be the Gospel of God, and the truth of God; and though some may think I have been too harsh, or taken too great liberty, I do not repent in that matter."

Luther then began to inquire after his child. "Where is my dearest little John?"—The child was soon brought smiling to the father, who immediately commended 'his good little boy,' as he called him, and his mother, 'his dearest Kate,' to a good and gracious God. "Ye have no worldly goods," said he; "but God, who is the father of the orphan, and judges the cause of the widow, will defend and keep you. I give thanks to thee, O Lord God, that thy providence has made me indigent in this world. I have neither house nor land nor possession to leave. Thou hast blessed me with a wife and children, and these I return back unto thee; O feed them, teach them, preserve them!"

To his wife he said, "My dearest Kate, if it is God's will, I request thee to submit to it: thou art my wedded wife; this thou wilt never forget; and let God's word be thy constant guide." He proceeded to say something to her concerning a few silver cups; and concluded with these words, "You know we have nothing else."

His wife displayed, on this trying occasion, extraordinary Christian fortitude. Almost heart-broken and frightened even

Conduct of
the wife of
Luther.

to consternation, she yet preserved a good hope in her countenance. She allowed that not only herself and her child, but many other Christian people, would experience a great loss; but she entreated her husband not to be uneasy on her account; for if it really was God's will that he should depart, she could submit to it cordially. She therefore commended him to the Lord God, under whose protection he could not fail to be safe.*

By the external application of warmth, and by the use of cordial medicines internally, Luther soon recovered from the apparently immediate danger; but such had been the violence of the paroxysm, that he experienced the debilitating effects of it during the remainder of the year.

On the Sunday succeeding this memorable Saturday, Luther declared to Jonas, that on comparing the agony of his mind, during the spiritual temptation in the morning of the preceding day, with his bodily afflictions in the evening, the latter had not been half so distressing as the former. He added, "Doctor, I must mark the day. I was yesterday at school."

Afterwards he underwent many exacerbations of mind of a similar nature to that described, but none equally severe. Yet during all these trials, Bugenhagen assures us, that Luther attended to every part of his duty, that he seldom omitted his public lectures, and generally preached on the Lord's day. Bugenhagen was frequently called during the hours of the night to visit him in his distress; and repeatedly heard him say, "The violence of the temptation stupifies me that I cannot open my mouth: as soon as ever it pleases God that I can lift up my heart in prayer, and make use of scriptural expressions, it ceases to prevail."

Bugenhagen tells us, that he found real satisfaction in being of some little service to Luther, through whose instrumentality, God had been pleased to reveal to himself the Gospel of his Son.†

* Descrip. Tentat. 340.

† Joan. Bug. Pomer. 340. b.

3. DISTINCTION BETWEEN DEEP RELIGIOUS CONCERN, AND CONSTITUTIONAL MELANCHOLY.

THERE are, I believe, those who will not be displeased to see this eminent servant of God in his imbecility; and to whom the narrative may be even consolatory and instructive. They will observe that such instances, when well considered, incontrovertibly prove that the excellency of evangelical power is of God, and not of man. Hence the nature of true Christian experience is both illustrated and confirmed. If I have enlarged on this case, I shall endeavour to be brief on the civil politics of Lutheranism. The propriety of thus distinguishing and treating the materials before me, is continually suggested by the original plan of this history. Add to this, the authorities for the preceding account are in the hands of very few persons, and, as far as I know, have never before been given in English to the public; and this may be a reason, among many others, why the real character of the Saxon Reformer has been so little understood. Let us regret sincerely the strength of his prejudices, the violence of his temper, the asperity of his language; but let us be glad, that, in the hour of affliction at least, he bitterly lamented his faults, and earnestly prayed "that by them he might not bring a scandal on the Gospel."* Amidst all his blemishes, men of candour and discernment will be compelled to recognize the most unequivocal marks of purity of intention.

Those who are disposed to class this Reformer among ENTHUSIASTS, should pause, and seriously reflect what that word means in its ordinary acceptation, when applied to religious characters; and they Luther no enthusiast. may, in the end, be led to agree with the writer of this history, that few men, perhaps none, in any age, were ever less infected with that evil.

I less wonder, that, by modern writers, Martin Luther should have been suspected of a propensity to melancholy; because it is too much their practice to represent all deep concern and personal anxiety in matters of religion, and still more, all the distresses, afflictions, mournings, and temptations of godly persons,

* Ego enim orabo ne peccatis meis alicui scandalo sim. Narr. Bug. 338.

as implying a melancholic temperament of the natural constitution. Instances of this way of judging are innumerable.—Dr. Jortin,* for example, considers Luther as having a tincture both of melancholy and enthusiasm; but when I turn to his authorities for such a sentiment, I find nothing to support it. The truth is, the Saxon Reformer was naturally of a cast directly the opposite to that which is here represented; and Melancthon expressly declares that he was of a LIVELY, SOCIAL, GENEROUS turn of mind.† Extraordinary then must be that penetration, which, in our times, can discover what escaped the observation of his most intimate friend and contemporary.

Luther himself was fully persuaded of the agency of Satan in the production of those temptations, which afflicted him so grievously. Beausobre, on the contrary, peremptorily rejects the supposition, and without the least ceremony or hesitation, pronounces them to have been the effect of melancholy.

A single declaration of this kind, when made by such an author as Beausobre,‡ who could not have been entirely ignorant of the private life of Luther, discloses at once the nature of the religious views and taste of this historian, and places it in a clearer light than many pages of cautious composition in divinity would probably have done. What a contrast to the positive decision of Beausobre is the following unaffected observation of the pious Bugenhagenius, who, living daily in habits of the utmost familiarity with our Reformer, must have known him thoroughly! “If these things,” says he, “happened to the prophets, and to the apostles, and to others, and even to our Lord Jesus Christ, it is not so very wonderful that they should happen to Luther.”§ Not one word of his being disposed to melancholy.

Yet it may not be improper to interpose a brief caution here suggested by the preceding remark of Bugenhagenius. The Book of Psalms, and of Jeremiah,

and the Epistles of St. Paul, certainly contain descriptions of sensations similar to those of Luther; and it must therefore be admitted, that the choicest servants of God may very often be under great temporary sadness and dejection of mind; and this from different causes;—from a deep conviction of sin, and an awful sense of the wrath of God; such was Luther’s case when he first entered the monastery, and for some time after; from great darkness of mind, and the hiding of God’s face; which David complains of repeatedly;—and again, from some unknown chastisement, as in the instance of St. Paul’s thorn in the flesh. In the next place, we may safely admit further, that a true servant of God, under a severe discipline of this sort, may actually be reduced to a condition which shall, in many circumstances, RESEMBLE that of a person whose natural disposition is truly melancholic; but when all this is granted, it will not follow that the darkness and dejection and grief of a sincere penitent is any proof at all of a melancholic constitution by nature. It is true, the temperament MAY be of that kind, and then probably the more severe will be the sufferings of the holy man; but these things do not necessarily go together; and those who think they do, have yet to learn the manner of God’s dealings, in subduing the pride and stubbornness of his fallen creatures. “Paul, thou art beside thyself;” “Luther mistook melancholy for a temptation of the devil;”* appear to me to be instances of a rash judgment, which are to be classed together, originating in a similar want of humility, of self-knowledge, and of submission to the Divine will.

4. LUTHER’S QUARREL WITH GEORGE OF SAXONY.

IT must not however be dissembled, that the inevitability and the violence of Luther’s language, prejudiced the minds of many persons against the doctrines of this great Reformer. Learning, sincerity, sound understanding, and scriptural penetration, were so strikingly apparent in his productions, that even George of Saxony owned, that some of Luther’s more early publications had given him

* Life of Erasmus, I. 126.

† Page 429 of this vol. Letter to Cambrar.

‡ [IV. 12 & 13.

§ History of Luther’s Temptations, 311. b.

* Beausobre.

A necessary caution.

considerable satisfaction; and, moreover, that he had not been displeas'd with what he had heard of him during the public disputations at Leipsic; but had hop'd that those discussions might lead to a reform of the existing abuses.*

This prince was certainly no libertine either in principle or practice; and it has been thought by some an inexplicable contradiction in his conduct, that notwithstanding his excessive aversion to the Lutherans, he should have selected for his chaplain at Dresden, Alexius Crosner, who was well

Brief account of Alexius Crosner.

known to be not only a proselyte of the reformers, but also particularly attached to Luther himself. Then the apparent difficulty is not in the least diminished by reflecting on the long duration of Crosner's ministry at the court of Dresden. He continued to preach before this duke during the space of three years. It may possibly assist the solution of this enigma, to consider—that George, though an incurable bigot, was yet by no means without CONSCIENCE; nor probably without some CURIOSITY and desire to know more distinctly the nature of those protestant tenets, which, according to his ideas, had so much disturb'd the peace of Germany; and lastly, that Crosner himself, in his sermons, may perhaps have industriously avoided the frequent discussion of such topics as are peculiarly offensive to a papist. Indeed a very excellent judge makes no scruple to intimate, that there must have been, on the part of Crosner, some degree of dexterous trimming or political management, otherwise the Saxon duke would never have tolerat'd, for three years together, any direct and open attacks upon the gross corruptions of the Romish religion.† Be this as it may, Crosner's situation at Dresden was certainly not to be envied. George was pleas'd and offend'd with him by turns. The preacher's own conscience was probably not very easy. Then the duke's courtiers wrested his expressions, and harass'd him with perpetual accusations. It appears however clear, that Crosner on the whole must have been faithful; for he defend'd the cause of Christian truth with so much plainness and courage,—

at least in the latter part of his residence at Dresden,—that he gave great offence at court, and was at length dismissed from his office. Emser, one of Luther's great adversaries, happening to be on horseback, and to pass close to Crosner as he was leaving the city, exclaimed, "This is to me a joyful day, that puts an end to the preachings of this heretic. Away with thee; and may some mischief overtake thee!" "Emser," replied Crosner, "you ought to have said, Go in the name of the Lord."—It is affirm'd by two very respectable authorities, that Emser died that very night in dreadful agonies.* After all, Crosner labour'd so much under the imputation of having conducted himself with insincerity at the court of Dresden, that the elector of Saxony refus'd, upon a vacancy, to appoint him his domestic chaplain; and the poor man was reduc'd to so great indigence, that he petition'd that prince to place him in some lay-employment. The duke George, there is reason to believe, continu'd to see him occasionally, but it does not at all appear that he reliev'd his necessities.†

In regard to Luther, the affections of the duke were entirely alienated from him by those repeated asperities, with which both the public and private writings of the Reformer abound'd, and which he took not the least pains to soften or conceal. In 1528, George, having received information that Luther, in one of his letters, had treat'd him with the utmost rudeness and contempt, suffer'd his spirit to be irritat'd beyond all bounds against the writer. The letter contain'd rash and intemperate expressions, no doubt; and George was in no humour to reflect that the harsh language, which gave him so much offence, had been us'd only in a private communication to a friend; and that Luther was not to blame, because his friend,‡ imprudently and without warrant, afterwards divulg'd it. The breach between them was wide enough before; but this accident seems to have render'd it incurable. A thousand times Luther had represent'd the duke as a

Luther affronts the duke of Saxony. Resentment of the duke George.

* Daniel Schneider, a minister at Dresden; and Selnceer. Vid. Seck. Index I. Crosnerus.

† Seck. II. 92. Add. II.

‡ Wenceslaus Lincius, Ep. II. 38.

* Com. de Luth. II. XIII.

† Seck. II. Add. p. 93.

violent headstrong bigot, but in this letter he had called him a fool.

5. VISITATION OF THE ELECTORATE OF SAXONY.

In 1527, John, the good elector of Saxony, had ordered some steps to be taken towards a general visitation of all the churches under his jurisdiction, and, in the succeeding year, that important business was nearly brought to a conclusion. A directory for the use

of the clergy of the electorate was composed by Melancthon, revised and corrected

in some points by Luther, and lastly, published under the sanction of the prince himself. The instructions were digested under eighteen heads, with an admirable preface by Luther; in which he shows the great use of ecclesiastical visitations, confirms the practice from Scripture, and censures the neglect of the dignitaries of those times. Among the names of the visitors are mentioned Luther, Melancthon, Myconius, Justus Jonas, and Pomeranus, and also several laymen of less notoriety. These excellent commissioners fixed suitable pastors in the respective parishes; they abolished the ancient superstitions in the most lenient and gradual manner; and, in short, they gave every humane attention, consistent with their duty as visitors, to persons obstinately addicted to the forms of popery. Under their seventeenth article, the duty of a bishop is described; though the term superintendent was adopted. For example: Every superintendent was carefully to inspect the conduct of the clergy of his own diocese; to examine candidates for holy orders; to take care afterwards that they preached sound doctrine; also to admonish and censure defaulters, and if they proved incorrigible, to represent their obstinacy to the civil magistrate, or even to the prince himself.*

* Com. de Luth. II. XXXVI.

CHAPTER XVI.

FROM THE VISITATION OF THE ELECTORATE OF SAXONY TO THE COMPARISON OF LUTHER AND ZUINGLE.

1. LUTHER'S SENTIMENTS ON OBEDIENCE TO MAGISTRATES.
2. HIS SENTIMENTS ON TOLERATION.
3. ZUINGLE'S SENTIMENTS ON THE SAME SUBJECTS.
4. SENTIMENTS OF LUTHER AND OF ZUINGLE ON PREDESTINATION.
5. CONFERENCES AT MARBURG.
6. PECULIAR OPINIONS OF ZUINGLE. HIS DREAM.
7. ZUINGLE AND LUTHER COMPARED.—WHICH WAS THE FIRST REFORMERS?

I. OBEDIENCE TO MAGISTRATES.

IN the course of the year 1528, several circumstances occurred, which cast much additional light on the real practical principles of the German Reformers.

A. D. 1528.
Practical principles of Luther and his associates.

The protestants beheld all the motions of the Romanists with extreme jealousy, and had already concerted some measures for their own protection.* In moments of so much suspicion and fear, it was therefore natural that they should lend an ear to every story which was calculated to threaten and to alarm. Then it was affirmed, on very plausible evidence, that a number of the first potentates of Germany, with Ferdinand at their head, had, some months ago, concluded a treaty at Breslaw, of which one great object was, by an allied army to compel the elector of Saxony and the landgrave of Hesse to re-establish the ancient religious corruptions. Moreover, if the elector should refuse to give up Luther and his innovations, and if the landgrave also should persevere in his obstinacy, it was stipulated that the leaders of the confederacy should divide the possessions of the vanquished, and that the rest should be satisfied with pecuniary payments.†

We leave it to the secular historians to develop the truth of this mysterious business, which had well nigh involved the states of Germany in all the horrors

* Page 471.

† Com. de Luth. II. XXXV. 3.

of a civil war. The historian of the Church of Christ is chiefly concerned in the part which the Reformers acted at such a crisis. Suffice it to say, that the mild and steady temper of JOHN THE CONSTANT gave way at length to the warmth and impetuosity of the landgrave; and the two princes

Alliance of the elector and the landgrave. A. D. 1523.

agreed, in the former part of this year, to raise an army of twenty thousand foot and six thousand horse.* Almighty

God, they said, had graciously bestowed on them and their subjects the rich gift of the Gospel; and they thought themselves bound to protect their religion, at the hazard of their dignity, their possessions, and their lives.

Suddenly, the powerful influence of evangelical principles manifested itself at this juncture. The Wittenberg divines declared for pacific measures. Their leader Luther, with his associate Melanethon, wrote several

letters to the elector, in which he confutes the reasoning of the landgrave, who had argued that the steps already taken by their adversaries amounted to actual aggression. On the contrary, Luther contended, that their prince the elector, ought to wait till some overt act of incontrovertible aggression should take place, or at least till the reports of an intended hostility were completely substantiated. As matters stood at present, the popish princes, though accused of having formed a conspiracy against their neighbours, positively denied the fact; and the imperial regency, which was a legal authority, had, by express mandate, ordered the protestants to lay down their arms. "Here then," said Luther, "Providence affords an excellent opening for peace, which with a good conscience, ye cannot reject; ye ought rather to despatch a conciliatory and even submissive embassy to Ferdinand and the council of regency. It is true, the imperial order may probably have been obtained at the solicitation of your adversaries; nevertheless you ought to obey the supreme magistrates,—especially when they enjoy nothing but what appears just and laudable. To speak plain, I must repeat the protestation which I lately made before your highness at Altenburg; namely, that though it will give us the greatest

* Com. de Luth. II. XXXV. 5.

pain to be separated from such a kind patron and parent as our prince, yet we must quit this part of the country, rather than be partakers of the infamy which will infallibly attach to your highness in the prosecution of unlawful hostilities; and, if I mistake not, many good men will follow our example. You had much better break the treaty you have made with the landgrave, than commence a war of this sort." Such is the substance of Luther's admirable advice and remonstrance on this occasion. The memoir is in his own hand-writing, subscribed also by Melanethon: and in a similar strain of freedom and sincerity, these excellent men opened their minds to John Frederic the son of the elector.*

All this is the more remarkable, because there is no doubt that secretly Luther was fully convinced the treaty of Breslaw was by no means a mere fiction; † and Spalatinus, who had great opportunities of learning the interior counsels of several of the courts of Germany, has recorded his own opinion to the same effect. ‡ The more accurately we scrutinize the practical notions of the Saxon Reformers respecting obedience to the "powers that be," the preservation of peace, and the justification of war, the more shall we be satisfied that they were all entirely derived from the sacred oracles.

The tender conscience of the elector of Saxony was much affected by the arguments and suggestions of his Wittenberg theologians. Almost immediately he procured a modification of his late treaty with the landgrave, whereby it became purely a defensive treaty; and he also sent his son to the court of Hesse Cassel, to prevent the commencement of hostilities. The young prince, John Frederic, exhibited on this occasion a prudence not very common at his time of life. He said, "the circumstances called for a middle line of conduct. The friends of evangelical doctrine ought by no means to break the peace; but they should ever preserve a watchful eye on their persecutors, and ever maintain a posture of defence." But it was no easy matter to restrain the juvenile

Conscientious mind of the elector John.

* Seeck. II. Add. 98—99.

† Com. de Luth. II. XXXV. 13. Also Ep II. 379 & 387.

‡ Com. de Luth. II. XXXV. 17.

ardour of the landgrave, and prevent him from marching his army into the possessions of his neighbours. At the head of his Hessian soldiers, he menaced his father-in-law, George of Saxony; and at the same time in excessively warm terms blamed the unseasonable moderation of the elector of Saxony, which in a great measure he imputed to Luther. The differences, however, for the present, were at length happily composed, and without bloodshed, through the mediation of the elector of Treves, and the elector Palatine.

2. ON TOLERATION.

It was painful to the mind of Luther, as well as injurious to the cause of the Reformation, that after all

Luther's sentiments on Toleration.

that had been done to repress the fury of the Anabaptists, that fanatical sect continued to increase, and diffuse in all directions its contagious influence. Never was the grand maxim, that religious sentiments are not to be eradicated by persecution, more strikingly verified than in the conduct of these rebellious fanatics. Not only in Germany, but almost in every part of Europe, princes and magistrates used the utmost severity in punishing these sectarian teachers, and in preventing the dissemination of their tenets. In effect, all good governments

Bad principles of the Anabaptists.

had reason to dread the progress of the Anabaptists,—who taught the people to despise their lawful rulers, and the salutary regulations by which all communities exist. George of Saxony had alarmed his cousin, John, the elector, by intimating the danger there was of new seditions in Thuringia. “The common people there,” he said, “were expecting their REAL LORD AND MASTER to appear shortly in defence of his own Word and Gospel; and even in the alehouses talked of their hopes and prospects without disguise.”* Everywhere it was the cry of these enthusiastic visionaries,—“No tribute—all things in common—no tithes—no magistrates—the kingdom of Christ is at hand;—the baptism of infants is an invention of the devil!”—These and many other extravagant notions,† the deluded zealots maintained with an unconquerable fortitude, worthy of a better

cause. Neither the sword, nor fire, nor the gibbet, could induce them to recant.

Notwithstanding the absurd principles and detestable practices of the German Anabaptists in the former part of the sixteenth century, we cannot doubt that of the vast multitudes included under that denomination, there must have been many persons of sincerely pious and pacific dispositions, though probably unlearned, and liable to be led away by impassioned enthusiasts or artful incendiaries.

Luther has left a brief, but important testimony to the character of some of these men. “Satan,” says he, “rages: we have need of your prayers. The new sectarians, called Anabaptists, increase in number; and display great external appearances of strictness of life, as also great boldness in death, whether they suffer by fire or by water.”*

But as patience and courage in suffering persecution were looked on by the sound and judicious protestants, as by no means constituting the only essential qualifications of a reformer, it was impossible that Luther and his associates should receive the Anabaptists as friends and partners in the great struggle for Christian truth and liberty. They detested their turbulence and sedition, while they pitied their folly and delusion, and their pretences to extraordinary sanctity. Meanwhile the Anabaptists themselves claimed a connexion or good understanding with the Lutherans, as often as it suited their purpose; and the papists, either ignorantly, or through artifice, always represented Luther as the grand culprit; and the various sects as ramifications of his fundamental heresy. Discrimination was deemed needless, by men who considered all opposition or disobedience to the established hierarchy as the greatest of crimes, and were ready to punish the offenders with the most unrelenting barbarity.

In whatever way such wilful or careless misrepresentation of the facts might serve the purposes of error or iniquity, it behoved those who loved light rather than darkness, to exhibit themselves examples of godly truth and sincerity. And here the diligent student of the Reformation is presented with an excellent opportunity of narrowly inspecting both the principles and the practice of Luther. Balthazar Hubmeier had been an eloquent

* Seck. Addit. a. II. 97. † Page 409.

* To Sprenger, II. 366.

and useful preacher of the Gospel* in Suabia, till Munzer infected him and some others in Switzerland with his mischievous notions. From that time Balthazar became an active leader of the Anabaptists, raised disturbances in one place after another, till he was at length seized in Moravia, and suffered under papal cruelty in the flames at Vienna.† “I wish,” says Zuingle, speaking of this man, “I may be deceived; but to me an immoderate thirst for praise and for money appear to be his sole motives.”‡

Balthazar, to promote his own views, had represented, in a little publication, the sentiments of Luther as the same with his own. A calumny of that kind was not to be passed by in those circumstances without some notice. Luther published a brief reply, which consisted chiefly in an appeal to his own sermons, and to the well-known fact, that there was not a single Anabaptist to be found in all the electorate of Saxony.

At the same time, however, he took occasion to reprobate the cruel sufferings inflicted on the poor wretches by the persecutions of the ecclesiastical rulers; insisting with the utmost precision on that grand distinction of which this Reformer

never lost sight,—that errors in articles of faith were not to be suppressed or extirpated by fire and sword, but confuted by the word of God: and that recourse ought never to be had to capital penalties, except in cases of actual sedition and tumult. The blindness and darkness in which such men are often left, said Luther, are in themselves a sufficient punishment.§

The following declarations abundantly manifest the candid and enlightened spirit of this Reformer. “We differ from these fanatics, not merely in the article of baptism, but also in the general reason which they give for rejecting the baptism of infants. ‘It was,’ say they, ‘a practice under the papacy.’ Thus, it was with them a sufficient reason for rejecting anything,—that the papists had adopted it. Now

we do not argue in that manner. We allow that in the papacy are many good things; and all those good things we have retained. What we affirm is this; That the popes have in many instances corrupted the apostolic Church; and have preferred their own laws and ordinances to the laws and ordinances of Christ. Therefore all that accumulated mass of human contrivances, which is of Satan’s suggestion, and contributes to the destruction of the Church of God, rather than to its edification, we entirely disapprove and reject. But then we stop here. We would not imitate the man, who on seeing his brother in the utmost danger of being killed by a wild boar, instantly pierced both the boar and his brother with one thrust of his spear. Perhaps some papists will accuse me of flattering the pope in this instance: MY ANSWER is; If the pope will bear such flattery as this, I will become his obedient son; I will be a good papist, and will recant all that I have said to offend him.”*

These sentiments are the more deserving of notice, because they have often been quoted in a mutilated way by the adversaries of the Reformation, to show that, from Luther’s concessions it might be proved there existed no necessity of a separation from the church of Rome.—The fact is, the Protestants never denied that the foundations of the faith were to be found in the Romish church; but they complained of great errors and abuses, and of numerous superstitions; and as they could obtain no relief, they determined no longer to partake in the iniquity.

The judgment of Luther, on the subject of Religious Toleration, was called forth still more explicitly by the vexation, which the best Protestants of those times underwent from the practices of the fanatical sectarians, especially the Anabaptists.—

His worthy friend, Lincus, probably in a state of irritation, had asked him, “Whether he conceived the magistrate to be justified in putting to death teachers of false religion;” a question, then little understood, and not generally agreed upon till long afterwards. “I am backward,” replied Luther, “to pass

* Scult. p. 225, in XXIV.

† Ibid. in XXV. p. 262. Also Du Pin. II. 20. Com. de Luth. II. XL. 12.

‡ Letter to Peter Gynoræus. Op. Zuing. II. 115.

§ Com. de Luth. II. XL. 12.

* Com. de Luth. II. XL. 13 and 14.

a sentence of death, let the demerit be ever so apparent. For I am alarmed, when I reflect on the conduct of the papists, who have so often abused the statutes of capital punishment against heresy, to the effusion of innocent blood. Among the Protestants, in process of time, I foresee a great probability of a similar abuse, if they should now arm the magistrate with the same powers, and there should be left on record a single instance of a person having suffered legally for the propagation of false doctrine. On this ground, I am decidedly against capital punishment in such cases, and think it quite sufficient that mischievous teachers of religion be removed from their situations."^{*}

That Martin Luther in such an age, and in opposition to the habits of a popish education, could maintain these sentiments of justice and moderation, must be considered as an extraordinary instance of that liberal and magnanimous spirit, with which the Saxon Reformer was eminently endowed; and the judicious reader will not be disposed to think worse of his practical conclusion in the matter of Toleration, because he was led to rest his argument on EXPERIENCE, rather than on visionary theories concerning the rights of private judgment. Where we are to look for examples of similar discrimination and freedom from party violence, under any circumstances resembling those in which Luther was placed, I know not: Certainly we shall have occasion to lament, in the progress of this History, that some other Reformers, even of the most gentle and beneficent tempers, were of a very different opinion, deceived, no doubt, by the perversion of Old Testament precedents, which derived their force from the Jewish theocracy.

In the point of Consubstantiation, and in his refusal to hold an explicit fraternal communion with the Sacramentarians, Luther still persisted. Of his conduct in this respect, I pretend to give no satisfactory account. Let it be classed among the surprising inconsistencies which are to be observed in the history of human nature. Without doubt, it was in itself

utterly indefensible, and also perfectly unlike what might have been expected from his general principles of toleration and facility in other articles, as well as from the uncommon sacrifices which he had made of a thousand prejudices of education, apparently much harder to be overcome than this.

Luther's uniform abhorrence of the inhumanity of consigning heretics to the sword or the flames, appears on many occasions; and this both directly and indirectly.

—The following is an instance of the INDIRECT kind.

—His extreme aversion to the Sacramentarians is not to be questioned; yet, when the elector of Saxony consulted him, respecting a soldier, who, in his cups, had maintained the opinion of Zuingle, and reviled the doctrine of consubstantiation, he answered, "A man of this sort should be enjoined silence, rather than be permitted to mislead simple minds on a subject which he himself does not understand. But if he will continue to talk, let him procure information from the clergy: at all events, he must not be allowed to abuse the lawful ministers of the country."^{*}

The DIRECT testimonies of Luther against the cruelty of persecutors are innumerable.—There is a remarkable one at the end of one of his little treatises on the Sacrament. "Were there no other reason," says he, "for leaving the communion of the church of Rome, this single one would be sufficient;—they shed innocent blood, contrary not only to the Divine, but even to the pontifical law itself. They have no statute which makes it death to communicate in both kinds, yet they burn laymen who do so. They also burn their priests for marrying, when the penalty of their laws is only degradation. I say then, THEY ARE MEN OF BLOOD; and if I were at present a member of their communion, their savage barbarity would induce me to leave them for ever, even though I had no other fault to find with them."[†]

3. ZUINGLE'S SENTIMENTS ON THE SAME SUBJECTS.

ON the two great practical subjects, OBEDIENCE TO GOVERNORS, and RELIGIOUS

^{*} Ep. II. 351. b. See also his Letter to Jos. Metsch. Sup. Ep. 70.

^{*} Ex. MS. in Seck. Index III. 1528, 28.

[†] Com. de Luth. II. XL. 10.

His abhorrence of capital punishments in the case of heretics

Zuingle's
sentiments
contrasted
with Lu-
ther's.

TOLERATION, there is so marked a difference between the sentiments of Luther and Zuingle, that it seems to be the duty of the historian to call

the attention of his reader to certain facts which prove this point beyond all con-

A. D. 1530.

troversy. When the emperor, in the year 1530, threatened to re-establish the ancient Romish usages in some of the imperial cities, the ministers of Ulm and Memingen consulted the great Swiss reformer concerning the part which they ought to act, in case they should be driven to the last extremity.—“Stand firm,” said Zuingle, “to the truth; and promise the emperor due obedience, provided he does not touch your religion. If he

refuse those terms, then tell him how much you lament that he should be so ill advised, as to suppose, that he possesses a power over your consciences; a power which no pious emperor ever did assume, nor any man could ever give; and that, therefore, there is nothing you will not hazard, rather than give way in this matter to any authority but the Word of God. A steady conduct alone, will extricate you from all your present difficulties. When the papists shall see your resolute determination, I am confident they will not venture to employ force against you. They know very well, that if they go to war, their own possessions are liable to be plundered by the soldiers; and that after all, the event is doubtful. Besides, if the Romish hierarchy, nay, if any authority whatever, should begin to oppress the Gospel, and, if we, through negligence, should submit to the encroachment, I maintain, that we are as guilty of denying the truth as the oppressors themselves. Already ye

His republic-
an prin-
ciples.

have gradually shaken off much of the Romish yoke; what folly then now to submit, in spiritual things, to

the emperor's authority, which is entirely derived from those very papal pretensions which you have rejected!! These hints are not to be thrown out in public discourses, but are to be reserved for proper seasons. You may show this letter,—without name, however,—to such of the brethren as you can trust.*

It may be unnecessary for the historian

to add, how much all this savours of the republican.

The zeal and spirit of Zuingle is conspicuous in the peremptory advice he gives to his friends, to destroy, if possible, every vestige of the Romish superstitions. “The papists,” he said, “in some places where the Gospel had been received, were endeavouring to support their falling cause by artifice. They at length showed a disposition to amend certain exceptionable ceremonies; but this fair outside concealed an insidious intention of restoring the ancient corrupt usages which had been so happily abolished, and the protestants ought not to suffer themselves to be thus deceived. The Roman pontiff would never give up the hope of recovering his authority as long as the mass was celebrated, and there existed in the churches images to be worshipped, and while there could be found a perpetual succession of harlots and rascally monks* to sing psalms and hymns. A king, whose army has saved itself by flight, may easily repair the disaster, and return to the charge; cut his army to pieces, and there is an end of his hopes. Just so it is with the pontifical engines. Destroy them completely, and you destroy the pope's authority. Lose no time therefore; and do not wait to see what others do. Do not allow the papists so much as to breathe, and recover from their consternation. Let your reasoning be simply as follows:—This building, this structure, is raised in opposition to our Lord Jesus Christ.—We will demolish it therefore.—But still take care, lest in your haste to pull down, ye do mischief by the fall. In regard to colleges and monasteries, I hold the same doctrine; that is, destroy every thing in them that is properly and strictly popish. Ye understand me sufficiently. I do not entirely agree with those who think cowls and images and such like things to be matters of indifference.”

Nothing, however, could be more truly Christian than the conduct of Zuingle in the commencement of his disputes with the Anabaptists of Zurich, in the year 1525. Those artful proslaves of Munzer first in a clandestine manner insinu-

His zeal and
spirit.

The mild
conduct of
Zuingle to-
wards the
Anabaptists,
on their first
rise.

* “Scortis et monachis nebulonibus.” Op. Zuing. I. 420.

* Op. Zuing. I. 413. b.

ated to the minds of the people, that the Reformation, which had taken place among them, through the instrumentality of Zuingle, was in its whole plan contracted and inefficient, and neither deep nor finished, nor sufficiently spiritual. After this, they addressed Zuingle himself in grave and imposing language, reproaching him with managing the business of religion in a slow and frigid manner; and declaring, that now was the time for the real children of God to separate from the rest of their countrymen, as they did in the days of the Apostles: that the Spirit of God was at work, and unless men were more in earnest, there was no hope of their salvation: that the senate of Zurich were at present a motley assembly: but that a church, where all were pious members, would not fail to choose a pious senate. Zuingle replied to this statement in the kindest manner: "that there always would be a mixture of good and bad: that Christ had directed the tares and the wheat not to be separated till the time of harvest: that the example of the Apostles did not apply to the present times, when all men professed themselves to be Christians; whereas the secession of those days was that of believers from unbelievers: that a secession under the existing circumstances, he feared, would excite much disturbance; and, that as there was no necessity for so violent a measure, he could not look upon it as suggested by the Spirit of God. He added, that he was far from thinking so ill of the senate as they seemed to do; for that whatever defects they might have, they heartily favoured the Gospel of Christ. Lastly, he particularly recommended it to the consideration of persons who seemed to be aiming at a church of perfect parity, to reflect, that of the ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom, only five were wise and provident."*

When these enthusiasts were no longer able to withstand the solid arguments of Zuingle, they began to unfold their designs more distinctly, by insisting on the necessity of adult baptism in all cases, and by establishing rebaptization as the criterion of the genuine

Violent proceedings of the Anabaptists.

* Op. Zuing. II. 7. b. and 57. Gerdes. I. 316.

members of the visible Church of Christ. The senate did their utmost to terminate the disputes; first, by procuring amicable conferences to be held between Zuingle on one side, and Manzius, an Anabaptist leader; and then by directing the parties to keep the peace. The Anabaptists declared they must obey God rather than men. Another fruitless conference took place; after which, the malcontents became furious and extravagant in the extreme. They flew to the city in vast swarms; abused Zuingle, calling him the Old Dragon, rebaptized the people in the streets, boasted of having all things in common, and threatened destruction to every one who refused to follow their example. They also prophesied—and cried, Woe to Zurich! Woe to Zurich! Repent or perish!—Some of them, like Jonas, allowed the city forty days for repentance; and now, instead of defending their doctrine from Scripture, they cried, they were ready to seal the truth with their own blood.

In this prodigious agitation of men's minds, the senate proclaimed a freedom of public discussion, in consequence of which, every one had full leave to hear and be heard for three whole days together. Lastly, when this measure had failed to produce peace and tranquillity, Zuingle obtained permission to have, on November the 6th, a GENERAL and SOLEMN conference in the great church, where the points in dispute were again contested for the space of three days.* At length, a certain Anabaptist suddenly jumped up, and adjured Zuingle by the living God to own the truth; for the man had persuaded himself that Zuingle, in secret, favoured Anabaptism. Zuingle, with acuteness and promptitude, answered, I will; and I say then, YOU ARE THE RINGLEADER OF THE SEDITIOUS RUSTICS IN THIS DISTRICT.—Instantly there was a loud laugh, and the Anabaptist held his peace.†

After this CONFERENCE, the senate warned the people to desist from the practise of re-baptizing. But all was in vain.—They decreed therefore, that in future, all persons who professed Anabaptism, or harboured the professors of that doctrine, should be punished with death.

* Op. Zuing. II. 8. † Scultet. XXV. 257.

These things happened in 1525. Manzius, nevertheless, in defiance of the new law, and at the hazard of his life, ventured to rebaptize not a few within the jurisdiction of Zurich. He

New law against rebaptizing. A. D. 1525.

was apprehended by the order of the magistrates, and drowned in the river, on January the 5th, 1527. A little before his execution, he praised God, that he was permitted to seal the truth by his death. He said, the death of

Manzius put to death at Zurich, A. D. 1527.

the faithful was predicted by Christ. Both the mother and the brother of Manzius exhorted him to finish his course with firmness; and they had the satisfaction of hearing him sing with a loud voice, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit."*

A very able and learned protestant historian† of the Reformation informs us, that Manzius and his associate Grebel were both men of learning, who quarrelled with Zuingle about infant baptism; and moreover, that Manzius was drowned at Zurich, UPON THE SENTENCE PRONOUNCED BY ZUINGLE in these four words, Qui iterum mergit, mergatur; that is, He that rebaptizes with water, let him be drowned in the water. It is a lamentable truth, that more tragedies of this kind were performed about the same time, which provoked the memorialists of those days to exclaim, "This procedure is very strange: the Zuinglians themselves are scarce out of the reach of persecutors; the fires in which their fellow-believers were burnt, are still daily smoking. Most of them condemned the putting of heretics to death where it came home to themselves, and actually suffered death when they could not help it; and yet they practise the very same cruelties as soon as they are become uppermost. Thus do they do to others what they would not have done to themselves. OTHERS employed FIRE; THEY employ WATER. Those that knew better things, ought to have done better: neither were they actuated by a good spirit, that could lead the wanderer into the ditch, instead

of setting him in the right way: that could drown the infected, instead of washing and cleansing him; or could burn the blind, instead of restoring him to the light."*

Expostulations of this kind will not fail, in our days at least, to affect every heart with a mixture of pain and indignation, and we may add, of anxiety also, to know whether such a character as Zuingle was really involved in the perpetration of such barbarities.

Query, whether Zuingle approved of punishing the Anabaptists with death.

1. This Reformer owns that he was calumniated by the Anabaptists, as being the cause why the senate of Zurich had proscribed and banished them from the whole canton. At the same time he appeals to his accusers themselves, whether in their own presence he had not entreated the magistrates not to pass any severe edicts against them.†

This positive testimony of a conscientious Christian, had almost convinced me that the historian Brandt, above mentioned, had been deceived by want of discrimination in the Dutch authors whom he follows, till further reflection and a nicer scrutiny into the dates of the several transactions, and also a comparison of different parts of the writings of Zuingle, removed the doubts in the following satisfactory manner.

2. Every person conversant in the Swiss history of those times, must be aware of the entire ascendancy which Zuingle had then obtained over the magistrates of Zurich in ecclesiastical concerns. Absolutely unbounded were their love and admiration of their countryman, to whose wisdom and courage they were so much indebted for Christian liberty: and there is no doubt, that, in general, he well deserved all their confidence and best affections. This circumstance, therefore, renders it à priori very improbable, that the senate, in the exercise of their ecclesiastical jurisdiction, should agree to inflict the barbarous penalty of death upon any species of heretics, not only without his concurrence in so strong a measure, but even contrary to his judgment and wishes.

Still, this is but conjecture, against the positive declaration of Zuingle,—that he

* Scultet. XXV. and XXVII. Dupin. II. XX. Gerdes. II. 336.

† Rev. Gerard Brandt, Professor of Divinity, and minister to the Protestant Remonstrants at Amsterdam, p. 57.

* Brandt, p. 57.

† Zuing. de Bapt. 57.

pressed the senate to be gentle with the Anabaptists.

3. Let us then attend to the manner in which this eminent Reformer himself, without the least disguise or hesitation, recounts the circumstances under which the senate of Zurich decreed the penalty in question.

Speaking of the solemn conference, mentioned in p. 536, he says, "AFTER THAT CONFERENCE, which was indeed the tenth, besides many others, both public and private, our very RENOWNED senate decreed, that 'whoever should rebaptize any person, should himself be drowned in water.'" "I may perhaps tire you, good reader," continues he, "with this long account; but I am not influenced by heat or party spirit, or any other motive than that of a faithful vigilance and solicitude for the churches. Many of our brethren, before they knew what sort of men we had to do with, were disposed to think they had been treated inhumanly throughout; but now, since their own congregations have suffered devastations from the same people, they own that all they had heard of them was very much short of the truth. . . . Indeed, I believe the whole world never before experienced a hypocrisy of this sort."* Now,

Is it possible that Zuingle should have expressed himself in this manner concerning the senate of Zurich, and their inhuman treatment of the unhappy enthusiastic Anabaptists, unless he had been actually approving, consenting to, and probably recommending that cruel edict, which all the enlightened members of the church of Christ must forever condemn! Further, be it observed, that,

4. The SOLEMN CONFERENCE of the contending parties, which was soon followed by this violent decree of the senate, commenced on the sixth of November, 1525.† Whereas it was in the former part of the same year that the Swiss Reformer pleaded with the magistrates in favour of the Anabaptists.‡ And then,

With these facts in view, the discern-

ing reader will have no difficulty in drawing for himself the just inferences. He will see, that between the month of May, and the conclusion of the conference in the succeeding November, the Anabaptists became so abominably outrageous, that the patience of Zuingle was absolutely exhausted; and that, therefore, there is in the accounts, no inconsistency which either can at all impeach the veracity of the Reformer, or materially* affect the accuracy of the Dutch historian.—For the honour of the Reformation, I would it were in my power to clear the memory of the former from the imputation of an intolerant spirit, which led that great man to approve of capital punishments for no other offence, except the mere act of rebaptization!

In estimating, however, both the magnitude and the number of the persecutions which the Anabaptists of those times underwent, great care is required, not to confound the punishments inflicted on such as were proved guilty of tumult and sedition, with the severe hardships and heavy penalties which many of them certainly suffered on account of harmless practices, or even mere errors of judgment in articles of faith.

The several edicts in the senate of Zurich, issued during the rise of the Anabaptists, sufficiently manifest the spirit of those legislators. By the first, a penalty of two guilders was set upon all such as should suffer themselves to be rebaptized, or should withhold baptism from their children;—and it was further declared, that those who opposed this order should be yet more severely treated.† By the second, we have seen‡ the punishment of Anabaptism was made capital.

Erasmus, who always discovers a malignant satisfaction in exposing the faults of the Reformers, brings forward these cruelties of Zuinglians in one of his slanderous apologies, which has already been noticed.§ "The Reformers," says he, "show a most wonderful zeal against punishing heretics with death; whereas they them-

Erasmus's account of the persecutions of the Anabaptists.

* Zuing. Elench. contra Catab. p. 8.

† Scultet. XXV. 257.

‡ Zuingle's treatise de Baptismo, in which he says, he entreated the magistrates not to pass any severe edict against the Anabaptists, was written in May, 1525.

* I say, materially, because it was scarcely accurate to represent Zuingle as pronouncing the sentence of death upon Manzius.

† Brandt, p. 57.

‡ Page 537.

§ See page 466.

selves inflict capital punishment on the Anabaptists; a people against whom there is little to be said; and concerning whom we are assured there are many who have been reformed from the worst to the very best lives; and though they may foolishly err in certain opinions, yet they have never stormed towns nor churches, nor entered into any combinations against their governors.* I may add further, that they bring better scriptural proofs in support of their doctrine, than those do, who argue that the words, 'this is my body,' mean, 'this signifies my body.'†

There is no denying, that at Basil also, the followers of Zuingle exercised a considerable degree of the same sort of intolerance against those who dissented from them in mere non-essentials. Alluding to this, Erasmus, with great triumph, asks, "Whether it is not compulsion to oblige every one to pay a florin, who dares to receive the Sacrament in the neighbouring villages; or to threaten with the condemnation of the senate, all those who do not on Easter-day repair to the minister to receive mere bread and wine, instead of the body of Christ?" In another place he says, "At Basil they disclaim all compulsion, yet the receiving of the Lord's Supper any where, except as the magistrates direct, is punished with a penalty of one pound for the first offence, two for the second, four for the third, and banishment for the fourth."‡ He also intimates, that Balthazar Hubmeier was imprisoned six months at Zurich, through the cruel influence of Zuingle; and at last got free, only by making his escape.§

These and similar examples of persecution, to be found in the practice of some of the very best Reformers, are the more to be lamented, because they sometimes prove a stumbling-block to weaker minds, and always afford matter for triumph to profane unbelievers.

Reflection
on these
Persecutions.

* What extraordinary lengths did his dislike of the Reformers carry Erasmus! He knew very well the seditious character of the Anabaptists in general; yet how artfully does he here apologize for them, directing at the same time an ill-natured stroke against the Reformers, for putting themselves in a state of defence against their persecutors!

† 1592, ad Frat. Germ. ‡ Ep. p. 1453.

§ Op. X. 1602.

However, as the unbending laws of historical veracity forbid the writer to suppress such things, he ventures to admonish his pious readers to extract profit from the reflections which are suggested by these sad proofs of human blindness and imperfection.

1. How slow are we all to imitate our great Exemplar, who in the most trying moments cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

2. How dangerous is a spirit of contention, of opposition, of vengeance! And how often,—were it in our power,—should we be disposed to call down fire from heaven, as Elias did!

3. How watchful over the growth of bad tempers ought we to be in the very beginnings of all religious controversies!

4. Then in the progress of them, how does it become us to pause often and examine ourselves, lest we should suppose we are doing God service, when in reality we are impelled only by heat, animosity, and a desire of victory.

5. Lastly, when there really happens to exist in our motives some little good, are we not extremely apt to magnify it, till the fancied picture completely veils from our eyes that large admixture of evil, which on the whole miserably predominates? And is not this a fruitful source of deception?

But it is not the suggestion of general maxims, however important, which I had merely in view, in contrasting together the principles and practices of Martin Luther and Ulrick Zuingle.—The learned translator of Mosheim has enhanced the reputation of the latter, and very much at the expense of the former, in a manner which history by no means appears to me to justify. Other writers have not only implicitly followed Dr. Maclaine, but even gone much farther in decrying Luther, till at length a late elegant biographer has ventured to affirm, that this celebrated Reformer had no sooner "freed his followers from the chains of papal domination, then he forged others, in many respects equally intolerable;" and also, "that although he was ready on all occasions to make use of arguments from Scripture for the defence of his tenets, yet when these proved in-

Prejudices of
Dr. Maclaine
and
Mr. Roscoe.

sufficient, he SELDOM HESITATED to resort to more violent measures."*

Now as differences of opinions on momentous historical subjects are ever to be settled by a patient study and comparison of the original documents, rather than by hastily copying the prejudices of successive writers, it will, if I mistake not, be found that this history of the Reformation contains many important facts faithfully recorded, but not generally known, upon which the real character of Luther, Carolstadt, Zuingle, and others, must ultimately depend.

4. PREDESTINATION.

IT is a common, at the same time an erroneous notion, that the difference of the sentiments of Luther from those of all that class of protestants on the Continent, who had no connexion with HIS churches, lay very much in the article of PREDESTINATION.† There is a twofold mistake in this position, originating, I conceive, in an inattention to those variations of doctrine, which in the subsequent periods of the history of the Reformation, took place both in the Lutheran and the other churches that separated themselves from the Romish communion. Certainly the Lutheran churches by degrees became more Arminian, and, in general, the rest of the protestant churches more Calvinistic afterwards; but in truth, consubstantiation was the single point in the early part of the Reformation, on which the unhappy separation almost entirely turned; and the consequences of this schism deserve to be noticed by pious Reformers in all ages, as a warning to bury in silence their unimportant disagreements, rather than to perpetuate them by a formal and explicit contention.

Ulrick Zuingle was the founder of those reformed churches, which held no communion with the Lutherans; and on a careful perusal of his voluminous writings, I am convinced that certain peculiar sentiments,‡ afterwards maintained by Calvin, concerning the absolute decrees of God, made no part of the theology of the Swiss Reformer; and this

* Roseoe's Leo X. vol. IV. p. 48 & 49—51.

† The Lutherans are supposed to have been Anti-Calvinistic.

‡ This subject may be examined more accurately in the sequel of this History.

observation may serve to correct one part of the two-fold mistake above mentioned.—The other part will be done away effectually in the mind of every one who seriously attends to Luther's answer to the Diatribe of Erasmus. And thus it appears, not only that the lamentable rupture among the first Reformers was not occasioned by disputes concerning Predestination, but also, that if it had been so, the sentiments of the contending parties were really the reverse of what they are commonly supposed to be.

Nevertheless, the Saxon theologian, though he denied, as we have repeatedly seen, the existence of all human ability to save a lost sinner, as also the inefficacy of all human qualifications to merit reward; and though he ascribed salvation to grace alone, and to the merciful will of God, yet on the delicate question of Predestination, ever displayed that moderation by which his mind was uniformly influenced in all doctrinal inquiries EXCEPT ONE;* and, content with what Scripture had revealed, he never undertook to explain this difficult subject with anything like a systematic precision; much less did he ever think proper to propose the arduous speculations concerning the Divine decrees as necessary articles of a Christian's faith.

It happened, however, that a neighbouring minister, with a view of comforting one of his flock, whose mind was much distressed respecting the secret counsels of God, was desirous of obtaining from Luther more satisfaction on this head than could be collected from his publications. This circumstance gave to our Reformer the occasion of writing an epistle, the substance of which will be allowed by all sincere protestants to be well adapted to the purpose for which it was composed; and as a curious and inquisitive spirit of prying into the inscrutable mysteries of the Divine will, is but too often indulged by many serious persons, the perusal of a few quotations from Luther's advice may prove edifying to some evangelical readers.

"Many have perished in the indulgence of such curious inquiries; it is a temptation which leads even to blasphemy. I myself, by giving way to it, have more than once been reduced to the

Luther's thoughts on Predestination.

* Consubstantiation.

last extremity. We, poor mortals, by faith can scarcely comprehend a few rays of the Divine promise, or receive in practice a few sparks of the Divine precepts; and yet, feeble and impure as we are, we rashly attempt to fathom the majesty of God in all its brightness. Do we not know that his ways are past finding out? Instead of using well the mild light of the promises which is adapted to our faculties, we rush with eyes of moles, to view at once the majestic splendour of the Deity. What wonder then, if his glory should overwhelm us in the attempt to investigate it! We ought to know that there is such a thing as the secret will of God: but the danger is when we attempt to comprehend it.—I am wont to check myself with that answer of Christ to Peter, who had asked what was to become of John;—‘What is that to thee? follow thou me.’ But suppose we could give an accurate account of the judgments of Almighty God in his secret determinations, what advantage would accrue to us from such knowledge, beyond what lies open to us from the promises and the precepts,—from the former addressed to our faith,—from the latter to our practice? Tell your friend, if he would have peace of mind, to abstain from such intricate speculations. The subject is incomprehensible, and the study of it may drive him to despair and blasphemy.—Let him not give way to Satan, who would weary him out, by presenting impossibilities to his mind. Let him exercise faith in the promises, and obey the commandments; and when he has discharged those duties well, he will be able to judge whether he will have any time left for impossibilities. There is no other remedy than to neglect, and not give way to such thoughts; though this is a difficult task, because Satan suggests the absolute necessity of attending to them. This battle however must be fought; and many persons fail in the contest by not suspecting their thoughts to be the temptations of Satan; whereas, these are the very fiery darts of THAT WICKED ONE. He himself fell from heaven by aiming at a knowledge above his station. Thus also he vanquished Adam, by teaching him to be dissatisfied with his ignorance concerning the will of God. Flight is the true wisdom here; there is no room for Christ to dwell in the heart, as long as reasonings

of this kind are uppermost.”* In another letter, while he admits the preordination and foreknowledge of God, nevertheless, from Ezek. xviii. 23, “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God,” he argues, that God chose and seriously decreed from eternity, the possibility of the salvation and everlasting happiness of all men. And hence he concludes that the general promises of a gracious God, ought by no means to be limited; nor those suggestions of Satan to be indulged, which would separate us from the Divine mercy, which is represented in Scripture as infinite. He then refers the afflicted penitent to the voice of God himself; “This is my beloved Son, hear him;” and to the words of Christ, proclaiming in the streets, “Come unto me, all ye that labour.” He invites all, even the very worst, as publicans and harlots. Why should we perplex ourselves with difficult and circuitous roads, when the direct road is so clearly pointed out to us in the Gospel? †

5. CONFERENCES AT MARPURG.

It is a very just observation of Father Paul ‡, that “in the cause of religion every subdivision is a strong weapon in the hand of the enemy.” The zealous landgrave of Hesse was so sensible of the importance of this maxim, that he spared no pains to unite the Lutheran and Zuinglian protestants, and make them act in concert against the common enemy. In effect, the unhappy disagreement of these sects, was not only injurious to the Reformation in general, but also thwarted very much the military views of this active and magnanimous prince.

For the purpose of promoting so desirable an union, the landgrave, in the year 1529, proposed a friendly conference to be held at Marpurg between the heads of the two denominations. Thither repaired on the one side Luther and Melancthon, on the other Zuingle and Ecolampadius, together with several others, their friends respectively, and men of great note. It is unnecessary to detail the particulars of the conferences, which lasted several days. Suffice it to say, they ended rather according to what

* Ad. Caspar Aq. II. 392. b.

† Com. de Luth. II. XLIII. 3—5. Also Ep. II. 382.

‡ Council of Trent, 46.

might have been expected, than according to the Christian wishes of the good landgrave of Hesse. It was not probable that either Zuingle or Luther, in a public disputation on the nature of the presence of Christ in the Sacrament, should retract the sentiments which he had long defended, and against which he would hear no argument advanced, but what he had already repeatedly heard, well considered, and, in his own judgment, satisfactorily answered. To this we may add the suggestions of Father Paul* on this very occasion, "That the controversy having proceeded so far, it seemed as though the honour of the leaders were in question; and also, that IN VERBAL CONTENTIONS THE SMALLNESS OF THE DIFFERENCE OFTEN NOURISHES THE OBSTINACY OF THE PARTIES." It appears that Luther, conscious of his own positive determination not to give way one hair's breadth on the point of consubstantiation, and also well aware of the steady character of the Swiss Reformer, from the first clearly foresaw the event of the debates at Marburg, and was induced to go there, only or chiefly, lest the adverse party should have to boast that they were more disposed than himself to adopt measures of peace and concord.† The narratives of the party historians concerning this business contain many bitter things which are best passed over, especially as the sincerity of the motives of the controversialists cannot reasonably be doubted. We are bound however to mark with the most entire disapprobation that unchristian stubbornness of temper which manifested itself in Luther at the conclusion of the conferences. The Sacramentarians, as they were called, begged hard to be acknowledged as brethren. They even went so far as to own repeatedly, that the body of Christ was verily present in the Lord's Supper, though in a spiritual manner; and Zuingle himself, in pressing for mutual fraternity, declared with tears,‡ that there were no men in the world with whom he more earnestly wished to agree, than with the Wittenberg divines. Even the landgrave personally exerted himself, with all his

might, to produce a cordial friendship. But the spirit of Luther proved perfectly untractable and intolerant. Nothing more could be gained from him, than that each side should show Christian charity to the other as far as they could conscientiously; and that both should diligently pray God to lead them into the truth. To go farther, Luther maintained, was impossible; and expressed astonishment, that the Swiss divines could look upon himself as a Christian brother, when they did not believe his doctrine to be true.* In such circumstances, however, though there could be no such thing as fraternal union, the parties, he allowed, might preserve a friendly sort of peace and concord; might do good turns to each other, and abstain from harsh and acrimonious language.†

The papal advocates, either through ignorance or design, represent Luther's opposition to the Sacramentarians as founded in political reasons.‡ Little need is there, by the addition of imaginary accusations, to aggravate the blameable conduct of our Reformer in the discussions respecting consubstantiation. His reputation for sincerity in every part of his belief, is as completely unsullied as his pertinacity in the support of this particular article is altogether indefensible: and it is scarcely necessary to add, that mere human policy must have determined him to pursue measures the reverse of those which he actually adopted. To have been reinforced by the whole body of the Zuinglian Protestants, would have proved at that time to the Lutherans a most important accession of strength, and was an event very much dreaded by the Romanists.

In regard to Zuingle and his associates, it is by no means clear, that their excessive desire to be on good terms with the Lutherans did not carry them a little too far in the concessions which they made at the conferences of Marburg. It is true, that soon after those conferences, both sides published their own accounts of what had passed, and boasted that they had gotten the better in the combat.§ However, as certain articles had

* 1. 109. p. 46.

† Luth. ad Landgrav. IV. Jen. 466. in Hosp. 73. Vid. Supp. Ep. Luth. p. 67.

‡ Hosp. 82. b. Supp. Luth. Ep. 103. 1 Cœlest. 54.

* Scult. XXIX. 203.

† Joan. Agric. Supp. Ep. 71. Com. de Luth. II. XLVII. 7.

‡ Pallav. 3. I. 6.

§ Du Pin. II. XXI.

been drawn up, and actually signed by Luther, Melancthon, Jonas, &c. on one side, and by Zuingle, Ecolampadius, Bucer, &c. on the other, this authentic record is a very useful document to the curious inquirer, who wishes to determine how far in fact each party strictly adhered to their real sentiments.

Melancthon's account is, that Zuingle readily gave up several things which he had advanced in his writings, particularly his notion of original sin; and that he came over to the Wittenberg divines in all points, the single article of the Lord's Supper excepted.*

Luther, on his return home from Marburg, expresses himself much pleased with the moderation of the Zuinglians and their disposition to concede. From what had passed, however, he judged, that besides the question on the Lord's Supper, there was not a perfect agreement in the article of Original Sin. In fact, the fourth article of the Marburg concord, which treats of this doctrine,† is penned with some ambiguity; and in such matters Luther's eye was infinitely more penetrating than Melancthon's.‡

Bucer acknowledges, that as there was a definitive disagreement between the parties respecting the sacrament, himself and his friends, from a desire of peace and harmony, had been induced to sign the other articles, though they were not expressed with that precision with which they would have been, if the Helvetican theologians had drawn up their own creed.§

Lastly, a modern author, though strongly prejudiced on the side of the Sacramentarians, owns that the Marburg articles of concord are conceived in such terms as neither Zuingle nor Ecolampadius had ever used before; and that that circumstance leads to a belief, that Zuingle and Ecolampadius did not adhere to their former sentiments. He proceeds to say, that "these divines, with the view of uniting the Protestants, agreed to sign a formulary, which, according to their own way of interpreting the meaning of words, did not contradict their real sentiments, but which, however, in fact, was entirely the creed of Luther. The motive was good, but full

of danger.—Luther was more politic than he appeared to be."*

Without pretending to determine which side of the two was more politic, I may now safely leave it to the diligent student of ecclesiastical history, to reflect on the evidence before him, and determine for himself which was more HONEST and SINCERE.

6. PECULIAR OPINIONS OF ZUINGLE.

IN this place it may not be improper to mention briefly some of the peculiar opinions of the great Swiss Reformer.

In less than a twelvemonth after the conferences at Marburg, Melancthon, in the year 1530, then present

at the memorable diet of Augsburg, wrote to Luther in substance as follows: "Zuingle has sent hither, in print, his Confession of Faith. You would say neither more nor less, than that he is not in his senses. On original sin and the use of the sacraments, he clearly revives his old errors. On the nature of ceremonies he talks like a Swiss; that is, most barbarously. At one stroke he would abolish all ceremonies; and he would have no bishops: then he presses most vehemently to obtain his favourite article on the Lord's Supper."†

Let us now turn to that Confession itself of Zuingle, which called forth this harsh censure from Melancthon.‡

I. ON ORIGINAL SIN, he speaks to this effect: Sin is properly transgression of a law; and "where there is no law there is no transgression." Our great ancestor sinned; but WHICH OF US meddled with the forbidden fruit? There is then no denying that original sin, as it exists in us, the descendants of Adam, is NOT PROPERLY SIN. It is a disease; it is a condition. It may be called sin, but it is not so in strictness of speech. Thus a perfidious enemy when taken in war may DESERVE to be made a slave. His children also become slaves, but the fault was in the father. The children are not to blame: yet they suffer for the sin of their father; and if you choose to denominate their state of slavery SIN,

Melancthon's account of Zuingle's Confession of Faith.

Zuingle's own account.

* Melan. in Scult. 191. in Hosp. 80—82.

† Scult. 230.

‡ Com. de Luth. II. XLVII. 7.

§ Hosp. 85.

* Beausobre IV.

† Sup. Ep. 61. 191—193. Cælest. II. 258.

‡ Op. Zuing. II. 539.

because by sin they were brought into that state, I shall not object. It is, however, in this sense that we are by nature the children of wrath.

2. The SACRAMENTS, he affirms, do not confer grace, but are public testimonies given to the Church of the previous existence of grace.

3. He allows that such CEREMONIES as are not founded in superstition, nor are contrary to the word of God, may be tolerated, till the Day-star shall become more and more bright;* but that even these had better be abolished, provided it can be done without giving great offence.

4. He grants there ought to be MINISTERS of the word, to instruct the people, and to comfort and to alarm them, also to baptize, and to celebrate the Lord's Supper; but as to the whole tribe of mired bishops, he looks on them as born to consume the fruits of the earth; and to be in the church of Christ, precisely what wens and swellings are in the human body.

5. Zuingle's ideas concerning princes and magistrates merit peculiar attention. They are to be obeyed, says he, when they discharge their offices with wisdom and justice. But should they abuse their authority, in that case, if the tyrant was legally appointed, the Christian must obey him till he has an opportunity of putting in practice St. Paul's rule, "If thou mayest be free, use it rather."† The opportunity, however, should, I think, be clearly pointed out by God, and not by man; as clearly, for example, as when Saul was rejected to give place to David.‡

Not only in his Confession of Faith, but throughout the voluminous writings of Zuingle, we meet with many bold and novel thoughts. An instance or two, while they amuse the modest student of the Scriptures, may possibly suggest some useful reflections.

1. In a little tract on the doctrine of

* 2 Pct.

† 1 Cor. vii. 21. The reader will probably think this to be a strange use made of St. Paul's direction in this chapter.

‡ Query: Whether, according to these ideas, men may not sometimes conclude that Providence points out the proper opportunity for resistance, when their chief reason for thinking so is, that they believe themselves likely to succeed in the attempt?

original sin, he produces a passage from an epistle of Seneca to Lucilius, in which the philosopher maintains, that we ought to live as if men could see our most secret thoughts; for what use is there in hiding anything from our fellow-creatures, when God is always in the midst of our meditations? Zuingle on this occasion calls SENECA A MOST HOLY MAN; and hesitates not to conclude, that he was in possession of saving faith.

Now, though various doubts, hopes, and wishes, attended even with some anxieties and perturbations of mind, may often have affected many persons in contemplating cases of this kind; yet the wisest and best Christians have always, I think, judged it most safe to adhere to the written word, and obey the remarkable injunction, "What is that to thee? follow thou me."

In Zuingle's Exposition of his Faith, addressed to Francis I. the king of France, I find a much more extraordinary paragraph.

After expressing his belief in general, that all faithful souls, when they leave the body, will be joined to the Deity, and enjoy him for ever, he addresses Francis as a most PIOUS KING, assuring him, that if he governs his kingdom as

Peculiar sentiments of Zuingle.

David, Hezekiah and Josiah did, he may hope to see the Deity in perfection, and enjoy him for ever. Then he may hope also to see, and join the assembly of all holy, wise, faithful, brave, virtuous men that ever lived since the world began; and among these, the two Adams, the Redeemed, and the Redeemer, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Isaiah, the Virgin Mary, David, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul;—likewise, Hercules, The-sens, Socrates, Aristides, Antigonus, Numa, Camillus, the Catos, and the Scipios;*—his own predecessors, and as many of his ancestors as have departed in the faith. Lastly, there will not have been a good man, or a faithful soul, from the beginning of the world to its end, whom,

* This is not the only place in which Zuingle speaks in this manner of some of the celebrated heathen characters. "Both the Catos," says he, "and Camillus, and Scipio, would never have been magnanimous, had they not been religious."—Epist. Zuing. and Eccl. I. 9.

together with God himself, he will not see in Heaven. Is it possible, says Zuingle, to imagine a spectacle more delightful, or more honourable? He then adds these very memorable words—While in the mean time, the dreaming* Anabaptists may sleep in Hell, that sleep which they deserve, and from their sleep may never more awake!†

The pen drops from one's hand in writing such a sentence as this. I shall therefore content myself with laying before the reader the original words: "Cum interim somniantes Catapultistæ merito somnum dormiant apud inferos, à quo nunquam expergeant," and barely take notice, that most probably the latter part of the sentence ought to be translated so as to imply a wish, "that they may never more awake," which makes the sentiment still more exceptionable and unchristian.

There is a remarkable passage in one of Zuingle's treatises on the Eucharist, which, as it helps to illustrate both the character and the sentiments of this illustrious Reformer, must not be omitted.

In the year 1525, when the great question concerning the abolition of the Romish mass was agitated at Zurich in full senate, and in the presence of the protestant divines, a certain clerk or scribe rose up, and opposed Zuingle with all his might. The senate however were convinced by the arguments of Zuingle and his associates; and they decreed, that in future the Lord's Supper should be administered agreeably to Christ's own institution. In the morning of the following day, Zuingle had a dream, which he relates in these terms: "I tell the truth, and moreover, what I have to tell is so true, that my conscience compels me, against my will, to reveal what the Lord has bestowed upon me: for I am well aware to what jests and insults I shall hereby expose myself. I say then, that at break of day, in a dream, I appeared to myself to have a tedious debate with my adversary THE SCRIBE; and at length to have become so completely tongue-tied, as to have lost the power of saying what I

knew to be true. This inability seemed to distress me exceedingly, as delusive dreams in the night sometimes do;—for still, as far as I am concerned, I relate but a mere dream, although it is by no means a light matter which I have learnt by this dream,—thanks be to God, for whose glory alone I reveal these things. In this situation, suddenly an adviser seemed to be present with me,—whether he was white or black, I have no distinct recollection, for I am telling only my dream,—who said, You stupid man, why do not you answer him from the twelfth of Exodus, as it is there written, 'It is the Lord's passover.*' Instantly upon this suggestion in my sleep, I awoke and leaped from my bed; looked carefully at the passage in the Septuagint, and argued from it in my next sermon with all my power. The effect was, that all those who earnestly wished to understand their Bibles had no longer any doubts concerning the meaning of our Lord's words, 'This is my body,' in his institution of the Sacrament."

Zuingle then proceeds to compare the Jewish passover, as directed in the Old Testament, with the Lord's Supper, as commanded by Christ himself in the New. With great perspicuity he points out the analogy between the two expressions, "It is the Lord's passover," and "This is my body;" and powerfully contends, that as the former must necessarily be taken figuratively, the latter cannot positively be construed otherwise.‡

7. ZUINGLE AND LUTHER COMPARED.

THE two grand instruments of the Reformation on the continent, during the period which we are now reviewing, were undoubtedly Zuingle and Luther; and the Comparison of Zuingle and Luther. pious student of their history has now before him, I conceive, sufficient materials whereby to judge for himself of their integrity, their talents, and their DEFECTS. On the authority of the learned translator of Mosheim, I had imagined for many years that Zuingle, "instead of receiving instructions from Luther, was much his superior in learning, capacity, and judgment, and much fitter to be his master than his disciple."‡ Beausobre,

* Zuingle here alludes to the opinion entertained by the Anabaptists of those days, viz. that departed souls sleep till the resurrection. See his Sermon, II. 534. b.

† Op. II. 559. Also Moreri Supp. En. Zuingle.

* Exod. xii. 11.

† Subsid. Euch. II. 249. Also Melch. Adam. in Zuing. 20.

‡ Dr. Maclaine, in Mosh. XVI. I. p. 26, the notes.

Beausobre's
Prejudices.

I own, was the first who induced me to suspect this representation; not, however, by opposing the sentiments of Maclaine, but by supporting them with numerous instances of blind partiality towards Zuingle, and not a few of most uncandid and even abusive censure of Luther.* To point out simply the prepossessions of historians who have so many opportunities of directing the sentiments of mankind, must be deemed a just and commendable precaution for the protection of truth; but to aim at conjectures respecting the causes of their prepossessions may seem invidious and unnecessary. On historical questions, however, where pure religion is concerned, one may be allowed, perhaps, to make general observations of great practical consequence; such as, 1st, That men of LITTLE OR NO RELIGION rarely, or never, judge fairly on such questions; and therefore, a believer is not to expect an equitable sentence from infidels, sceptics, or atheists: And 2dly, That persons who profess some sort of belief in the Gospel, and have yet very erroneous views of its doctrines, are usually possessed with strong prejudices against those who hold the faith in orthodox purity and simplicity. For, till the human heart be effectually humbled by God's grace to receive the Gospel terms of reconciliation with thankfulness and submission of soul, it always harbours an unhappy opposition to the covenant of grace in Christ Jesus; that is, it remains ignorant of God's righteousness, and, like

the Jews, going about to establish its own righteousness, it does not submit to the righteousness of God.* The effect of such erroneous views is, that these nominal Christians not only oppose the DOCTRINE to which they have not yet been brought to submit, but also thoroughly dislike, and are violently prejudiced against all those who receive it and value it as the one thing needful. This is the true key for understanding rightly a thousand prepossessions, aversions, and misrepresentations which we meet with in authors, and which on any other ground are utterly unaccountable.

I need not dissemble that numerous passages in the writings of Beausobre, convince me that he is no very warm advocate for the great protestant doctrine of justification by faith. In one place, for example, upon a strong declaration by Melancthon, recorded in his own handwriting,† respecting the importance of that Christian article of doctrine, which asserts the efficacy of the merits of Christ without human works, he ventures to suggest that the passage was PERHAPS Luther's; and he afterwards adds, that one may hence learn how OBSTINATELY they were at that time attached to the doctrine of justification by faith. I scarcely need observe, that those who hold this precious article of faith in the sense of which Luther held it, and in which the Church of England now holds it, never speak of it in this manner.‡

From Melancthon's report of the conferences at Marburg, I collect, that it was one of the first public objections of Luther to Zuingle, that the Swiss reformer and his adherents were not accustomed, in their religious instructions, to say much concerning the Scriptural method of justification; which, as Luther maintained, rendered it probable, that the peculiar and essential doctrine of the Gospel was hardly known to them.§ On the whole, I believe, all dispassionate judges will be disposed to allow that these researches fully warrant the following conclusions:

1. That the Sacramental controversy did no good to Zuingle's temper, and much harm to Luther's.

* Beaus. III. 138, and 190 to 194.—The learned reader, who is well versed in the writings of the Sacramentarian controversialists, will perceive abundance of partiality in the pages here quoted. In particular, he will not approve of Luther being represented, p. 193, as saying, "The Switzers revoke ALL, but as for me, I revoke nothing," with reference to a note where this is an extract of merely three words from his letter, "Nos nihil revocavimus;" when in fact, the context of the letter shows, that he directs his friend to the Marburg articles themselves, where he might see how far the recantation had actually proceeded. Then in page 190, there is a still much more unjustifiable attack upon Luther, grounded upon a perverted interpretation of a certain passage in his letter, which passage, after all, is not found in the most authentic copies of that letter.—*Vid.* Hosp. II. 82. Supp. Ep. Luth. 103. Cælest. 54.

* Rom. x. 3.

† Seck. II. 43.

‡ Beausobre, III. 277.

§ Ad. Hen. Sax. in Hosp. 81. b. Also Sealt. 200.

2. That in the heat and haste of contention, Zuingle sometimes sank the efficacy both of Baptism and of the Lord's Supper below the true Scriptural standard, and represented them as mere tokens or badges of Christian society and connexion. Bucer, his own friend and advocate, whose testimony is therefore decisive, expressly allows this.* Let us however in one instance hear Zuingle himself. "You have celebrated the Lord's Supper;—Therefore you belong to the society of Christians."—"The cup which we use in giving thanks, what is it else but a mark of our society and connexion?"† In other places he represents the Lord's Supper, as implying nothing but a mere "COMMEMORATION;"‡ which at best is a loose and ambiguous way of speaking.§

3. That Zuingle, in the article of original sin, probably was never completely orthodox,|| and that in regard to the fundamental doctrine of justification by faith, though he seems always to have admitted it distinctly in theory, yet he by no means made that practical use of it which Luther and his disciples did. In effect, his time and thoughts were for years almost entirely taken up with the Sacramental controversy, and with disputes respecting baptism. On the contrary, Luther, though harassed with controversy beyond example, appears to have lived every hour of his life "by faith on the Son of God." The great doctrine of justification appears uppermost in all his voluminous writings: It was the support of his own soul in all his troubles; and we find him constantly inculcating it from the press and from the pulpit, in all his conversations, and in his most private letters. This part of the religious character of Luther is not relished by many.—They suppose he carried his notions too far.¶

4. That on the duties of Christian subjects, and also on questions relative to ecclesiastical polity, there was a still greater difference between the Saxon and the Helvetian reformers.—Obey and suffer, was Luther's motto in general; whereas the obedience of Zuingle, we have seen, hung on a very slender thread.

5. That Dr. Maclaine justly ascribes to Zuingle an adventurous genius, and an uncommon degree of knowledge and penetration.* And this is so true, that in my judgment, it was the ADVENTUROUS genius of this great man, which led him to speak in so peremptory a style of the holiness of the character of several celebrated heathens above mentioned. Luther's unbounded reverence for the written word, never allows him to use such liberties. "I HOPE," says he, "God will be merciful to Cicero, and to such as he was: however, it is not our duty to speak certainly touching that point, but to remain by the word revealed unto us; namely, whose believeth and is baptized, the same shall be saved. Yet nevertheless, God is able to dispense and hold a difference among the nations and the heathen. But our duty is not to know nor to search after the time and measure."†

Here I cannot but take notice, that it was this excessive reverence for the very words of Scripture,—“This is my body,”—which betrayed Luther into the unfortunate dispute respecting consubstantiation. Both on CON- and TRAN-substantiation a vast quantity of inconclusive argumentation has been advanced on all sides. Often the contention has been merely verbal; oftener completely unintelligible;‡ and after all the confident attempts that have been made to represent either the one notion or the other as ridiculous, absurd, and impossible, I freely own that with me the decisive reason for rejecting them is not that either con- or

* Bucer's Epistle in Melch. Ad. 19. Also Lect. in Ep. Zuing. et Ecolamp.

† Ep. Zuing. et Ecolamp. II. 71. b. . . . "Quid ille aliud est, quam nostra conjunctio et societas?" Also 120. a & b. Likewise Ad. Episcop. Const. Op. I. 225.

‡ Op. II. 85. b. And Maclaine, II. 197. note.

§ See Dr. Ogden's Five excellent Discourses on the Lord's Supper, vol. II. 291.

|| Vid. Pallav. Conc. Trid. III. l. 3 & 4.

¶ Maclaine, in Mosh. p. 170. Also Beaus. ut supra.

* In Mosh. p. 26.

† Coll. Men. 509.

‡ Bucer, in a letter to a friend, owns that immediately after he had read Luther's Confession on Consubstantiation, published in 1528, he began to see that this Reformer did not hold the unworthy notions of the person of Christ which he had supposed him to do. But the fact is, Luther's Confession is full of metaphysical obscurities, and is scarcely intelligible.—Vid. Scult. 154 & 171. Hosp. II. 166. Com. de Luth. II. XLI. 3.

TRAN-substantiation can be demonstrated to imply a contradiction in terms, but that the Scriptural declarations respecting the Sacrament do not require an interpretation so altogether remote from common sense and experience.

On Zuingle's relation of his dream, I am inclined to make no comment whatever, except that I cannot but think he would have judged better, if he had kept the thing entirely to himself; or at least, not made it so public at the time. Certainly, in our days, to mention such a circumstance in the pulpit, would rather expose the dreamer to ridicule than procure attention to his discourse.—Zuingle, however, knew both his own situation and that of the people of Zurich, better than we can do: He deemed the suggestion to be a communication from God; he was grateful for it: and no doubt he acted conscientiously in informing his congregation how he had obtained a new argument in favour of his view of the Sacrament.

With respect to the important subject of religious toleration, there can be no question but Luther was abundantly more enlightened than Zuingle.

Both these champions of the Reformation passed much of their lives in the midst of active, tumultuous, perilous scenes; and both of them met with great provocations from the Anabaptists. What room could there be for the private, tranquil exercises of religion; or even, for the study and practice of pastoral care and instruction? It happens, however, that the writings of Luther abound in these things. His devotion never flags. Ever aware of the wiles of Satan, and well skilled in the use of Christian armour, his dependence both for himself and his people is always and altogether on the grace of God; yet his vigilance in superintending the Saxon churches is as incessant as if their spiritual improvement depended on himself. The comparison in this point, grounded on documents in existence, is unquestionably very much to the advantage of the Saxon Reformer.

The blemishes of Luther have been freely acknowledged in the course of this volume. It was proper and even necessary to advert to those of Zuingle for obvious reasons, and among others, that the reader may be the better enabled to appreciate duly the encomium of Dr. Mac-laine, who scruples not to assert that the

Swiss Reformer was "perhaps BEYOND COMPARISON THE BRIGHTEST ORNAMENT OF THE PROTESTANT CAUSE.*"

We must not dismiss this subject without briefly touching upon another point in the history of the Reformation, on which writers have not agreed in their representations. The Swiss historians, jealous of the honour of their country, contend that Zuingle, as a Reformer of religion, has the precedence of Luther in point of time; and Dr. Mac-laine seems out of humour with Mosheim, for leading us to imagine that Luther saw the truth as soon as Zuingle did. He tells us, moreover, that Zuingle had conceived "noble and extensive ideas of a general Reformation, at the very time that Luther retained almost the whole system of popery, indulgences excepted."

General observations of this kind are hard to be confuted: they insinuate a great deal; often leave abiding impressions; yet prove little or nothing. A distinct statement of facts is the best way to settle the point in dispute.

Zuingle affirms, that he began to preach the Gospel in the year 1516, and that Luther's name at that time was not so much as heard of in Switzerland: that he was settled at Zurich in 1519, and then informed the leading members of the collegiate church, that in future he intended to preach from the Gospel of St. Matthew, without using any comment but that of Scripture itself; that even then, in 1519, not one of the inhabitants had heard of Luther, except that he had published something on the subject of indulgences; but that in regard to these, Zuingle wanted no information; he knew very well before that indulgences were nothing but mere pretence and delusion. He adds, that the Romish cardinals, however they might hate him at that time, courted him with all their address, and even attempted to corrupt him with Italian gold.

He then proceeds to praise Luther in the strongest terms.—"As far as I can judge," says he, "Luther is a very brave soldier of Christ, who examines the Scriptures with a diligence which no person else has used for the last thousand years. I do not care if the papists call

Which of the two was the first Reformer?

Zuingle's own narrative.

* In Mosh. II.

me a heretic as they do Luther: I say this; there has not existed any person since the commencement of the Romish pontificate, who has been so constant and immovable as Luther, in his attacks on the pope. But to whom are we to look as the cause of all this new light and new doctrine? To God, or to Luther? Ask Luther himself: I know he will answer that the work is of God."

"Luther's interpretations of Scripture," continues Zuingle, "are so well founded, that no creature can confute them: yet I do not take it well to be called by the papists a Lutheran, because I learned the doctrine of Christ from the Scriptures and not from Luther. If Luther preaches Christ, so do I: and though—thanks to God—innumerable people by his ministry, and more than by mine, are led to Christ, yet I do not choose to bear the name of any other than of Christ, who is my only captain, as I am his soldier. He will assign to me both my duties and my reward according to his good pleasure. I trust every one must now see why I do not choose to be called a Lutheran; though nevertheless, in fact, no man living esteems Luther so much as I do. However, I have not on any occasion written a single line to him, nor he to me, directly or indirectly. And why have I thus abstained from all communication with him? Certainly not from fear, but to prove how altogether consistent is the Spirit of God, which can teach two persons, living asunder at such a distance, to write on the doctrines of Christ, and to instruct the people in them, in a manner so perfectly harmonious with each other."*

If some circumstances before mentioned have had the effect of depressing the character of Zuingle, these liberal and truly Christian sentiments will restore him again to the reader's favour. And as I know no reason whatever for suspecting that pride of precedence in point of time, or that any petty jealousy lurking in the mind of Zuingle, should induce him to speak in this manner, I am disposed to give this good man full credit for the sincerity of every part of his declaration. He had studied the Scriptures for himself, and through God's grace had made a progress in Christian knowledge. He found that Luther had not only done the

same, but was also undermining and pulling to pieces, at the hazard of his own life, the whole papal edifice. Accordingly he loved him as a Christian, and admired him as a hero. But be it remembered, that the fatal controversy respecting the Sacrament had not yet begun!!

After all, this evidence only proves what nobody denies,—that the Swiss divine, like several before his time, and like many of his contemporaries, had begun to study the Scriptures, and had already discovered various corruptions and abominations in the papal system. But here the question is, what progress had he made towards a reformation in the Church, when Luther first astonished all Europe with the novelty of his system, the judgment which he displayed in explaining and defending it, and the courage with which he withstood the combined power of popes and princes. It has been said that Zuingle, even in 1516, used "to censure, THOUGH WITH GREAT PRUDENCE AND MODERATION, the errors of a corrupt Church."* I would observe, that if Luther had never done more than this, Europe might have been held at this moment in the chains of superstition and spiritual despotism. To sigh in secret, to inculcate even some important truths in a mild and placid way, so as to give little offence, and to form in the imagination theoretical plans of reform, could never have availed to the emancipation of mankind. It is not that Zuingle was deficient either in understanding or intrepidity;—but how impolitic, how altogether vain and hopeless must it have appeared to oppose the enormous power of the Roman See! Again, it is not that Luther had preconceived, much less digested, any formal plan of resistance to the existing hierarchy: he constantly disclaims any such wisdom or foresight. In effect, it was by a train of peculiar circumstances, that he was gradually led on to a success beyond his most sanguine expectations; and as his endowments were admirably suited to the work he had to execute, I know no reason why we should be backward to allow that he was a chosen vessel, an honoured instrument in the hands of Providence for the great purposes which he accomplished.

In the year 1527, Luther complained

* Zuingle. I. Art. xviii. 37—39.

* Maclaine, in Mosh. II. 26.

to his friend M. Stifel, that he had received a most insolent and abusive letter from Zuingle; and that even his adversaries the papists were not so much disposed as his friends to harass and persecute him;—friends, says he, who, before my contests with the pope, were scarcely known, and did not dare to open their mouths.* Without dwelling one moment longer on the disgusting effects of the Sacramental controversy, I will subjoin two or three circumstances, which exhibit to my mind, beyond all contradiction, THE SORT OF TERMS which Zuingle kept up with the Roman Catholics, at the very time when Luther was the object of their most malignant fury and vengeance.

1. In the year 1520, Zuingle expresses himself concerning Luther in these very handsome terms:† “I have not much fear for Luther’s life; I have none for the safety of his soul, even though he should be struck by this Jupiter with the thunderbolt of excommunication. Not that I despise excommunication; but that I think unjust sentences of that kind do harm to the body rather than the soul. It is not my business to decide whether Luther has had fair play. However, you know my sentiments on that subject. I intend shortly to call on the pope’s legate, and if he should say anything respecting that business, as he did a little time ago, I will persuade him to advise the pope by no means to publish the excommunication. And I believe it will be for his interest to listen to this advice; for if he does not, I foresee the Germans will despise both the bull of excommunication, and the pope that sends it.”

2. But there exists a still more decisive testimony to prove how very far Zuingle must have been from anything like a rupture with the papists, even in the year 1523. The pope Adrian having heard of the reputation of the Helvetian divine for piety and learning, condescended to transmit to him, by his nuncio, a BRIEF in his own handwriting. He had received, he said,

such particular accounts of his extraordinary virtue, as had increased his affection and esteem for a character so devoted to religion. He exhorts him to show a grateful zeal in promoting the interests of the Apostolic See, as he could assure him that it was his intention to place him in honourable and lucrative situations.*

Lastly, Pallavicini distinctly observes,† that not only in the diplomas of Adrian and Clement, which those pontiffs sent into Switzerland, but—what is more to the purpose—in the mandates which the Helvetian Catholics delivered to their own ambassadors upon the appointment of any embassy to Rome, the heresy of the country was called, in general, the Lutheran heresy. And the Italian historian gives two reasons for this; the first is, that though Zuingle and Luther differed in some points, yet that they agreed in the main. Secondly, that THE LUTHERAN HERESY EXISTED BEFORE THAT OF ZUINGLE, and became the more powerful in its partisans.‡

This relation will assist the inquisitive student in clearing up some points in the memoirs of Luther and Zuingle, which have been much clouded by party zeal. The historian of the Church of Christ is desirous that his work should be distinguished by the selection, which it contains, of well authenticated facts: Of conjectures there is no end. Doubtless the Helvetian Reformer was a man of an acute understanding, and great Scriptural learning. His pastoral labours were a blessing to the congregations over which he presided;§ and his writings proved a permanent support to the Protestant cause. These things are certain. It is, however, equally certain, that though in 1518 he opposed the papal

Zuingle’s account of Luther.

A. D. 1520.

The Pope Adrian flatters Zuingle, A. D. 1523.

Priority of Lutheranism.

* Meleh. Ad. in Zuing. 13.

† Concil. Trid. 3. I. 3.

‡ The Roman Catholic clergy in general, and especially the agents of the papal See, have ever been so vigilant in observing the very beginnings of what they called heresies, that we may safely credit the historians of their communion, at least in their positive reports of the chronology of the several defections from the established church. For so far they were impartial judges; and they had certainly the best means of information.

§ Arch. Zuin. I. 132. b.

* Ep. II. Aurif. 315, 6. . . . ne hisecre quidem audebant.

† Zuingle to his friend Myconius, Op. I. 412. b.

abuse of indulgences,* and afterwards exposed several errors of the Romish church, he yet so managed his opposition, as to be courted even by the pope himself, long after Luther had been in open rebellion against the existing hierarchy. How this truly great man would have acted, had he been called to the trying scenes in which Luther bore so conspicuous a part, must be mere conjecture.

On the other hand, any judgment that we can form of the manner in which the Saxon Reformer would have conducted himself in the situation of Zuingle, must be mere conjecture also. Yet I cannot but suspect, that his reputation would have suffered by the change of circumstances. There was that in Martin Luther, which required great and magnificent objects, attended with difficulties, dangers, and perplexities, to call forth those exertions of wisdom, courage, and perseverance, for which he is so justly celebrated. I may add also, my entire conviction, that internal trials and distress of mind greatly improved his character; they made him a humbler Christian, and a more skilful adviser in spiritual things; and if Zuingle had experienced a similar afflictive discipline, though perhaps he did not stand in need of that chastisement so much as Luther did, I suppose we should have heard abundantly more of his personal sufferings and lamentations on account of the deceitfulness of sin, the delusions of Satan, the workings of inward corruptions; and, above all, of those hidings of God's face, and that darkness of soul, which the most godly persons always represent as their grievous and intolerable calamity.

* See Chap. IV. Cent. XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM THE COMPARISON OF LUTHER AND ZUINGLE TO THE DIET OF AUGSBURG IN 1530.

1. PERSECUTIONS.
2. RUPTURE BETWEEN CHARLES V. AND THE POPE.
3. DIET OF SPIRES IN 1529.
4. PROTEST OF THE REFORMERS.
5. MEETINGS OF THE PROTESTANTS.
6. DIET OF AUGSBURG.

THE progress of Divine knowledge, the genuine conversion of souls, and the abolition of abominable superstitions, were carried on ^{Success of} the Gospel with no great interruption for the space of ten years and upwards: that is, till the year 1529, reckoning from the year 1517, when Luther, unable to smother his indignation, first raised his voice against Tetzels, the impudent vender of indulgences, and at the same time pointed out the Roman pontiff himself as the leading culprit in this iniquitous traffic. The success of the Gospel, if we except the Apostolic age, was perhaps in this period unexampled. Even in Italy, in a town called Fayenza, we are told by Father Paul, that there was public preaching against the Church of Rome, and that Gospellers increased every day.*

I. PERSECUTIONS.

WE are however not to forget, that notwithstanding this blessed influence of the written Word, persons, who openly avowed their conviction of the truth, were miserably exposed to persecution in all those places where either the civil or the ecclesiastical ruler happened to be an active and zealous Roman Catholic. The catalogue of the sufferers is very considerable.—It may however suffice to add, to the instances already noticed at page 520, a few others of the most remarkable cases.

In 1527, a Bohemian woman, after a confinement of almost a whole year, was cast into the flames on account of two crimes laid to her charge.

Various
Persecu-
tions.

1. That by denying the corporeal presence of Christ's natural body, she had blasphemed the Sacrament of the altar.

2. That she had been rebaptized by John Kalens. The wooden cup which Kalens had used in the administration of the Lord's Supper, was burnt along with this heretic.*

Sometimes the evangelical preachers, when proscribed by papal cruelty, fled from their habitations to save their lives. There is an record an admirable consolatory letter of Ecolampadius,

Letter of
Ecolampadius.

written in 1528, to two persons of this sort then in exile.—“It would move a heart of adamant,” says he, “my dear brethren, to think of your flocks thus deprived of their faithful shepherds, dispersed and exposed to the wolves: then to see the adversaries triumphing and glorying in their iniquity; and the weaker brethren, who were on the very eve of renouncing popery, suddenly alarmed, and apprehensive of a similar treatment. Add to this, the dangers, the ignominy, the distresses of exile, which are sometimes more grievous than death itself. For, exiles undergo a daily death. However, when we reflect that God is faithful, and will not tempt us above what we are able to bear, but will regulate everything according to the strength which he is pleased to give, this consideration supplies an abundance of substantial consolation. Be assured, the Holy Ghost, who has anointed you for this contest, will not fail to preserve you from fainting in the afflictions which ye undergo for the truth. Moreover, your silence during your proscription speaks louder by much to the hearts of God's children, than ever your most animated sermons could do. Your present firmness fixes an inviolable seal on the doctrines you have been teaching with so much piety. The blood of Abel has a voice; and so has your persecution a tongue. Away then with cowardice and lamentation. Happy the man who is conformed to the image of the crucified Saviour, whom we preach. Christ knows his sheep; he will preserve them from the jaws of the wolf; and the exaltation of the hypocrites will be but for a moment.”†

Joachim, the elector of Brandenburg, distinguished himself at this time in persecuting the Lutherans. This bigoted prince had confined Elizabeth of Brandenburg escapes from Berlin.

on account of her attachment to the Gospel, his own wife Elizabeth, the sister of the aforementioned exiled king of Denmark; and was intending to immure her perpetually; when by the help of her brother, she effected a wonderful escape from Berlin; was conveyed in the wagon of a peasant, and hospitably received by the elector of Saxony.*

The duchess of Munsterberg also, named Ursula, had this year a most miraculous escape from the monastery of Friburg; and fled with two virgins to Luther for protection. This was a most mortifying event to George of Saxony; for this duchess was his own cousin.†

Flight of the
duchess of
Munster-
berg,
A. D. 1528.

In France the persecutions were dreadful. The papists persuaded the king, that all the misfortunes with which the country was afflicted,

Persecutions
in France.

were owing to the mischievous Lutheran heresy. In consequence, the most sanguinary laws were solemnly decreed against Lutheranism, and every one who could be proved to favour the doctrine was treated as a blasphemer.‡ Yet this same prince, Francis I., notwithstanding the zeal

Inconsistency of
Francis I.

with which his Catholic clergy availed to inspire him, had no objection, for the purpose of more effectually serving his political schemes, to endeavour, by the medium of his ambassadors, to promote in Swisserland that very reformation of religion, which he was labouring to expel from his own kingdom by fire and sword. Zuingle, in a letter to Ecolampadius, tells us, that the royal ambassadors of France pressed the five Catholic cantons of Swisserland to allow the word of God to be preached among them, according to the system of the Reformers.§

In North Holland, a widow, named Wendelmut, was seized on account of her religion, carried to the Hague, and there strangled, and afterwards burnt

* Scult. 174. Spal. in Seck. 122. II. Ep. Aurif. 375.

† Scult. Ibid. II. Ep. 290. b.

‡ Scult. 175.

§ Op. Zuing. I. 419. b.

* Scult. XXVII. p. 111.

† Scult. XXVIII. 173. Ep. Zuing. and Ecolamp. 4. 191. b.

toashes. On her examination concerning the mass, she answered, "It was a piece of bread;" and in regard to the images and pictures of saints, she confessed she knew of no other mediator but Jesus Christ. To one that told her, she did not fear death because she had not tasted it, this widow replied, "I shall never taste it; for Christ has said, If any man keep my sayings, he shall never see death." She was then advised to confess her sins to a priest: upon which she cried aloud, "I have confessed all my sins to Christ my Lord, who takes away all sin. But if I have offended my neighbours, I heartily ask them forgiveness." She then went to the place of execution with meekness and courage.*

It is said that some of the Moravian brethren, as well as other pious persons of those times, were baptized a second time; and this, not as proselytes of Anabaptism, but merely because they could then see no other way of separating themselves from a wicked world.† And we may observe in general, that it is not always easy to distinguish, in the accounts of the Anabaptist martyrs, who were truly humble Christians. We cannot however doubt of the REALITY of the sufferings of the unfortunate victims, when

the facts are distinctly recorded with triumph by the Romish historians themselves. On this ground it is, that I select from Cocklæus,—who otherwise is rarely to be trusted in any question respecting the Reformers,—the following testimonies of the execrable barbarity of the papists. "At Rotenberg by the river Neckar," says this fiery zealot, "many of the Anabaptists, both men and women, were apprehended; and all put to death that refused to recant their errors. Nine men were burnt: Ten women were drowned. But their leader and teacher, Michael Sellarius, an apostate monk, who was by far the greatest offender, was condemned in a public

court of judicature,—to have his blasphemous tongue cut out by the executioner; to be tied to a curriole, and to have two pieces of his flesh torn from his body in the market-place, by red-hot pincers; then to be torn again afterwards in the

same manner by the hot pincers five times on the road, as he was dragged to the burning pile." This sentence, the author tells us, was executed on the 17th of May, 1527: and he proceeds to exclaim what a grievous deceiver Sellarius had been; and among other things mentions his teaching of the people not to invoke saints;* but not one word escapes this malignant and bigoted historian, concerning the firmness, patience, or piety of the martyr.

At Tournay in Flanders, in 1528, an Augustine monk, named Henry, was condemned to the flames, for having thrown off his dress, and of Henry of Tournay, A. D. 1528. married a wife, and preached against popery. The bishop's official told him, he might save his life, if he would but own that the woman he had married was his concubine. But he, refusing to lengthen his days on such terms, praised God by singing *Te Deum*, and soon after cheerfully finished his course in the fire.‡

2. RUPTURE BETWEEN CHARLES V. AND THE POPE.

NOTWITHSTANDING these dreadful narratives, which sufficiently demonstrate the cruel and unrelenting hostility of the papal hierarchy, there is no doubt but the violence of the war between Francis I. and the emperor, as also the dissensions between the emperor and the pope, proved extremely favourable to the progress of the Reformation. For though the spirit of persecution was not in the least abated, yet it spent its chief fury on such defenceless individuals as happened to fall into the cruel hands of some bigoted ruler, ecclesiastic or civil. The three potentates above mentioned were themselves beset with too many difficulties in their political affairs to give much serious and steady attention to the business of religion. Add, that their respective interests were often so opposite and perplexed, as entirely to exclude all amicable concurrence in the formation of any general plan for the extirpation of heresy. In effect, it is by reflecting on these jarring interests, with an overruling Providence constantly in the mind, that we are enabled in some measure to account not only for the mild

The wars of the Emperor were favourable to the Protestants.

Martyrdom of Michael Sellarius.

* Brandt, 56. Scult. p. 111.

† Scult. 177.

* Cocklæus de Luth. XXVII. 163.

† Brandt, 57. Scult. 176.

decree of the diet of Spires in 1526, but also for the inefficiency of the succeeding attempts of the great papal powers to stifle the revival of Christian truth and liberty. The pope, no doubt, was sincere in his desires to crush every symptom of growing protestantism, but Charles V. had neither leisure nor inclination to gratify the wishes of a pontiff who had so lately entered into an alliance against him with the French and the Venetians. The religion of this prince, as far as it was real, is supposed to have been Roman Catholic; but whatever it was, he never suffered it to interfere with his ambitious schemes of secular aggrandizement. Even the pope himself ceased to have the least influence with him, the moment the politics of the court of Rome appeared to thwart those of his imperial majesty. On the other hand, the principles of Clement VII. were in no degree better. Under the pretence that hard and unjust terms had been extorted from the king of France while a prisoner in Spain,* Clement at once absolved him from the oath by which he was bound to execute the treaty of Madrid, and sent a person both to congratulate him on his deliverance from captivity, and to settle a treaty against Charles; and lastly, he despatched a brieve to the emperor, full of accusation, invective, and menace.†

This proceeding of Clement VII. inflamed the resentment of the emperor to such a degree, that he abolished the authority of the Roman pontiff throughout all his Spanish dominions,‡ made war upon him in Italy, laid siege to Rome, and blocked up Clement himself in the castle of St. Angelo, where he was reduced to the extremity of feeding on asses' flesh, and at length compelled to capitulate on severe terms, and to remain a prisoner until the chief articles were performed.§

Such, in brief, were the important consequences of that confederacy which has been termed the HOLY LEAGUE,|| because

* Pallav. 2. 13. 6.

† Paul Sarpi, Goldast. Pol. Imp. 987.

‡ Thuanus, I. XI.; who here observes, that Spain has hereby left to posterity a remarkable proof, that the ecclesiastical discipline may be preserved without the authority of the pope.

§ Jov. Vit. Colon. 167, in Rob. II.

|| Traités de Paix, II. 124.

the pope was at the head of it. The detail of the war we leave to the secular historians, having no concern with victories or defeats, diminutions or extensions of empire; or with the ambitious plans and schemes that produce them, any further than as these things frequently affect the interests of the Gospel, lay open the secret motives of the principal actors, and thereby explain a number of circumstances, otherwise utterly inexplicable, in the history of the Church of Christ.

Therefore, with these objects in view, we judge it expedient to give some account of two memorable letters which the emperor thought fit to write,—one of them to the pope himself, the other to his cardinals at Rome,—before he came to an absolute rupture with Clement VII.

1. In the former, he accuses the pope of ingratitude, putting him in mind that it was by his assistance he had been raised to the pontifical chair. "The king of England," he said, "had been called the PROTECTOR of the Holy League; whereas that monarch had assured him in his letters, that he neither had, nor would accept that title, though the pope had pressed him to do so. The king of France, moreover, made no scruple to own publicly, that before he returned from Madrid to his own country, he had been urged by the pope to enter into the new alliance; and the emperor added, that he knew the pope had absolved him from the oath by which he was bound, either to observe the articles of peace, or return to his captivity.*

He then proceeds to put his holiness in mind, that the pope of Rome received more money from the subjects of his imperial highness, than from all the other kings of Christendom put together. That a judgment might be formed of the magnitude of those annual receipts from the hundred grievances which had been presented to his court by the Germanic body: That, as emperor, such had always been his devotion and reverence for the Apostolic See, he had hitherto FORBORN TO LISTEN TO THE COMPLAINTS OF HIS GERMAN SUBJECTS: but that if, for good reasons, he should be driven to withhold those revenues, then the pope would no longer possess the golden keys

Charles's
Letter to
the Pope.

* Pallav. 2. 13. 6.

which open and shut the gates of war; he would no longer be allowed to carry on hostilities against the emperor with the money which belonged to the subjects of his imperial highness; for that it would certainly be more just for the emperor to apply that money to the purposes of his own defence.

Charles V. then concludes by roundly telling the pope, that if he were still determined to go on with the war, and would not listen to the reasons he had alleged, he should look upon him as acting not the part of a father, but of the head of a faction; not of a pastor, but of an invader of the just rights of sovereigns. This, he said, was his ultimatum, and he should appeal to a general council of the whole Christian world.*

2. In his letter addressed to the College of Cardinals, Charles, with much parade, insists on the purity of his intentions, his great moderation, and continued endeavours to establish peace and tranquillity. "How shocked then, and how disgusted," he said, "must any one be to read the briefs which had been delivered to him by the nuncio, and had the sanction of so eminent a pontiff and of so many pious and Christian fathers. It was evidently written for the express purpose of vilifying and degrading the emperor, who was the protector of the Apostolic See. It breathed nothing but war, sedition, false and injurious accusations against himself; and yet there was not any prince who so much respected the holy See, or defended its dignity with so disinterested a care. It was his innate reverence for the Roman hierarchy, which had induced him, when he was at the diet of Worms, to turn A DEAF EAR to all the importunate complaints and petitions of the Germans. In effect, by the steps he had taken to serve the pope, he had in some measure alienated the minds of his German subjects, particularly by forbidding, under a heavy penalty, the intended assembly of the princes at Spire.† He had prohibited that convention, because he foresaw such a meeting would prove disadvantageous to the pope; and in order to soothe the minds of the princes under their disappointment, he had then given them hopes of having a general council in a short

time. He had explained all these things with great care to the pope, and had admonished him to call a council. He concluded this address to the cardinals with requesting them to concur with himself in putting Clement VII. in mind of his duty, and in exhorting him to preserve the peace of Christendom, which good purpose would be best effected by the convocation of a general council without further delay.

Then, if the pope should persist in refusing to hear reason, the emperor called on the cardinals themselves to come forward, and in their own name summon the council which was so much wanted. And lastly, if the reverend Fathers should oppose his equitable requisition, he told them, he himself would not fail to use such remedies as God had put in his power, for the protection of religion and the tranquillity of Christendom.*

Charles V., in his indignation against Clement, published these manifestoes, and did everything he could to give notoriety to his complaints.† The German Protestants also most industriously dispersed the same.

And we need not wonder that such extraordinary documents should have been read with prodigious eagerness. What could those, who well remembered the emperor's solemn declarations, both at Worms, and on other occasions, against Lutheranism, now think of his religion or conscience, when they heard him confess that he had stopped his ears against the honest prayers of Germany, merely to please the pope? Who would scruple to say, that having betrayed the interests of his imperial subjects, he could in his own turn expect no better than to be betrayed by an unprincipled pontiff?

No more needs to be said to convince thinking persons of the effects which must have been produced on the public mind by these manifestoes of the emperor. Full as acrimonious and reproachful as the bitterest invectives of Luther, they not only emboldened men, after the example of Charles, to treat the pope with little reverence, but also lowered exceedingly the credit of the whole dominant ecclesiastical establishment, and of all its most strenuous supporters. The

His letter
to the
Cardinals.

Publication
of the Empe-
ror's mani-
festoes.

* Goldast, I. 81. & III. 492.

† Page 394.

* Goldast, I. 102. III. 493.

† Du Pin, II. 20.

publication of them had in effect divulged a dangerous secret,—by many indeed sufficiently known before,—yet did it require extraordinary confidence in Charles, to make a public avowal, which, in substance, though not in words, amounted to a confession, “That reverence towards the pope was no more than an art of government covered with the cloak of religion.”* The disclosure of so much political manœuvre and defective morality did more than counterbalance all that he had hitherto done against the Reformers, whose conduct, ever marked by ingenuousness and plain dealing, appeared a PERFECT CONTRAST to all this duplicity, artifice, and inconsistency.

If the contention and animosity of two such unprincipled potentates as the pope and the emperor, thus operated in 1526 at the Diet of Spires to check the persecuting spirit of the Romanists, and to prevent any systematic attempt to exterminate the protestants, it required no great foresight to predict the lamentable consequences of their union or alliance. To their lasting shame be it recorded, that the moment a prospect opened for the accommodation of their own respective political differences, both Clement VII. and Charles V. concurred in wreaking their united vengeance on the defenders of the sacred cause of religion and liberty.†

3. ANOTHER DIET AT SPIRES IN 1529.

THE decree of the Diet of Spires was equivalent to a toleration of Luther’s opinions in all the states where those opinions were approved by their respective governors or magistrates; but in

1529 a new diet was assembled at the same place, when the said decree was, by a majority of suffrages, so far revoked, as to forbid all further propagation of novel opinions in religion. Those who had observed the execution of the edict of Worms, were ordered to continue the execution of it. Those who had changed their religious system, and could not without danger of sedition revert to the ancient usages, were to be quiet, and make no further innovation till the meeting of a council. The celebration of mass was not to be

Severe Decree of the Diet of Spires in 1529.

obstructed in any place whatever; and lastly, the Anabaptists were proscribed in the severest terms, and made subject to capital punishments.*

The motives of Clement in this business were sufficiently intelligible. A pope of Rome, in peace or in war, confined and starved in a castle, or re-seated in the chair of St. Peter, issuing briefes and bulls for the terror of Christendom, never loses sight of his grand object, the maintenance of his supreme and despotical jurisdiction;—well aware, that should that be in the least impaired, the whole edifice of the pontifical authority would be thereby at once endangered.

The precise views of Charles V. in urging the harsh decree of this diet, may admit of some doubt. Perhaps he thereby hoped to attach firmly to his interests—or at least to soothe and gratify—the pope, whose sacred character he had lately insulted with so many indignities. Perhaps he beheld the new doctrines as leading to close and durable confederacies in Germany, which might eventually weaken the imperial authority. Or he might imagine, that a resolute, well-timed, and rigorous exertion of authority, would prove useful both for the protection and extension of his prerogatives, several of which, he would naturally suppose, were not much relished by a bold and turbulent race of people, of whom almost one half had already revolted from the papal domination. These, it must be owned, are only conjectures; but we are SURE that the ambition of this prince was restless, insatiable, and constantly impelling him, both to narrow the power of the Roman See, and also to encroach on the liberties of his German subjects. He had abundantly satisfied his revenge in the late humiliation of Clement;† yet he still menaced that pontiff with the prospect of an impending general council: and, in regard to the Germans, he certainly looked on their domestic troubles and divisions as in the main extremely favourable to his arbitrary and despotical intention.—This monarch was what the world calls a great politician; but not what the Scripture describes as a good man. His understanding became vitiated by his inordinate thirst after dominion, and by his unexampled prosperity; insomuch, that

* Paul Sarpi, 39.

† The Pope and Charles V. concluded a treaty of peace at Barcelona, June 20, 1529. Guicc. Lib. XIX. 522.

* Sleidan, 171. Goldast. III. 495. II. 155.

† Thuan. I. XI.

notwithstanding all his natural good sense, and all his experience, he was frequently the dupe of his own intricate schemes and projects.

4. PROTEST OF THE REFORMERS.

INIQUITOUS as was the decree of the second Diet of Spire, it would doubtless have been much more rigorous and oppressive, if Charles had not been still at war with the French and his inveterate rival Francis I. The recess of this diet is dated in April: and the peace of Cambray, between the emperor and the king of France, was not concluded till the succeeding August.*

Fourteen imperial cities,† with the elector of Saxony, the marquis of Brandenburg, the dukes of Lunenburg, and the prince of Anhalt at their head, in firm but moderate language solemnly PROTESTED against the decree of the diet, as unjust and intolerable, and in every way calculated to produce discontent and tumult. Hence arose for the first time

the denomination of PROTESTANT,‡ an honourable appellation, which not only in Germany, but other nations, is given to all those sects of Christians who renounce the superstitious Romish communion.§

The protestant princes and protectors of the reformed churches were not satisfied with merely expressing their dissent from the decree of the diet; they also drew up all their grievances in form; and appealed to the emperor and to a future general council, or to a lawful Germanic council, and to all impartial judges. Lastly, they fixed upon ambassadors, whom they directed to lay all their proceedings before his imperial majesty. Charles had not been present at the late diet, but had received from his brother Ferdinand, who had there presided in his place, an exact account of all that passed; and having at length concluded a peace with France, was now in Italy on his road to Bologna.

* *Traité de Paix*, p. 170.

† The names of the cities are Strasburg, Nuremberg, Ulm, Constance, Reutlingen, Windsheim, Meinengen, Lindau, Kempten, Hailbron, Isna, Weissemburg, Nordlingen, and St. Gall.

‡ This term, on account of its convenient use, has been frequently anticipated in the course of this History. § Sleidan, 173.

The German ambassadors were introduced to him at Placentia,* and there they executed their commissions with a spirit and resolution worthy of the princes whom they represented. Nothing however could be more discouraging than the reception they met with from this haughty monarch, whose vain mind was now puffed up with a series of extraordinary successes. By a message delivered to the deputies three days before they were admitted into his presence, he admonished them to be brief in what they had to say; and on their introduction he repeated the same admonition. Afterwards, when he had heard their objections to the decree, and they had waited a full month for his answer,† he told them, “that he exceedingly lamented their divisions; but nevertheless insisted on obedience to the decree which was passed for the purpose of putting an end to the mischievous sects of every description. He had written, he said, to the elector of Saxony and his associates, and had commanded them, in conformity to their oaths, to obey the decree of the diet; and if they were refractory, he should be compelled, for the sake of example and good government, to punish such contumacy with severity. He asserted, that himself and the rest of the princes, regarded the peace of their consciences and the salvation of their souls, as much as the protestants could do; and moreover, that he was also as desirous of a general council as they could be, though (said he) there would not be much occasion for it, provided the lawful decrees of the diet, especially that of Worms, were duly enforced.”

On receiving this answer, the ambassadors produced the act of appeal, as it had been drawn up at Spire; but Charles's minister for some time refused to deliver it to his master; and afterwards, when he had ventured to present that spirited memorial, the monarch's pride was so severely wounded by this instance of opposition to his will, that in a rage he ordered the German ambassadors to be put under an arrest for some days; and, on pain of death, neither to stir a foot from their apartments, nor write a line to the protestant princes.‡

The Emperor's Answer to the Appeal.

* Sleidan, 177. † Ibid. 178. ‡ Ibid. 179.

5. MEETINGS OF THE PROTESTANTS.

THE account of this contemptuous and violent procedure of Charles V. soon found its way to Nuremberg, and convinced the protestant party that it was high time for them to consult for their protection against a powerful potentate intoxicated with success, and irritated by opposition. Then, whatever hopes they might place in foreign assistance, it was plain that little was to be done without unanimity at home. The papal adherents had for a long time been well aware of this; and at the Diet of Spire had employed two of their most able and artful agents, Eckius, and Faber bishop of Vienna,* to exert their utmost efforts in widening the breach between the disciples of Luther and of Zuingle. On the other side, the good landgrave of Hesse, both at Spire and afterwards at Marburg, exhausted all the means which human prudence could suggest,† to bring about if possible between the contending parties an accommodation of so much importance, in the present struggle for deliverance from the yoke of superstition and ecclesiastical despotism.

In effect, the heads of the protestants, even while they were in suspense respecting the emperor's answer to their embassy, were so much alarmed at the late decree of Spire, that for the wise purpose of enlarging and cementing a defensive confederacy, they had a solemn conference at Roth in the month of June;‡ and moreover, at Nuremberg they drew up certain articles of their intended alliance.§

In the succeeding October they met again at Sultzbach;|| and upon hearing of the severe treatment of their ambassadors at Placentia, they again assembled about the end of November at Smalcald; and lastly once more at Nuremberg, early in the January of the succeeding year, 1530.¶

All these deliberations, owing to the various and jarring sentiments of the deputies, failed of producing the desirable issue. However the Sacramentarian dissension, exasperated by the incurable obstinacy of Luther, appears to have

been the principal, though perhaps not the only obstruction to unanimity. The tender conscience of the elector of Saxony rendered this prince averse to a military confederacy, even of defence, which might seem formed in opposition to the legitimate government of the country. His scruples are well known to have originated from Luther, who a little before the convention at Smalcald, exhorted him in the strongest terms not to think of using force against the emperor in the defence of religion.* In his arguments he was supported by Melancthon and Bugenhagius.

At Nuremberg, in January, the deputies had almost resolved to send a new and more respectable embassy to his imperial majesty; but the assembly was but thinly attended, and as it was understood that the emperor would soon summon another diet of all the Germanic princes and orders, they abandoned their first intentions; and contented themselves with coming to this ultimate resolution,—that each state should deliberate for itself, and within the space of a month, transmit to the elector of Saxony its peculiar sentiment, in order that the protestants at so critical a juncture might act in concert, both in regard to the common defence, and also the objects to be aimed at in the ensuing diet.

6. DIET OF AUGSBURG.

CHARLES V. arrived at Bologna on the fifth of November 1529, and on the thirty-first of January of the succeeding year sent his mandatory letters into Germany for the purpose of summoning a general diet of the empire, to be held at Augsburg on the eighth day of April. At Bologna, on the twenty-fourth of February, his own birth-day,† he was crowned with great pomp by the pope himself; with whom he continued to reside in the same palace till the following month of March.‡

During the winter months these two mighty potentates had held many consultations concerning the state of religion in Germany, and the best methods of extirpating heresy; but their views were

* Ep. Melan. IV. 83. † Page 541.

‡ Seck. 135. a. § Sleid. 176.

|| Du Pin. 114. Sleid. 176.

¶ Sleid. 180, 181. Com. de Luth. XLVIII. et Add.

* Com. de Luth. XLVIII. 2. † Du Pin. ‡ Sleidan, 181. 186. It was thought not so proper to perform the solemnity of the coronation at Rome, in the presence of those who had sacked it but two years before. P. Sarpi, 47.

materially different. The pope dreaded nothing so much as general councils, which he represented as factious, and, at best, slow in their operation. The case, he said, was desperate, and required speedy and rigorous measures: The clemency of the emperor was ill-judged, and had in effect exasperated the spirit of rebellion; and it was now incumbent on him to support the Church, and crush the heretics by force. Charles, though at this time much disposed to gratify the pope, was convinced that his German subjects were not to be trifled with; and it is not improbable but he might feel some compunction, for having lately exhibited so much unreasonable resentment in his insolent treatment of their ambassadors at Placentia.

Whether the mind of the emperor really revolted at the iniquitous suggestion of condemning the honest protestants unheard, and of putting an end at once to their political existence, it may be hard to say; certain it is, that in the conferences with the pope at Bologna, whatever approached in the least degree to moderation and impartiality, originated with Charles V. and not with Clement VII. The pope and his whole party demonstrated by their activity in open persecution, and by their secret manœuvres which have since transpired, that they sighed for the universal destruction of protestantism. The emperor in his own judgment, there is reason to believe, deemed the convocation of a council to be the proper expedient at this season, but having peremptorily refused to comply with the sanguinary proposals of the pope, he was disposed so far to humour his holiness, as first to adopt a less offensive measure, namely, the appointment of a Diet of the Empire. A general council was the next thing to be tried; but it was agreed that without the most urgent necessity, recourse should not be had to a remedy, the mere mention of which filled the mind of Clement with the most harassing apprehensions; and in every event, Charles appears to have bound himself by an unequivocal promise to use the most efficacious endeavours for the reduction of all the rebellious adversaries of the Catholic religion.*

Notwithstanding the disposition in

which the emperor left Bologna, the pope had the precaution to appoint cardinal Campeggio not only as his own representative and plenipotentiary at the ensuing diet, but also as an honorary attendant on his imperial majesty during all his journey to Augsburg: and to secure still more effectually the pontifical interests, he dispatched P. Vergerio as his nuncio to Ferdinand in Germany, with secret instructions to consult with that prince, and strain every nerve to hinder the convocation of a council. Vergerio was a lawyer, and proved himself well qualified for the commission with which he was intrusted. He injured the Lutherans by every method he could devise. The exertions of the popish divines Eokius, Faber, and Cocklaus, might undoubtedly have been depended upon: but Vergerio thought it best to insure their activity by munificent presents. This precious commissioner was likewise directed to gratify king Ferdinand, by informing him that the pope was ready to grant him, in support of the war against the Turks, both a contribution from the clergy of Germany, and also the gold and silver ornaments of the churches.*

Thus did the Roman pontiff, with fire and sword in one hand, and artifice and corruption in the other, endeavour to extirpate the godly protestants; and meanwhile, with consummate hypocrisy, express the most ardent wishes for peace and harmony, and the restoration of Gospel principles in the Church of Christ.

John the CONSTANT, the excellent elector of Saxony, was determined to procure for the protestants, if possible, a fair hearing at the Diet of Augsburg. And with a view to prevent all loose and fugitive discussion in a business of such immense importance, and also to enable any equitable judge to see distinctly all the leading points of religion which had produced so many volumes of controversy, he wisely directed his Wittenberg divines to draw up in a narrow compass the heads of that religious system which had produced the separation from the Romish communion. This, though an affair of considerable nicety, was presently effected by Luther. For the doc-

Precautions
of the Pope.

The seven-
teen Articles
of Torgau.

* Maim. 142. P. Sarpi, 49.

* Sleidan, 182. P. Sarpi, 49.

trines in question had already been digested into seventeen articles; and had been proposed twice in the conferences at Sultzbach, and once in that at Smalcald,* as the confession of faith to be agreed on by the protestant confederates. These seventeen articles, with little or no alteration, were delivered by Luther, at Torgauf, to the elector, then on his road to Augsburg; and served as a basis for a more orderly and elaborate composition, to be exhibited at the approaching diet. For the execution of a work of so great moment, the protestant princes employed the elegant and accurate pen of Melancthon, the result of whose labours was a treatise, admired even by many of its enemies for its piety, learning, and perspicuity.—This celebrated performance

The Confession of Augsburg.

is well known under the title of the CONFESSION OF AUGSBURG; and in the next Volume of this History of the Church of Christ, the reader will find a more particular description of its contents, † together with a brief detail of the proceedings of the diet of Augsburg, and also of the consequences of the infamous decree of that assembly in November 1530, § which furnished matter of much exultation to the supporters of the papacy, while it dejected and even alarmed many of the sincerest friends and protectors of the cause of religious truth and liberty.

The Reformation, as we have seen, in spite of all the efforts of papal rage and malignity, had not ceased to spread and prosper throughout various districts. The great city of Strasburg, in the former part of 1529, could not, by all the remonstrances of the imperial regency, be deterred from adopting the bold resolution of abolishing the mass; moreover, Count Philip of Hanover, though menaced by a formidable opposition, introduced evangelical doctrine in the same year throughout his dominions. Many instances indeed of the martyrdom of godly men might be added to the several catalogues already given; but the good protestants were accustomed to these

sufferings, and bore them with extraordinary patience and fortitude:* however, as soon as they heard of the deplorable issue of the Diet of Augsburg, they justly concluded that the pope and the emperor had resolved on their entire destruction; and they looked on the publication of the new edict, which was in effect severer than that of Worms, as the signal for the commencement of more violent and barbarous persecutions than any they had experienced before.

The Diet of Augsburg in 1530, forms a sort of era in the history of the Reformation; but at present we shall say no more concerning it, than—1.

That the German princes, Diet of Augsburg. A. D. 1530. the magnanimous defenders of the sacred cause, assembled at Smalcald towards the end of the year, and there concluded a solemn alliance of mutual defence; and—2. That some of the most wise and pious of the protestant theologians, especially Melancthon, were so oppressed by the prospect of the calamities which threatened the afflicted Church of Christ, that they were almost ready to abandon the contest, and give themselves up to melancholy and lamentation.

We will conclude this Volume with an observation or two on the conduct of Luther, about the time of this very critical conjuncture.

1. Before the Diet of Augsburg, in the year 1529, while the tempest of persecution was louring on the faithful, this indefatigable servant of God

was employed in publishing Conduct of Luther before the meeting of the Diet. his lesser and greater Catechism, which at this day are treatises of authority in the

Lutheran Churches. In the preface to each, he deploras the ignorance of the people at large, and asserts, that those who know nothing of Christian principles, ought not even to be called by their name. He expatiates on the utility of catechising; recommends the frequent use of it to masters of families; cites his own example of attending to the first catechetical truths for the purpose of edifi-

* Com. de Luth. XLII. 4. & XLVIII. & Add. See also p. 509.

† Ibid. LV. 4.

‡ The Confession of Augsburg contains twenty-eight Chapters.

§ The Protestant league at Smalcald was one of those consequences.

* Sleidan mentions two learned divines, who were burnt at Cologne in 1529. And Ab. Scultet reports from a MS. of Bullinger, that at Rothwell, an imperial city in Suabia, three hundred and eighty-five persons were driven into exile for deserting the doctrines of the papacy.

cation, notwithstanding the proficiency which, in a course of years, he might be supposed to have made; and observes, that daily reading and meditation, among many other advantages, has this,—that a new light and unction from the Holy Spirit is hence, from time to time, afforded to the humble soul. With such godly simplicity was Luther conversant in the Gospel practice: and so totally distinct was the spiritual understanding and improvement, which he desired to encourage in the Church, from the mere theory of frigid theological disquisition. Perhaps no history since the days of the Apostles, affords a more remarkable instance of the humility and condescension of a primary theologian, in stooping to the infirmities of the weak, and lowering himself to the most uncultivated minds, than is exhibited by the publication of these two Catechisms.

In the same year, Luther accompanied Melancthon's Commentary on the Epistle to the Colossians, with a memorable eulogium on the author; in which he frankly declared, that he preferred the works of Melancthon to his own, and was more desirous that they should be read than anything which he himself had composed. "I," says he, "am born to be a rough controversialist; I clear the ground, pull up weeds, fill up ditches, and smooth the roads. But to build, to plant, to sow, to water, to adorn the country, belongs, by the grace of God, to Melancthon."

It was a singular felicity of the infant Church of Saxony, that its two great luminaries, exceedingly diverse as they were in temper and in gifts, should have been constantly united in the bonds of a strict affection, which never seems to have admitted the least degree of envy or jealousy. Such is the light in which these two worthies are transmitted to posterity;—an incontestable pair of disinterested friends, whose sole object of contention was to excel each other in proofs of mutual regard!

2. It was in the low and desponding state of the protestant party,—for example, after such a lamentable defeat as they had suffered at the Diet of Augsburg,—that the spirit and character of Luther was calculated to shine forth with peculiar lustre, and in its true and genuine colours. By his unwearied vigilance

in superintending the reformed churches, and by his incessant attacks on the ecclesiastical corruptions and abuses, he had shown, to demonstration, that great and continued successes had in no degree disposed him to be remiss; and he now stood forward to prove, that notwithstanding the late untoward events and the magnitude of the impending danger, he was neither depressed by a reverse of circumstances, nor intimidated by the menaces of an arm of flesh, nor worn out by the length and obstinacy of the contention. In effect, the champion of evangelical truth always looked on the conflict in which he was engaged, as the proper concern of Almighty God, and on himself as a mere instrument in the righteous cause. His mind, deeply impressed with this conviction, remained serene and cheerful, and as vigorous as ever, for new attacks on Antichrist, and for new combats with his unblushing advocates. He exhorted the princes never to abandon the great truths they had undertaken to support; and at the same time he comforted his dejected friends, and employed much time in private prayer. At no period of his life was the weight and influence of Martin Luther more conspicuous than in 1530, when the religious differences seemed tending to an awful crisis. His fortitude was invincible; his zeal courageous and disinterested; and happily they both were tempered by an extraordinary degree of rational and fervent piety.*

* One of Melancthon's correspondents describes Luther thus: "I cannot enough admire the extraordinary cheerfulness, constancy, faith and hope of this man, in these trying and vexatious times. He constantly feeds these good affections by a very diligent study of the Word of God. Then, not a day passes in which he does not employ in prayer at least three of his very best hours. Once I happened to hear him at prayer. Gracious God! what spirit and what faith there is in his expressions! He petitions God with as much reverence as if he was actually in the Divine Presence; and yet with as firm a hope, and confidence, as he would address a father or a friend. 'I know,' said he, 'thou art our father and our God: therefore I am sure thou wilt bring to nought the persecutors of thy children. For shouldst thou fail to do this, thine own cause, being connected with ours, would be endangered. It is entirely thine own concern: We, by thy pro-

Luther's
Eulogium on
Melancthon.

Luther's con-
duct after
the Diet.

vidence, have been compelled to take a part. Thou therefore wilt be our defence!"

"While I was listening to Luther praying in this manner at a distance, my soul seemed on fire within me, to hear the man address God so like a friend, and yet with so much gravity and reverence; and also to hear him in the course of his prayer insisting on the promises contained in the Psalms, as if he was sure his petitions would be granted." *Cœlest. I. 275. Com. de Luth. LXIX. 3.*

The papal historian, Maimbourg, is so well convinced of Luther's great influence about the year 1530, that he breaks out in a rage, in the following manner. "I will

speaking freely what I think. Charles V. was to blame that he did not order Luther to be seized, when he talked so audaciously before him at Worms. However, he may be excused on account of the SAFE CONDUCT he had granted him. But at Augsburg he ought to have compelled the elector of Saxony to give him up to justice, and no longer to protect a rebel, who was then proscribed by an imperial edict, and yet continued writing insolent tracts against the emperor himself. It was this neglect on the part of Charles, which defeated all his endeavours to produce an agreement between the parties." Maimb. p. 180.

APPENDIX.

WICKLIFF. Page 121.

It is observed in the History, page 129, that the distinguishing tenet of Wickliff was, undoubtedly, the election of Grace. He calls the Church an assembly of predestinated persons. Much more might be produced to the same effect. On some occasions he speaks in such strong terms on this subject, that he has been understood to lean even to the doctrines of absolute necessity and fatalism. The student of ecclesiastical history may be pleased to have some of the evidence relative to this matter, laid before him, that he may have the opportunity of judging for himself.

In our account of the proceedings of the council of Constance, p. 173, it appears that the heretical opinions of Wickliff were digested into forty-five specific articles, and unanimously condemned by that assembly. Two of those articles were, viz.

Article 26. The prayer of the reprobate is of no avail: and,

Article 27. All things happen from absolute necessity.*

The manner in which this great man defended the latter, proves him to have been a deep thinker and a skilful disputant.

Our Lord, says he in his *Trialogus*, affirmed that such or such an event should come to pass. Its accomplishment, therefore, was unavoidable. The antecedent is necessary; by parity of argument the consequent is so too. The consequent is not in the power of any created being, forasmuch as the declarations of Christ, and the elections of his mind, are not liable to accidents. And, therefore, as it is absolutely certain, and cannot be otherwise but that Christ hath foretold certain events, those events must necessarily come to pass. The same

kind of argument will demonstrate every event to be necessary, the future existence of which hath been previously determined by God: and it will make no difference, in whatever manner, or by whatever after-discoveries in time, it may have pleased God to inform us that he had actually determined so, before the creation of the world. If the thing be clearly and necessarily so, namely, that God did predetermine any event, the consequence is inevitable: that event must take place. Now what can prevent future events from having been predetermined by the Deity? Want of knowledge? inconstancy of will? efficacy of impediments to interrupt his purpose? But with respect to God there is no room for any of these suppositions. Every future event must therefore necessarily take place.*

Wickliff states the above argument, drawn from the prophecies of our Lord, with great triumph. It had puzzled, he said, the very best reasoners; and by its brilliancy had absolutely confounded superficial divines: among whom he reckons the then bishop of Armagh, who owned that he had laboured for twenty years to reconcile the free-will of man with the certain completion of Christ's predictions; and, after all, saw no way of evading the conclusion in favour of necessity, but by allowing that Christ might possibly have been mistaken and have misinformed his Church in regard to future events.

From this and similar passages, it has been concluded that Wickliff was a fatalist. The whole question turns upon the meaning of such expressions as, "*sicut necessario Christus illud asseruit, ita necessario illud eveniet.*" The just interpretation of which, according to Wickliff's ideas, is given, I think, in the

* L'Enfant.

* Lib. III. Cap. 9. *Trialog.*

translation above. He never meant to say that Christ was not a free agent, but merely that it was absolutely CERTAIN, and could not be otherwise, that Christ HAD MADE such or such declarations. I am confirmed in this opinion by three reasons:—1. From having very diligently considered the passage itself, as it stands in the ninth chapter of the third book of the *Triologus*. 2. From observing that some of those who have thought differently, have probably never seen the *Triologus* itself. The book is very scarce, and they do not refer to it, but only to certain extracts from it by Widefort, who was an enemy, and gives them unfairly: And, 3, by attending to Wickliff's sentiments as they are delivered in other parts of that work. In book the second, chapter the fourteenth, he says: "If you ask, what is the real cause of the eternal decrees of God before they are made; the answer is, the WILL OF GOD, or GOD HIMSELF:" And again, in the tenth chapter of the first book, where the author is treating particularly of the wisdom and power of God, he expressly affirms, that the Divine energy acts with the most perfect freedom, though the effects produced by it must necessarily happen. "Quantum ad libertatem divinæ potentie, patet quod est summè libera, et tamen quicquid facit, necessario eveniet."

"That the Supreme Being acts in the most exact conformity to his own decrees, is a truth which Scripture again and again asserts; but that HE was and is absolutely free in decreeing, is no less asserted by the inspired writers; who with one voice declare, that the disposals and appointments of the Almighty do not depend on any antecedent and fatal necessity, but on his own free choice directed by infinite wisdom." If Wickliff could be shown to go farther than this, he ought not, I think, to be defended.

Thomas Netter, commonly called Thomas of Walden, a learned Roman Catholic of the Carmelite order, was one of the greatest adversaries of Wickliff. In his four folio volumes, we find sixty dangerous heretical articles enumerated against the English reformer. The following are among them: 1. That God gives no good things to his enemies; 2. That God is not more willing to reward the good than to punish the wicked; 3. That all things come to pass by

fatal necessity; 4. That God could not make the world otherwise than it is made; 5. That God cannot do anything which he doth not do; 6. That God cannot bring to pass that something should return into nothing.

In perusing the distinct and pious argumentations of Bradwardine, we every where meet with much entertainment and instruction. Not so in traversing the abstruse, thorny, metaphysical subtilities of Wickliff and his adversaries. No one need be surprised if some inconsistencies and even contradictions should be found in his writings. We have seen, that in himself he was not a very consistent character, whether we regard his words or his actions. Then his insight into Christian truths was gradual; so that he may be expected not to hold the same language at different periods of his life. There can, however, be no doubt but that he loved Light and Truth; and the real wonder is, that in his circumstances, he attained so much of them. Lastly, his writings have come down to us very imperfect; many of them are entirely lost, and we are obliged to take the accounts of his enemies. With no little need for patience, I have examined Walden's evidence against him respecting the fatalism contained in the third, fourth, and fifth articles above mentioned; and am convinced that he misrepresents the sentiments of the excellent man, whom he so much disliked. Wickliff, on several occasions, for argument sake, appears to grant that there would be a contradiction in supposing anything to be producible, which God does not actually produce; but in one place he expressly informs us, that it was an usual thing with him to guard concessions of that sort by limiting them in such a manner that they should be no restraint on the Divine Will; everything, according to him, is producible, WHICH GOD PLEASES TO PRODUCE. I know very well, says Wickliff, that in pretending to treat of the wisdom and power of God, I am plunging into an ocean of difficulties, where I may be apt to prate concerning many things, without having a good foundation for what I say. I know that it is a very hard matter to preserve the due course, especially as on many points I think differently from what I formerly did. However, as I was then ready to own my error, so I trust I always shall be, whenever I am shown

that I have advanced anything contrary to truth.*

If Thomas of Walden had properly attended to this candid concession, and honest protestation, that are to be found at a very little distance from the passages which he thought so objectionable, he would probably have treated Wickliff with less severity.

I cannot dismiss this head in better terms than those of a very useful memorialist, † who speaks of Wickliff, in substance as follows :

“ I intend neither to deny, dissemble, defend, nor excuse any of his faults. We have this treasure, says the apostle, in EARTHEN vessels ; and he that shall endeavour to prove a pitcher of clay to be a pot of gold, will take great pains to small purpose. Yea, should I be over officious to retain myself to plead for Wickliff's faults, that glorious Saint would sooner chide than thank me. He was a man, and so, subject to error ; he lived in a dark age, and was vexed with opposition ; and it is therefore unreasonable that the constitution of his positive opinions should be GUESSED by his polemical heat, when he was chafed in disputation. Besides, envy has falsely fathered many foul aspersions upon him. What a pity it is that we have not his works, to hear him speak in his own behalf ! Were they all extant, we might know the occasion, intention, and connexion of what he spake, together with the limitations, restrictions, distinctions, and qualifications of what he maintained. There we might see what was overplus of passion, and what the just measure of his judgment. Many phrases, heretical in sound, would appear orthodox in sense. Some of his poisonous passages, dressed with due caution, would prove wholesome, and even cordial truths : Many of his expressions wanting, not GRANUM PONDERIS, but SALIS ; no weight of truth, but some grains of discretion. But, alas ! two hundred of his books are burnt ; and we are fain to borrow the bare titles of them from his adversaries, who have winnowed his works, as Satan did Peter, not to find CORN, but CHIAFF.”

SICKNESS OF WICKLIFF.

The prodigious exertions of Wickliff, and the harassing persecutions he under-

went in 1378, are said to have been the occasion of a dangerous fit of sickness, which brought him almost to the point of death in the beginning of the year 1379. The mendicant friars hearing of this, immediately selected a committee of grave doctors, and instructed them in what they were to say to the sick man who had so grievously offended them. And, that the message might be the more solemn, they joined with them four of the most respectable citizens, whom they termed Aldermen of the Wards. These commissioners found Wickliff lying in his bed ; and they are said first of all to have wished him health, and a recovery from his distemper. After some time they put him in mind of the many and great injuries which he had done to the begging friars by his sermons and writings, and exhorted him, that as he had now very little time to live, he would, like a true penitent, bewail and revoke, in their presence, whatever things he had said to their disparagement. But Dr. Wickliff, immediately recovering strength, called his servants to him, and ordered them to raise him a little on his pillows. Which, when they had done, he said with a loud voice, “ I SHALL NOT DIE, BUT LIVE AND DECLARE THE EVIL DEEDS OF THE FRIARS.” On which the doctors, and the other deputies, departed from him in no little confusion.*

ANECDOTES RELATIVE TO WICKLIFF.

S. Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in the insurrection by Wat Tyler ; and was succeeded in the primacy by William Courtney, † who had always shown himself one of Wickliff's most active adversaries. This new archbishop highly approved of the proceedings of the university of Oxford, mentioned in page 130 ; and he determined to use all the authority of his high office to crush Wickliff and his followers. He was not duly invested with the consecrated pall from Rome, till the sixth of May 1382 ; and on the seventeenth of the same month he called together a court of select bishops and doctors.

The memorandum ‡ in the archbishop's register states, that the court having met in the monastery of the friars preachers, certain Conclusions repugnant to the determinations of the church were laid be-

* Bale, Appendix, p. 469.

† A. D. 1351. ‡ Wilkins, Vol. III. p. 157.

fore them; and that after good deliberation they met again, and pronounced ten of the Conclusions heretical, and fourteen erroneous and repugnant to the church.

It does not appear by the records, that Wickliff himself was cited to appear before the archbishop; only the names of a few persons who espoused his opinions are mentioned. Wickliff is said to have claimed the privilege of being exempted from episcopal jurisdiction, on the ground of being a member of the university, and holding an office therein.

There cannot be the smallest doubt but that these proceedings were levelled chiefly at the obnoxious Reformer. But till with my own eyes I read the seventh heretical article in the page above referred to in Wilkin's Concilia, I could scarce believe it possible that one of the charges against either Wickliff or his followers, should be, *Deus debet obedire diabolo*, "God ought to obey the devil." This single fact shows to what a length calumny and credulity may go, when men are heated by passion and prejudice.

However, such violence and misrepresentation served but in the end to promote the cause of truth. Wickliff defended his opinions with spirit, took particular notice of this charge, and gained many new friends. "Such things," says he, "do they invent of catholic men, that they may blacken their reputation, as if they held this impious opinion, that God is a devil; or any other open heretical tenet; and they are prepared by false and slanderous witnesses to fix such heresies on good men, as if they had invented them."*

An extraordinary, but well authenticated circumstance, proves the ability and address of Courtney. At the instant when the extracts from the writings of Wickliff were produced, and the court was going to enter upon business on the seventeenth of May, a violent earthquake shook the monastery. The affrighted bishops and doctors threw down their papers, and cried out, "the business is displeasing to God." The firm and intrepid archbishop, coolly and quietly chid their superstitious fears; and with great promptitude gave the matter a different turn: "If this earthquake," said he, "means anything, it portends the downfall of heresy. For as noxious vapours are confined in the bowels of the earth,

and are expelled by these violent concussions, so through our strenuous endeavours the kingdom must be purified from the pestilential opinions of reprobate men. But this is not to be done without great commotion."*

Wickliff in his writings often alluded to this accident, calling it the council of the herydene, which is the old English word for earthquake.

When the archbishop and his court had condemned Wickliff's doctrines, and had finished the business for which they had met together, a sermon was preached at the church of the grey friars, by John Cunningham, a distinguished adversary of Wickliff. At this sermon we are told there was present, among others, a knight, named Cornelius Cloune, who was a great favourer of the Conclusions then condemned, and one of those who held and taught them; nor would he believe otherwise of the sacrament than that real and true bread was present, according to Wickliff's opinion.

The next day, being the Vigil of the Holy Trinity, the knight went to the same convent to hear mass. Behold! at the breaking of the Host, upon casting his eye towards the friar who happened to celebrate mass, he saw in his hands, very flesh, raw and bloody, and divided into three parts. Full of wonder and amazement, he called his squire, that he might see it; but the squire saw nothing more than usual. Moreover, in the middle of the third piece, which was to be put into the chalice, the knight saw this name, JESUS, written in letters of flesh, all raw and bloody; which was very wonderful to behold. On the next day, namely, the feast of the Holy Trinity, the same friar, preaching at Paul's Cross, told this story to all the people, and the knight attested the truth of it, and promised that he would fight and die in that cause; for that in the sacrament of the altar there was the very body of Christ, and not bread only, as he had formerly believed.†

Such were the artifices of those, who at that time zealously defended the popish doctrines.

I have taken much pains to reconcile the inconsistencies and obscurities which are to be found in the accounts of the latter part of Wickliff's life. Even in

* MS. Bodl.

* MS. Bodl. and Chron. Mon. Alban.

† Knyghton de Event. Angl. 2651.

consulting such authorities as Spelman and Wilkins, I find erroneous and contradictory dates of one of the most material original records. I believe the following brief account does not differ essentially from the truth.

In the former part of the summer of 1381, Dr. Barton, the vice-chancellor, or chancellor, as he is called in the instrument of the university of Oxford, appeared in the public schools while Dr. Wickliff was sitting in the chair; and with the unanimous consent of twelve doctors, his assessors, pronounced the professor's doctrines respecting the sacrament, heretical.

Wickliff, upon the first hearing of this sentence, is said to have been put to some confusion; but he soon recovered himself, and told the vice-chancellor, that neither he nor his assistants could confute the opinions they had ventured to condemn.

From this sentence the professor appealed to king Richard; but the Duke of Lancaster, who in the manuscripts is styled a wise counsellor and a faithful son of the sacred church, came expressly to Oxford, and, as is hinted in p. 127 of this volume, ordered Wickliff to harangue no more on that subject.* But he did not choose to obey.

At length, Courtney, a more active and determined primate than his predecessor Sudbury, finding that neither the strong measures which had been taken at Oxford, nor his own subsequent proceedings at the Earthquake-council, availed to the silencing of the audacious heretic, devised the following expedients, which enabled him at least to rid the university of the man whose person had hitherto been sheltered under academical immunities.

1. He obtained the king's patent, empowering the archbishop and his suffragans to arrest and imprison all persons who privately or publicly should maintain the heresies in question.

2. He also obtained the king's patent, directed to the chancellor and proctors at Oxford, appointing them inquisitors-general, and ordering them to banish and expel from the university and town of Oxford all who were advocates of Wickliff's heresies, and even all who should dare to receive into their inns or houses Wickliff himself, or any other of his friends, suspected of the like.†

From this storm Wickliff thought proper to retire, and the haughty archbishop had the satisfaction of seeing the man he so much disliked, compelled to retreat before his power, to Lutterworth, an obscure part of the kingdom.

DEATH OF WICKLIFF. Page 128.

I have followed Mosheim in the history, who says that this event took place in the year 1387. On more accurate inquiry, I find that soon after his removal to his parsonage, he was seized with the palsy, from which, however, he recovered so as to resume his studies and pastoral exertions. It was, I believe, on the 28th of December 1384, when he was attending divine service, in his church at Lutterworth, that he was attacked by a second and fatal stroke of the palsy. His tongue, in particular, was so much affected, that he never spoke again.

The bigoted papists gloried in his death; and one of them has insulted his memory unmercifully: "It was reported," says Walsingham, "that he had prepared accusations and blasphemies, which he had intended, on the day he was taken ill, to have uttered in his pulpit against Thomas à Becket, the saint and martyr of the day; but by the judgment of God he was suddenly struck, and the palsy seized his limbs; and that mouth, which was to have spoken huge things against God, and his Saint, and the holy Church, was miserably drawn aside, and afforded a frightful spectacle to the beholders. His tongue was speechless, and his head shook, showing plainly that the curse of God was upon him."*

The reader will be beforehand with me in any remarks I could make on this account.

It was in the year 1415 that the council of Constance declared that Wickliff had died an obstinate heretic; and ordered his bones, if they could be distinguished from the bones of the faithful, to be dug up and thrown upon a dunghill. This sentence was not executed till thirteen years after, when orders for that purpose were sent by Pope Martin V. to R. Fleming, bishop of Lincoln and diocesan of Lutterworth. Accordingly, the bishop's

* The Tinnmouth Chronicle and Walsingham say, that it was the day after, 29th December, being the Feast of St. Thomas a Becket, whom the Romish church style a saint and a martyr.

* Wilkins, Vol. III. p. 171.

† Ib. p. 156 and 166.

officers took the bones out of the grave, where they had lain undisturbed forty-four years, burnt them, and cast the remaining ashes into an adjoining brook.*

Among the forty-five articles of Wickliff's doctrines† condemned at Constance in 1415, I observe the sixth to be the very same with that which stands the seventh among those pronounced heretical by Courtney and his council in 1382: "God ought to obey the devil." I have allowed in general that the council of Constance did not misrepresent the opinions of Wickliff. But this article certainly ought to be excepted; and a diligent examination, were it worth while, might probably discover others in the same predicament.

TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE. Page 127.

Wickliff, in one place, defines the CHURCH to be the congregation of just men for whom Christ shed his blood. And in others he speaks thus: "Scripture is the faith of the Church, and the more it is known in an orthodox sense, the better; therefore as secular men ought to know the faith, the Divine word is to be taught them in whatever language is best known to them. The truth of the faith is clearer and more exact in the Scripture, than the priests know how to express it; and if one may say so, there are many prelates who are ignorant of Scripture, and others who conceal things contained in it. It seems useful therefore that the faithful should themselves search and discover the sense of the faith, by having the Scriptures in a language which they know and understand. Christ and his apostles converted men, by making known to them the Scriptures in that language which was familiar to them. Why then ought not the modern disciples of Christ to collect fragments from the loaf; and, as they did, clearly open the Scriptures to the people, that they may know them? The apostle teaches, that we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be answerable for all the goods intrusted to us; it is necessary therefore the faithful should know these goods and the use of them, that they may give a proper answer. For the answer by a prelate or an attorney will not THEN

avail, but every one MUST answer in his own person."*

In this manner did our zealous Reformer argue for the propriety of a translation of the Bible into the English language.

In his prologue to the translation, he informs us of the method in which he proceeded, notwithstanding the opposition he met with, and the clamours that were raised against him on the account. 1. He, with several who assisted him, got together all the Latin Bibles they could, which they diligently collated and corrected, in order that they might have one Latin Bible near the truth. In the next place, they collected the ordinary comments, with which they studied the text so as to make themselves masters of its sense and meaning. Lastly, they consulted the old grammarians and ancient divines, respecting the hard words and sentences. After all this was done, Wickliff then set about the translation, which he resolved, should not be a literal one, but so as to express the meaning as clearly as he could.

A specimen or two of Wickliff's New Testament, in the old English of his time, may not be displeasing to the reader.

Matt. xi. 25, 26. "In thilke tyme Jhesus answeride & seid, I knowleche to thee, Fadir, Lord of Hevene & of earthe, for thou hast hid these thingis fro wise men and redy, and hast schewid hem to litil children. So, Fadir; for so it was plesynge to fore thee."

John x. 26—30. "Ye beleven not, for ye ben not of my scheep. My scheep heren my vois, and I knowe hem, and thei suen me. And I gyve to hem everlastynge life, & thei schulen not perische, withouten end; & noon schal rausysche hem fro myn hond. That thing that my Fadir gaf to me, is more than alle thingis: & no man may rausysche from my Fadir's hond. I & the Fadir ben oon."

Rom. ix. 12. "It was seid to him, that the more schulde serve the lesse: as it is writun, I louyde Jacob, but I hatide Esau. What therfore schulen we seie? wher wickidnesse be anentis God? God forbede. For he seith to Moises, I schal have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I schal ghyve mercy on whom I have mercy. Therefore, it is not neither of man willynge, neither rennyng; but of

* L'Enfant, 231.—Fuller, 171.

† Page 173 of this Vol.

* Great Sentence.—Spec. Scul.—Doctr. Christ.

God hauynge mercy. And the Scripture seith to Farao, For to this thing have I styrred thee, that I schewe in thee my vertu, and that my name be teeld in al erthe. Therefore, of whom God wole, he hath mercy: & whom he wole, he endureth. Thanne seith thou to me, what is sought ghit, for who withstondith his will? Oo man, what art thou that answerist to God! Wher a maad thing seith to him that made it, What hast thou maad me so? Wher a pottere of cley hath not power to make, of the same gobet, oo vessel into onour, a nothir into dyspyt!"*

LOLLARDS. Pages 160, 161.

In the above pages are briefly mentioned the grievous persecutions by bishop Langland or Longland. Mr. Collier, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, after allowing that several abjured, and that six actually suffered, observes, that these men were accused for reading the New Testament in English; and why, says he, was this so great a crime? Because it was WICKLIFF'S translation, and condemned by the church. The English clergy did not believe this translator had reached the original, and rightly expressed the mind of the Holy Ghost. . . . They were careful to prevent the spreading of Lollardism, and we need not wonder.—Collier, vol. ii. p. 11.

It is quite painful to see so valuable a writer undertake to speak thus in mitigation of the abominable cruelties of the papists in those times.

Further; he does not believe that "six men and a woman were burnt at Coventry, for teaching their children the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments, and the creed in the vulgar tongue;" and he expresses a hope that Bishop Burnet, who mentions the fact in his *History of the Reformation*, was misinformed. "The learned historian," says he, "cites Fox for his authority. But this looks like a lame story, for Fox cites no other authority than one Mother Hall."—Collier, *ibid.*

On reading the above, I was curious to see what Fox actually DOES SAY: and here I shall transcribe his very words,

* N. B.—This being a passage frequently quoted in controversy, it is supposed, that very particular pains were taken with it by the translator.

without making any observation on them. "The WITNESSES of this history," says he, "be yet alive, which both SAW THEM and KNEW THEM. OF WHOM ONE is Mother Hall, dwelling now in Baginton, two miles from Coventry. By whom also this is testified of them, that they above all other in Coventry pretended most show and worship of devotion at the holding up of the sacrament; whether to colour the matter or no, it is not known."—Fox, vol. ii. p. 182.

Mr. Fox speaks of the zeal of the holy men in those times of persecution in the most glowing terms; "To see their travails, their earnest seeking, their burning zeal, their readings, watchings, their sweet assemblies, their love and concord, their godly living, their faithful marrying with the faithful, may make us now in these our days of free profession to blush for shame."—Fox, vol. ii. p. 23.

COUNCIL OF CONSTANCE.

Pages 162—194.

JOHN HUSS, AND JEROM OF PRAGUE.

Learned men of a speculative turn, and of the most impartial and dispassionate temper, have been puzzled to account for the treatment these good men met with from the council of Constance. Jerom suffered as an associate and supporter of Huss; and in regard to the latter, the sentence of the council is express, that he was a notorious, scandalous, obstinate, incorrigible heretic. L'Enfant, after a most careful and judicious review of all the circumstances relative to this sentence, is decidedly of opinion that the accusers failed in making out their charges, and that the council therefore were not justified in passing so severe and cruel a sentence. There is no doubt that both Huss and Jerom were victims to the rage and injustice of their unrelenting enemies. But still, in public transactions, even the most abandoned of mankind do not usually lay aside all regard to principles or to the judgment of others.

Several motives, not openly avowed by the council, have been supposed to influence their minds in the condemnation of John Huss:

1. He always refused to subscribe to

the condemnation of Wickliff; and, on many occasions, he had spoken of him as of a holy man. And though he did not agree with the English reformer respecting the eucharist, he appears to have been a thorough Wickliffite in all those matters which related to the prevailing abuses of ecclesiastical power. Hence it is easy to understand how obnoxious he must have been to corrupt pontiffs and cardinals; and in general, to ambitious and domineering dignitaries of the established hierarchy. L'Enfant speaks out, when he says, "the **SOUNDEST** part of the council of Constance were not materially different from so many Wickliffites and Hussites." The sound part, however, it is to be feared, was but a small part of the whole; and every one must see that by far the greater part of that assembly would concur in thinking it high time to silence a man who was continually exclaiming against the tyranny and irregularities of the clergy.

2. John Huss, by his sermons, his writings, and his conversation, had **CERTAINLY** contributed to render the clergy of Bohemia odious and contemptible in the eyes of the people. The bishops, therefore, together with the sacerdotal and monastic orders, were sensible that their honours and advantages, their credit and authority, would be in the greatest danger, if this zealous Reformer should be allowed to return into his own country, and declaim with his usual freedom. The true cause of the commotions, which existed in Bohemia, is allowed by all the authors of that time, without a single exception, to have been the scandalous conduct of the popes, the subversion of discipline, and the entire corruption of the whole ecclesiastical state. A complete reformation, therefore, was the only adequate remedy. But this, as the event proved, was not to be expected from a corrupt hierarchy. It was far more probable that the indignant interested ecclesiastics should unite to accomplish the ruin of the man who exposed their ambition, tyranny, and avarice. For this very purpose, we are told, the wicked clergy of Bohemia and Moravia, and especially the bishops and abbots, combined together; and even contributed sums of money to be employed in procuring the condemnation and death of Huss; and all this, because they could not bear his faithful honest advice and admonition, and because he detected

their abominable pride, simony, avarice, and debauchery.*

3. That some persons of the greatest weight in the council were actually influenced by these motives, is not a matter of mere conjecture. L'Enfant has given us the very words, in Latin, spoken by the Emperor to the council, after the examination of Huss. The translation of them is as follows:

"You have heard the articles laid to the charge of John Huss. They are grievous, numerous, and proved not only by credible witnesses, but by his own confession. In my opinion, there's not a single one among them which does not call for the punishment of fire. If therefore he do not retract all, I am for having him burnt. And even though he should obey the council, I am of opinion, that he should be forbid to preach, and instruct, or ever to set foot again in the kingdom of Bohemia. For if he be suffered to preach, and especially in Bohemia, where he has a strong party, he will not fail to return to his natural bent, and even to sow new errors worse than the former. Moreover, I am of opinion, that the condemnation of his errors in Bohemia ought to be sent to my brother the king of Bohemia, to Poland, and to other countries where this doctrine prevails, with orders to cause all those who shall continue to believe and teach it, to be punished by the Ecclesiastical authority, and by the secular arm jointly. There is no remedy for this evil, but by thus cutting the branches as well as pulling up the root. Moreover, it is absolutely necessary that the bishops and other prelates, who have laboured here for the extirpation of this heresy, be recommended by the suffrages of the whole council to their sovereigns. Lastly, says the Emperor, if there are any of John Huss's friends here at Constance, they ought to be restrained with all due severity, but especially his disciple Jerom." Whereupon, some said, that Jerom of Prague might perhaps be brought to reason by the punishment of his MASTER.

This lays open the true reason of that treatment, p. 180, [which Huss was to have experienced in case he had retracted. The council dreaded his return in Bohemia. Even in the iniquitous sentence which they passed against him,

* L'Enfant.—Mosheim.—Diar. Hussit.

they had the incautious effrontery to declare John Huss not a true preacher of the Gospel of Christ, according to the exposition of holy doctors, but rather one who in his public discourses seduced the Christian people of Bohemia BY HIS COMPILATIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES.*

4. It is a lamentable truth, that in those days the disputes concerning the most abstract metaphysical subtilities were carried to such a height by the contending parties, as to produce the greatest bitterness and animosity. Huss was attached to the party of the REALISTS, as they were then called; and opposed with great warmth his adversaries the NOMINALISTS. This circumstance is supposed to have contributed not a little to the unhappy fate of this pious Bohemian. For the tribunal at Constance was principally composed of Nominalists, with the famous John Gerson at their head, who was the zealous patron of the faction, and the mortal enemy of Huss. In the report which the popish writers sent to the king of France, respecting the transactions at Constance, there is the following passage: "God raised up the Catholic doctors Peter Allyaco and John Gerson, and many other learned NOMINALISTS, who disputed, during forty days at the council of Constance, with the heretics Jerom and John Huss, and vanquished them."†

Happy would it have been if these opposite sects of philosophers had confined themselves within the bounds of reason and argument, or even of mutual invectives; but they were accustomed to accuse each other of heresy and impiety, and had constantly recourse to penal laws and corporal punishments. Thus the leading NOMINALISTS at Constance looked on themselves as personally offended with Huss, and would be satisfied with nothing short of the death of their powerful adversary. On the other hand, in 1479, the Realists had sufficient weight and influence to procure the condemnation of John de Wesalia, a Nominalist, of whose sufferings we have already given a brief account.‡

It is needless to detain the reader with a minute detail of the distinctions between the Realists and Nominalists.

* Vid. Fascicul. rer. Sententia defin. contra Huss. p. 302.

† Baluz. Miscell. Tom. IV. p. 534.

‡ See pages 201, 202.

Their principal point of contention seems to have been the existence or non-existence of abstract or universal ideas. Strange infatuation! That a difference of opinion on such abstruse and obscure subjects as these should ever have been supposed to amount to the sin against the Holy Ghost, or to a mortal offence against God, the Christian religion, justice, and the commonwealth. "Can this blindness proceed from any other cause than the influence of Satan, who diverts us from good things, and makes us apply to vain speculations, which neither inspire us with devotion towards God, nor with love and charity towards our neighbour." Such is the fine reflection of the anonymous author of the Examination of John de Wesalia.*

The angry disputations of these discordant sects continued till the appearance of Luther, who, by introducing more important subjects, soon put an end to the mutual wranglings of the scholastic divines.

There is a tradition, that John Huss, alluding to his own name, which signifies a Goose, predicted before his judges, the Reformation by Luther, in the following terms: "This day ye roast a Goose; but a hundred years hence a white Swan will come, which ye will never be able to put to death." This pretended prophecy, like many others, was probably made after the event.

L'Eufrant mentions several medals which appear to have been struck for the purpose of commemorating the virtues of Huss. Two were preserved at Magdeburg, which have on one side the image of John Huss, with his beard and mitre, with a book in his right hand, which Luther, in a priest's habit, bare-headed and clasping the Bible with both hands, looks on with pleasure. A third was in the private cabinet of a German Count. On one side it represents Huss, with these words, *Sola Deo acceptos nos facit esse fides*—Faith alone renders us acceptable to God; and on the other side Luther, with these words, *Pestis eram, vivus; moriens ero mors tua, Papa*—I was a plague to thee, O Pope, whilst living, and will be thy death when I die.

The encomium passed by the same very impartial historian, on the private letters of Huss, is well worthy of notice: "There is not a papist nor a protestant,

* Fascicul. rer. exp.

I will venture to say, not a Turk, nor a pagan, who, notwithstanding the hasty expressions dropped now and then in his letters, does not admire them for the dignity and piety of his sentiments, the tenderness of his conscience, his charity towards his enemies, his affection and fidelity to his friends, his gratitude to his benefactors, and above all his constancy of mind, accompanied with the most extraordinary modesty and humility."

After all, a very learned and profound ecclesiastical historian, admits that there did appear in the conduct of HUSS, ONE MARK OF HERESY, which, according to the maxims of the age, might expose him to condemnation with some appearance of justice; namely, HIS INFLEXIBLE OBSTINACY; which the church of Rome always considered as a grievous heresy, even in those whose errors were of little moment.* Huss refused to abjure his errors; and in so doing, he resisted that council which was supposed to represent the catholic church. Moreover, he intimated with sufficient plainness that the church was fallible. All this was certainly highly criminal and intolerably heretical. For it became a dutiful son of the church to submit, without any exception, his own judgment to the judgment of his holy mother, and to believe firmly in her infallibility. The Roman church for many years had observed the rule of Pliny:† "In case of obstinate perseverance I ordered them to be executed. For this I had no doubt, that a sullen and obstinate inflexibility called for the vengeance of the magistrate." The discerning reader will determine for himself, how far Dr. Mosheim, in making these observations, is to be considered as speaking ironically.

LUTHER. Pages 209—223.

Though this chapter contains the most material circumstances relative to the earlier part of Luther's life, the reader may not be displeased to peruse the following passages, the substance of which is taken from the preface to the second volume of Luther's Works. This preface is sometimes called the Life of Luther, and is particularly valuable, because

it was written by the pious Melancthon, after Luther's decease, and because it is wanting in some of the copies of the Wittenberg Latin editions.*—The excellent writer begins thus:

"The Rev. Martin Luther had given reason to hope that in the preface to this part of his writings, he would favour us with some account of his own life, and of the occasions of those contests in which he was so much concerned. And no doubt he would have done so, if before this volume was printed, he had not been called from the present mortal life, to the eternal enjoyment of God, and the heavenly church. A luminous review of his private life would have been peculiarly useful: the narrative must have been full of lessons for the admonition of posterity, and also full of examples for the encouragement of piety: moreover it would have confuted the slanderous fictions of his enemies; who insinuate, that he was stirred up by princes or others to undermine the dignity of bishops, or that he was induced, through the violence of private ambition, to break the bonds of monastic slavery.

"It were much to be wished that such a narrative had been executed by himself with a copiousness of detail. For though the malevolent might have objected, that the author was trumpeting his own praise, we know very well, that HE was too grave a character to have allowed the smallest deviation from truth. Besides, as many good and wise men are yet alive, who, he must have known, were well acquainted with all the transactions,—to have devised falsehoods under such circumstances must have been perfectly ridiculous.

"I now proceed to recite, with the strictest regard to truth, such matters relative to his life, as I either actually saw, or was told of by himself.

"The parents of Luther took especial care in their daily instructions, to educate their son in the knowledge and fear of God, and in a sense of his duty. The youth soon displayed very great talents, and particularly in an inclination to eloquence. With great ease he surpassed his school-fellows in copiousness of language, both in prose and verse; and if he had been so fortunate as to have met with suitable teachers, his great capacity

* Mosh. Historia Eccl. p. 616. Not. (a).

† See Vol. I. page 86 of this History.

* It has been published separately; but it is not easy to be met with.

would have enabled him to go through all the sciences. Neither is it improbable but the milder studies of a sound philosophy, and a careful habit of elaborate composition, might have been useful in moderating the vehemence of his natural temper: but at Erfurt he was introduced to the dry, thorny logic of the age; and his penetrating genius quickly made him master of all that was valuable in that subject.

“His capacious mind eager for knowledge, was not content with this. He proceeded to Cicero, Virgil, Livy, and the rest. Nor did he read these authors, as boys do, for the sake of the words, but for the instruction they furnish. He entered into the spirit of the writers; and as his memory was in an extraordinary degree tenacious, almost everything he had read, was at hand for practice. Hence the superior genius of Luther became the admiration of the whole university.

“His parents had intended these great powers of eloquence, and this vast strength of genius, to be employed in public business for the advantage of the state; but Luther, contrary to their judgment, suddenly left the study of the law, and entered the Augustine monastery at Erfurt. There he not only gave the closest attention to ecclesiastical learning, but also personally submitted to the severest discipline. He far exceeded every one in all kinds of religious exercises, in reading, in arguing, in fasting, in praying. And as he was neither a little, nor a weak man, I have often been astonished to observe how little meat or drink he seemed to require. I have seen him, when he was in perfect health, absolutely neither eat nor drink during four days together; at other times, I have seen him for many days be content with the slight allowance of a very little bread and a herring on each day.

“The immediate occasion of his commencing that course of life which he judged most adapted to sacred duties and the promotion of piety, was this, as he himself told me, and as many persons well know. While he was deeply reflecting on the astonishing instances of the Divine vengeance, so great alarm would suddenly affect his whole frame, as almost to frighten him to death. I was once present, when, through intense exertion of mind in the course of an argument respecting some point of doctrine,

he was so terrified, as to retire to a neighbour's chamber, place himself on the bed, and pray aloud, frequently repeating these words, ‘He hath concluded all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all.’ These alarming agitations came upon him either for the first time, or, certainly, they were the severest in that year, when he lost an intimate companion, who was killed; but I know not by what accident.

“It was not, therefore, poverty, but the love of a pious life, which induced Luther to enter the monastery. And as this was his grand object, he was not content with the usual scholastic learning, though his proficiency in it was surprising. He was not in quest of fame, but of religious improvement. He soon comprehended the subtle processes of the schools, but his heart was not in those things. The fountain of SACRED AND HEAVENLY LEARNING, that is, the writings of the prophets and the apostles, were more suited to his taste; and these he studied with the greatest avidity. The anxieties and terrors above mentioned had increased this turn of mind. He wished to know the WILL of God, to build his faith on the firmest foundations, and to cultivate an habitual reverence for the Divine commands.

“He used to say, that an elderly priest in the monastery, to whom he had opened the distresses of his conscience, had been of great use to him, by his discourses on the nature of faith, and by drawing his attention to that expression in the creed, ‘I believe in the remission of sins.’ The elderly priest interpreted this article as implying not merely a GENERAL BELIEF, for the devils had a faith of that sort, but, that it was the command of God that each particular person should apply this doctrine of the remission of sins to his own particular case: and this interpretation, he said, was confirmed by a reference to a passage of St. Bernard, in one of his sermons, who maintains the same sentiment, and also produces the apostle Paul in support of the doctrine of free justification by faith.

“This conversation proved a great comfort to the mind of Luther. He was led to attend to St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith, which is so often inculcated by that apostle. By reading and comparing together different parts of the Old and New Testament, and by an increased dependence on God in daily prayer, he gradually acquired more light,

and saw the emptiness of the usual interpretations of Scripture.

“He then began to read the works of Augustine, where he found many decisive passages which confirmed his idea of faith, and gave him much satisfaction. He read other divines, but stuck close to Augustine.

“Frederic, the elector of Saxony, heard him preach; and much admired the excellent matter of his sermons, as well as the nervous language and genius of the preacher.*

“Afterwards, Luther undertook to expound the Psalms and the Epistle to the Romans. He showed the difference between the Law and the Gospel: he refuted the ancient pharisaical error, at that time prevalent both in the schools and the pulpit, that men by their own works may merit the remission of their sins, and be accounted righteous before God. Thus he recalled men’s minds to the office of the Son of God, and, like John the Baptist, showed them the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. Moreover, he taught them, that remission of their sins is freely for Christ’s sake, and that this benefit is to be received by faith.

“This revival of most excellent doctrine procured him a great and extensive authority; especially as the LIFE of the man harmonized with his professions. His language was not merely that of the lips, but proceeded from the heart. The proverb was remarkably verified in this case—‘The pious conduct of a man maketh his speech persuasive.’ It was this circumstance, namely, the sanctity of his life, that induced some excellent characters to comply with the plans which he afterwards proposed, of changing certain established ceremonies.

“Not that Luther, at this time, meditated the smallest innovation on the customary observances. On the contrary, he was a most rigid disciplinarian; and had broached nothing to alarm. But he was illustrating more and more those doctrines of which ALL stand in need, the doctrines of repentance, remission of sins, faith, and the true consolations of the cross. Pious Christians were delighted with these things; and even learned men were much pleased to see Christ, the prophets, and the apostles, brought, as it were, out of darkness and

prison; and to hear of the difference between law and gospel and their promises, and between philosophy and the word of God, concerning which important matters, not a line was to be found in Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, and such like. Add to this, the writings of Erasmus proved great incitements to the cultivation of the Greek and Latin languages. Luther himself diligently studied Hebrew and Greek, for the purpose of obtaining a more perfect knowledge of the Scriptures.

“Such were the employments of Luther at the time when those prostitute indulgences were first proclaimed by that most impudent Dominican, Tetzel. Burning with the love of everything that was godly, and irritated by Tetzel’s shameful discourses, he published some propositions concerning the nature of indulgences. The Dominican, in return, publicly burnt Luther’s propositions, and menaced the heretic himself with the flames. In a word, the outrageous conduct of Tetzel and his associates absolutely compelled Luther to discuss the subject at length, in support of the cause of Truth.

“In this manner began the controversy between the Reformers and the Papists. As yet Luther never dreamt of changing any one of the rites of the church, nor even of entirely rejecting indulgences. They, therefore, charge him falsely, who say that he made use of the affair of the indulgences as a plausible pretext for subverting the establishment, or for increasing either his own power or that of others.

“Frederic of Saxony, in particular, conducted himself agreeably to the known character of that prince. He neither incited nor applauded Luther; he was ever distinguished as a lover of peace; and it was with a painful concern that he beheld the prospect of still greater dissensions.

“But he was a wise man, and was influenced not merely by worldly maxims, which always direct us to crush as quickly as possible the slightest beginnings of every innovation: he revered the DIVINE commands, which enjoin attention to the Gospel, and forbid an obstinate resistance to the Truth. Thus this prince submitted to God, read his word with diligence, and never discouraged whatever his judgment pointed out to him as sound doctrine. Moreover,

* Page 215.

I know that he often asked wise and learned men to give him their sentiments freely on the disputed points; and in particular at Cologne he besought Erasmus to open his mind to him respecting the controversies in which Luther was engaged. There Erasmus spoke without disguise: 'The man is right; but there is a want of mildness in him.*'

"On this head Duke Frederic afterwards wrote to Luther, and exhorted him, in the most serious manner, to moderate the asperity of his style.

"It is also well known that Luther promised Cardinal Cajetan to be silent, provided his adversaries were also enjoined silence. From which it most clearly appears that he had, at that time, formed no purpose of raising contests in the church, but wished for peace; till ignorant writers provoked him on all sides, and drew him into fresh disputes.

"The grand question concerning the supremacy of the Roman See was raised by Eckius for the purpose of inflaming the hatred of the pope and of princes against Luther.

"Our Reformer, not only in the beginning of the contest, undertook the cause of Truth, without the least motive of private ambition, but also remained throughout the course of it, always mindful of his own peculiar department; so that though he was naturally of an ardent and passionate temper, yet he constantly disclaimed the use of force, or of any other arms but those of argument and instruction. He wisely distinguished between things that were totally different in every way; for example, the duties of a bishop instructing the Church of God, and of a magistrate holding the sword as a restraint on the licentious multitude.

"Accordingly when Satan, who loves to disgrace religion by the ruinous errors of poor miserable men, raised up several seditious characters to excite tumults and irregularities, Luther was ever the man to condemn such outrages in the strongest language; and, both by his precepts and example, to adorn and strengthen the bonds of social order and polity. WHEN I SERIOUSLY REFLECT ON THIS MATTER, and consider how many great men in the Church have failed in this very point, I do not hesitate to af-

firm distinctly, that no human care or diligence alone could have been equal to this effect; but that there must also have been a divine principle which illumined and directed his mind, and preserved him so constantly within the proper limits of his duty.

"'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's,' was his constant exhortation; in other words, Worship God in true penitence, and in an open avowal of the truth, in true prayer and in a conscientious discharge of duties: and obey with reverence and in the fear of God all the civil regulations of the community to which you belong. These were the very rules to which Luther himself adhered in his practice. He gave to God the things which are God's. He taught the Truth, and he offered up his prayers to God on right principles; he likewise possessed the other virtues which are pleasing to God. Lastly, as a citizen, he avoided everything that had the smallest tendency to sedition. These virtues rank so high in my estimation, that in this life, I think, greater accomplishments cannot be desired.

"But while we praise the excellencies of the man who made so becoming a use of his heavenly gifts, it is our bounden duty to give particular thanks to God, that he hath been pleased, through Luther's means, to restore to us the light of the Gospel, and it is also our duty to preserve and spread the doctrine which he taught. It is this doctrine which must guide our prayers, and even our whole lives. It is this doctrine, of which the Son of God says, 'If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.'

"In fact, a false philosophy, and the succeeding errors of Pelagius, had exceedingly corrupted the pure faith of the Scriptures. St. Augustine was raised up by God to restore it in a measure; and I doubt not but if he could now judge of the controversies of the present age, he would be decidedly with us.

"With my whole heart, I pray to the eternal God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for his own and his Son's glory, he would collect together the Eternal Church by the voice of his Gospel: and may he direct our wills by his Holy Spirit, and preserve in its purity that doctrine which he hath revived

* Page 228.

among us through the ministry of Martin Luther!

“The Son of God himself prayed, ‘Father, sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.’ To this prayer of our high priest we would add our own petitions, That true religion may ever shine among us and direct our lives. These were the daily prayers of Luther; and continued to be so till his soul was called from his mortal body, which took place without struggle in the sixty-third year of his age.”

The reader has now before him the SUBSTANCE of a considerable part of Melancthon’s account of Luther, written very soon after the death of that Reformer. The known integrity, piety, and moderation of the writer, render his Preface to the second volume of Luther’s Works peculiarly valuable. An exact translation was deemed unnecessary. It was thought better to condense the MATTER into as little room as possible, and not to interrupt the detail of the biographer by introducing any particulars from other authorities. The facts, which were already mentioned in the preceding History, are in general omitted in these extracts. A trifling repetition sometimes could not well be avoided, and will be excused by the indulgent reader, on account of the instructive remark or opinion which accompanies it. The positive judgment and declaration of Melancthon, whenever they can be had, respecting the circumstances or events in which he himself was immediately concerned, cannot fail to be instructive.

But in this instance, as in many others, it has unfortunately happened that those passages of this little tract, which are most deeply practical, and which peculiarly relate to Luther’s penitential convictions, and to his progress in spiritual understanding, during the earlier years of his religious course, have been almost entirely overlooked by historians and memorialists. The consequence has been, that certain precious fragments of the secret thoughts and practice of the Reformer, though authentic beyond all dispute, are scarcely known among protestants in general. The pious and enlightened reader of every denomination, will no doubt be gratified in seeing them brought forward and recorded here.

MISCELLANEOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Melancthon, in another place, has given a very decided testimony to the talents of Luther.

“Pomeranus,” says he, “is a grammarian, and explains the force of words; I profess logic, and teach both the management of the matter, and the nature of argumentation; Justus Jonas is an orator, and discourses with copiousness and elegance;—but Luther is OMNIA IN OMNIBUS, complete in everything; a very miracle among men; whatever he says, whatever he writes, penetrates their minds, and leaves the most astonishing stings in their hearts.”

The same author assures us that he often found Luther at prayer, with vehemence and tears imploring God for the whole Church. He daily set apart a portion of time for reading psalms, and for earnest supplications; and would often say, he was not pleased with those, who, through indolence or a multiplicity of employments, contented themselves with mere sighs instead of actual prayers. Forms of prayer, he said, were prescribed to us by the will of God; that the reading of them might warm our affections, and that our voices might profess aloud the God whom we serve and implore.*

The religious student of Ecclesiastical history naturally finds himself interested in every event where Luther is materially concerned. This does not arise from curiosity alone. Much light is often thrown on the characters of eminent men, from a knowledge of their conduct under peculiar or extraordinary circumstances, provided the facts be but stated with accuracy.

The various accounts of authors, respecting the immediate incidents which determined Luther to retire from the world into a monastery,† agree in the main, but not precisely in every circumstance. It is very remarkable, that Melancthon, who speaks of the occasion of this sudden resolution, as a thing which was well known, and which he himself had heard Luther relate, is not only silent concerning any storm of thunder and lightning, but, as we have mentioned above, expressly says, he does not know

* Melch. Adam.

† Page 213 of this Vol.

by what accident Luther's companion was killed. The story of the thunder-storm appears also to have had little weight on the mind of Melchior Adamus.* Yet, from the very respectable evidence collected by Seekendorf and others, the most probable conclusion seems to be,

1. That Luther's companion was not killed by lightning, but murdered by some unknown person, who left him miserably bruised and wounded. His name is said to have been Alexius.

2. That Luther himself, while walking at a distance from house or town, was so alarmed by a storm of thunder, that he fell upon the ground, and in that situation made a sort of vow to lead a monastic life in future, if he should be delivered from the impending danger.

3. That he afterwards considered this vow as binding on his conscience, which was at that time in a remarkably tender state.

4. That soon after these events, which took place when he was about twenty-one years of age, he called together his particular friends and fellow-students, and entertained them in his usual way, with music and a convivial treat; and when they had not the smallest suspicion of his intentions, he besought them to be cheerful with him that evening, for it was the last time, he said, they would ever see him in his present situation, as he had actually determined to begin the monastic life. In the morning he wrote farewell letters to them; and sent his parents the ring and gown which belonged to him as Master of Arts; and at the same time he unfolded to them in writing the grounds of his resolution. They grieved excessively that so great talents should be buried in a state of almost non-existence. But for the space of a month nobody was admitted to speak to him. †

GEO. SPALATINUS. Pages 216, 217.

George Spalatinus appears to have been one of the most intimate friends of Luther. He was of all others the person to whom the Reformer, in his greatest difficulties and dangers, entrusted his most secret feelings and designs. Spa-

latinus by his good sense, his opportunity of easy access to the elector of Saxony, and his sincere attachment to Luther, was, on many occasions, useful to the cause of the Reformation in general, as well as to his friend in particular.

A private epistolary correspondence between the two seems to have been frequent and uninterrupted during many years: and as the historian frequently refers to certain parts of it, which are extremely interesting, the following short account of Georgius Spalatinus himself may have its use.

He was a Franconian, of considerable learning and great discretion. He was about a year older than Luther, but appears not to have begun the study of divinity, with any degree of earnestness, till he was more than thirty years of age. He requested his friend to give him his advice concerning the best method of acquiring sacred knowledge. The answer of Luther on this occasion well deserves to be remembered and practised by every student in divinity. After recommending to his notice certain parts of the writings of Jerom, Ambrose, and Augustine, he exhorts him always to begin his studies with "SERIOUS PRAYER;" for, says he, there is really NO INTERPRETER OF THE DIVINE WORD, BUT ITS OWN AUTHOR. He adds, READ THE BIBLE IN ORDER FROM THE BEGINNING TO THE END.

Luther, in his letters to Spalatinus, addresses him, sometimes as Librarian, and sometimes as Registry of the Elector of Saxony, but takes care, at the same time, to call him Minister of Jesus Christ. In fact Spalatinus was both secretary and privy-counsellor to the elector; he accompanied him to several German Diets; and at his court he preached and performed the duties of domestic chaplain.* A stronger proof of the high estimation in which he was supposed to be held by Frederic the Wise needs not to be adduced, than that, in the year 1519, the pope himself, Leo X. condescended to write a letter to his BELOVED SON GEORGE SPALATINUS, in which, after acknowledging, in the most flattering terms, the great influence and weight which Spalatinus had with the elector, and how very much that prince valued the prudent and wholesome advice of his secretary, he exhorts him "in the Lord, and with his paternal authority requires

* Who wrote the lives of the German Divines who promoted the Reformation.

† Seek.—Luth. Ep.—Melch. Adam.

him, to contribute everything in his power to repress the detestable temerity of Brother Martin Luther, that child of Satan, whose grievous heresy was spreading among the credulous people."

In the affairs of religion, Spalatinus used all his influence to strengthen the party of Luther; but he was often so vexed and even dispirited on account of the little attention that was paid to his own ministerial exertions, that he seriously thought of quitting his situation at the elector's court. Luther opposed this intention in the most animated and decisive terms: "Take care," said he, "that you get the better of these thoughts which harass your mind, or, at least, learn to dismiss them. You must not desert the ministry of the word of God. Christ has called you to his service. Yield yourself to his good pleasure. At present you do not understand the importance of your situation; you will understand it better by and by. The desire you have to quit your post is a mere temptation; the reason of which, we, who are spectators, see better than you do yourself. In a case of this sort, you should rather trust the judgment of your friends than your own. We are the means which, on this occasion, the Lord uses for your comfort and advice. We call God to witness, that in wishing you to continue in your vocation we have no other object but his WILL and his GLORY. I consider it as a certain sign of your ministry being acceptable to God, that you are thus tempted. If it were otherwise, you would not be weary, and deplore your unfruitfulness; you would rather bustle, and seek to please men, as those do who talk much, though they were never sent with a commission to preach the Gospel."

On the same subject Luther writes thus: "You ask my advice, my dear Spalatinus, whether you should quit your situation at the elector's court. This is my opinion. I own there is reason in what you allege. 'The word of God is disregarded.' And it is a wise rule, 'not to pour out speeches where there is no attention.' But I say, if there be ANY persons that love to hear, you should not cease to speak. I myself acted on the principle which I now recommend to you; otherwise I might long ago have been silent amidst this prodigious contempt of the word of God. Therefore, I affirm, that unless you have

some better reason, which lies heavy on your conscience, this perverse and unreasonable inattention of wicked men is not a sufficient cause for your leaving the court. Consider of how much service you may be to many, from the weight of your influence with the prince, and from your long experience of the ways of courtiers. Whatever may be the abilities of your successor, Frederic the Wise will not trust him much, till time has furnished proofs of his integrity. On the whole, I cannot so much as conceive any reason that will justify the step you speak of, but one, namely, marriage. Stay, therefore, where you are; or if you do depart, let a wife be the cause."

Spalatinus continued in his employments until his death, which happened in his grand climacteric, sixty-three, in the year of our Lord 1545. Great grief and depression of spirits are said to have hastened his end. There is extant a most judicious, consolatory letter, which Luther wrote to him the preceding year, and which gave him much comfort. Spalatinus, it seems, through ignorance or inadvertency, had consented to the illegal marriage of a clergyman of bad character; and the matter hung heavy on his mind. 1. Luther wisely cautions his friend against giving way to too much sorrow. He was well acquainted, he said, with the dreadful effects of it. He had felt those effects in his own case; and he had seen them in the cases of others. He instanced Melancthon, who fell into a most dangerous disease, owing to great grief. He then takes up the case at the worst, namely on the supposition that Spalatinus had been really much to blame in the affair; and shows that still he ought not to despair of the grace of God, who was ready to pardon not only the slight faults, but the most grievous sins of the penitent. He tells him, that formerly he himself had been in a similar affliction of mind, which had brought him to the very edge of the grave; but that Staupitius had been of great use to him, by saying, "You are endeavouring to quiet your conscience by considering yourself as a slight, outward, superficial sinner; but you ought to know that Jesus Christ is ready to save the greatest and the vilest of sinners." Lastly, Luther, as a kind brother, exhorts him in the sweetest and most emphatical language to derive his comfort from a view of the gracious Redeemer.

Thus we find Luther always the same man. Exercised in the school of adversity, he feels for others. Naturally tender and grateful, he loves his friends, and administers every comfort in his power. His eye is always fixed on the next world; and the proper business of this life, with him, is the care of the soul. The account just given is an admirable specimen of his talents as a spiritual adviser. How many, in a like case, through a mistaken affection, or through fear of giving offence to an aged, dying friend, would have contented themselves with saying nothing but "smooth things"* concerning human infirmity, general sincerity, and the venial nature of sins of inadvertence, &c. But Martin Luther, though behind no man in compassion and benevolence, kept two things constantly in mind, the glory of the Redeemer, and the salvation of men's souls. Hence, on these subjects particularly, he always spoke without disguise.

ERASMUS. Page 241.

It is a most unpleasant circumstance belonging to the history of this great man, that the longer he lives, the lower he sinks in the estimation of the Christian reader. It is in the beginning of the Reformation, while he was exposing the scandalous practices of the indolent, debauched, avaricious clergy, that he appears to the greatest advantage. But when Luther and his associates began to preach boldly the Gospel of Christ in its purity, Erasmus instantly shrunk; and not only ceased to be a coadjutor of the Reformers, but became gradually their peevish and disgusted adversary. With inconceivable address and management, he steadily trode, as long as he could, his favourite middle path of pleasing both sides; but when the contention grew sharp, when the doctrines of Grace were found to offend the great and the powerful, and when persecution was at the door, the cautious evasive system was no longer practicable; Erasmus was called upon to decide; and there could be little doubt to which party a character of his stamp would incline.

When we divest ourselves of prejudice, and view Erasmus as the most elegant

scholar of his age, admired and courted by Princes, Popes, and dignified Ecclesiastics, we are compelled to admit, that his temptation to support the established hierarchy was very great; and it is to be lamented that he had not a clearer and a more affecting insight into the deceitfulness of the human heart. If he had understood more of men's natural alienation from God by the FALL, and had had a deeper practical sense of the evil of sin in his own case, he would have felt weary and heavy laden; he would have sought more diligently for deliverance from internal guilt and misery; he would have been more disposed to resist temptations of every sort, and particularly those sins that easily beset him; and lastly, though he might still have differed from Luther in subordinate matters or modes of expression, he would have had the same general views of the nature of the Redemption by Christ Jesus; and instead of raising captious objections against the doctrines of Grace, and quarrelling with the man, whom Providence had ordained to be the instrument of their revival, he would have applied those blessed healing truths to the distresses of his own conscience, and would have rejoiced in that "burning and shining light" which arose amidst the thick darkness of Papal ignorance and superstition.

In one word; the different sentiments, which these great men entertained of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, was the real cause of their unhappy contention; every circumstance of which may be traced to this single source. And no wonder; for it seems almost impossible that a warm and cordial attachment should long subsist between persons, who zealously support contrary notions of the way of eternal salvation. It is true, that where the natural tempers are mild and ingenuous, many causes of irritation might be avoided or suppressed; and it is true, also, that where Divine Grace is powerful, the affections of meekness, kindness, and forbearance, will abound and be in vigorous exercise. But after all that can be said or imagined, there will still be such an essential difference of the spiritual taste, such an opposition of the judgment, and such a dissimilitude in the whole turn of thinking, that separation, not coalescence, dissension, not agreement, is to be looked for under such circumstances.

* Isa. xxx. 10.

One cannot reflect on these things without much concern. The cause of disunion, here pointed at, is of very extensive operation in practice, and might be exemplified in many lamentable instances, as well as in the unfriendly strife between Luther and Erasmus.

This second volume, together with the subjoined Appendix, contains ample materials to enable the reader to form a judgment both of the soundness of Luther's Christianity, and also of the earnestness with which he taught his doctrines. Everything that is to follow concerning him, is altogether of a similar description with what has gone before. With intense study and with fervent prayer, he searches for light, and he attains it: Faithful to his convictions, he speaks without disguise; he exerts every nerve in support of Christian truth and Christian liberty; and as he is engaged in a contest which he considers as the cause of God, he is ever ready to hazard all that in this life is dear to man.

From the foregoing observations concerning Erasmus, and also from what is advanced in the Preface, the student of the History of the Church of Christ will be led to expect FURTHER documents relative both to his religious sentiments, and to the part which he acted during the progress of the Reformation. The facts which are at present before the reader, it must be owned, do not convict that cautious and artful disputant, of any decided opposition to a change in the Ecclesiastical system, or of any settled alienation of mind from the Reformer. On the contrary, they must rather be considered, in the main, as favourable both to Luther and to his doctrines. Yet enough has appeared already to raise considerable suspicions respecting the stanch orthodoxy of his faith, and the honest simplicity and disinterestedness of his intentions.

In another place we shall endeavour to throw light on these matters. At present we conclude with the substance of a passage extracted from one of his little controversial tracts. The quotation, though but short, is of itself sufficiently characteristic to furnish satisfactory evidence, that Erasmus differed very materially from Luther, in his ideas of the importance of certain scriptural doctrines, and also of the existing contest with the Romish hierarchy.

"If," says he, "I were called upon to

suffer for the truth of the Gospel, I should not refuse to die; but as yet I have no disposition to suffer death for Luther's paradoxes. The present disputes are not concerning articles of faith; but, whether the pope's supremacy is of Christ's appointment; whether the order of cardinals is a necessary part of the church; whether there is Christ's authority for the practice of confession; whether free will contributes to salvation; whether faith confers salvation;* . . . whether the mass can in any sense be called a sacrifice: On account of these points, which are the usual subjects of the scholastic contentions, I would neither endanger my own life, nor venture to take away the life of another. . . . During our endless quarrels, whether any HUMAN WORKS should be denominated GOOD, the consequence is, we produce no good works. While we are contending whether faith alone without works confers salvation,† we neither reap the fruits of faith, nor the reward of good works. Besides, there are some things of such a nature, that, though they were ever so true, they ought not to be mentioned in the hearing of the populace; for example, That free-will is nothing but an unmeaning term; That ANY person may do the office of a priest, and has the power of remitting sins, and of consecrating the body of our Lord;—That Justification is by FAITH ALONE;‡ and that our works are of no use for that end. What can be the effect of throwing out such paradoxical doctrines as these before the vulgar, but schism and sedition."§

This language is so perfectly intelligible, that it cannot be necessary to add any remarks by way of elucidation.

ALEXANDER. Page 280.

Seckendorf informs us, that Jerome Alexander had formerly been Secretary to the infamous Cæsar Borgia; and he calls him a servant worthy of such a master. He was made archbishop of Brindisi by Clement VII. and a cardinal by Paul III. Luther also gives him a very bad character. He represents him as covetous,

* Conferat salutem. † Id.

‡ Solâ fide conferri justitiam. opera nostra nihil ad rem facere.

§ Erasm. Purg. ad exp. Hutten.

proud, and passionate, and as one who did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and wallowed in the most infamous voluptuousness. He owns, however, that he was well skilled in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Erasmus often speaks of him, and generally to his disadvantage; e. g. "Aleander is a man, to say no worse of him, not superstitiously addicted to truth."* He acted a conspicuous part at the Diet of Worms.—See p. 317.

LUTHER'S WRITINGS. Page 292.

1. About the beginning of the year 1520, he wrote an excellent consolatory tract for the particular use of the elector Frederic, who had lately had a severe illness. †—Erasmus himself sent it to the bishop of Basle, in 1523, and commends it in these terms: "Luther's little book is extremely approved, even by those who have the greatest aversion to his doctrine; for he wrote this piece before matters were come to these extremities." ‡ It is indeed an excellent performance, and deserves to be wholly transcribed. It consists of fourteen chapters, seven of which contain an account of the afflictions to which the Christian is exposed; and the other seven point out the effectual remedies and comforts which he should use. §

2. He published a commentary on the twenty-two first Psalms; also on some parts of the Evangelists, and particularly on the Lord's Prayer. ||

Among his numerous sermons, I observe one on Matrimony; which proves that at that time, namely 1519, he considered Marriage as a SACRAMENT. ¶

3. He wrote many controversial treatises.

BUCER ON LUTHER'S COMMENTARY ON GALATIANS. Page 292.

He writes thus to Spalatinus: "Luther, by the divine lucubrations which he has published, stands so high in my opinion, that I look up to him as an angelic guide in the interpretation of difficult passages of Scripture. How then, think you, did I rejoice when one of our

brethren brought me his Commentary on the Galatians! After a very slight perusal of it, I was almost ready to dance for joy."—So far the learned protestant Bucer.*

PONTANUS AND GLAPIO. Page 299.

The following conversation was at the time kept an entire secret, even from Spalatinus himself. It was in substance thus:

Glapio. "I was delighted with the first publications of Luther. I said, What rich fruit the church may expect, if we judge from the buds and shoots which Luther has already thrown out. But when his book on the Babylonish Captivity came out, I was vexed as if any one had flogged me from head to foot. Indeed I do not believe Luther will own it to be his: it is neither in the style, nor has it the polish of his writings. If it be really his, he must have written it when provoked by the Pope's bull. However, the ease is not without remedy.—I wish I might be allowed to talk with the elector.

Pontanus. "My master is too much engaged; I pray, open your mind to me."—Then, with a most sanctimonious countenance, Glapio said,

Glap. "I protest, it was the emperor's most ardent wish, before the publication of the Babylonish Captivity, that such a man should be reconciled to the church. Therefore, if Luther will but own, that in this tract some improper expressions have escaped him through passion, and that he meant nothing against the church, he will have all learned men in all nations on his side. His attempts to reform abuses have great merit in them; but in the Babylonish Captivity he tries to roll a stone beyond his strength. His intentions are the best possible, but he does not consider the times and circumstances, and especially the princes. I wish the elector would depute trusty persons to settle the business in a private way."

Pont. "My master never undertook to defend Luther; nor has Luther desired him to do so. But what do you suppose would settle the business?"

Glap. "If Luther does not choose to recall this book as being written in a pas-

* Ep. Erasmi. p. 1035, "non superstitiosè verax."

† Vol. II. 257, and the note.

‡ Eras. p. 775. § Op. Jen. I. 335, b.

|| Witt. VII. 99. ¶ Jen. I. 296.

* Seck. 138. d.

sion, let him say at once it is not his—for it really is not in his style.”

Pont. “Well, but still there would be the Pope’s bull in force against him; and the bull condemns his works before this was published.”

Glap. “That may be got over. The bull was issued upon a supposed contumacy, when he really had not been heard; and therefore the pope, in the plenitude of his power, can restore Luther; and the rest may be settled by impartial judges: for he OUGHT to be heard, and heard by learned GERMANS. I would not have him leave the prince, who protects him. My advice is sound; and there is nothing I more wish for, than a reform of the church. Luther, however, I must say, lays too much stress on Scriptural arguments. The Scripture is like soft wax. One may prove anything by it: for example, ‘Pluck out your eye, and cast it from you.’—Can your master propose any better plan than this of mine? Mine, I hope, will please the emperor; for yesterday I said to his majesty, God will flagellate the emperor and all the princes, if the spouse of Christ is not freed from the loads which oppress her. Moreover, I added, this Martin is sent by God as a scourge, on account of our sins.”*

This abstract of a most curious and authentic piece of secret history, proves how the cunning popish agents tried to draw Luther into one concession after another. No wonder this artful confessor of Charles V. is much commended by Pallavicini.†

JUSTUS JONAS. Page 306.

He was a doctor of divinity, and a canon of the collegiate church of Wittenberg. He was made president or principal by the elector in 1521. The profession of the canon law belonged to this presidency, but Jonas chose to employ his time in studying the Scriptures. He read lectures in divinity to the students every day; and gave up a portion of his salary to a lecturer in the canon law. He refused to accept the presidency on any other terms. He was one of the most intimate friends both of Luther and Melancthon.‡

* Seck. 143.—Add. II. f.

† Pallav. I. XXIV. 4.

‡ Seck. Sup. Ind. XLI.—Melch. Adam.

BUCER. Page 307.

A very learned and able protestant divine, born at Shelestadt, in Alsace. He was uncommonly well qualified for business, and was concerned in many of the ecclesiastical negotiations respecting the Reformation. He came to see Luther at the Diet of Worms, spent some days with him, embraced his opinions, and in a short time professed them openly.* Afterwards he preached the protestant doctrines at Strasburg. He was indefatigable in his endeavours to reconcile the Lutherans and Zuinglians; and his great desire to effect a lasting peace between the parties, seems to have led him to use general, and perhaps ambiguous expressions in his writings. If I am not mistaken, he thought Luther’s notion of the sacrament too strong, and that of Zuingle too weak. Justus Jonas is much too hard upon him, when he describes Zuingle as something rustic, and a little arrogant, Ecolampadius and Hedio as very mild and good-natured, but Bucer, AS CUNNING AS A FOX.† Jonas, however, was at that time heated with the disputes at Marburg.‡ The reputation of Bucer for learning, wisdom and integrity, was so great, that he was invited into England by archbishop Cranmer in 1549, and appointed lecturer in divinity in the university of Cambridge, with triple the usual stipend. His lectures were solid and full of erudition; he continued to read them till the year 1551; when, at the age of sixty-one, he died of the stone and several other painful disorders. He was buried with the greatest respect in St. Mary’s church; and the Vice-chancellor ordered the members of all the colleges to attend his funeral.§

FREDERIC MYCONIUS, OF LICHTENFELD, IN FRANCONIA. P. 332.

At the age of sixteen, he entered the monastery of Annaberg; and, by Popish austerities and hard study for the space of seven years, was much reduced in bodily strength. About this time, Tetzels, the impudent vender of indulgences, came into Germany, and Myconius requested he might have one of them gratis, on the

* Melch. Ad.

† Seck. II. p. 140.

‡ Page 541.

§ Melch. Ad. and Bayle’s Dict.

score of his poverty, and agreeably to the Pope's letters. Tetzal refused; Myconius pressed the point with great spirit, but could not make the least impression on the infamous and hardened popish agent.

Myconius went into holy orders in the year 1516, preached at Weimar, was confirmed in the truth by Luther's writings, and ever after opposed the corruptions of Popery. He exerted himself in preserving tranquillity at the time of the tumults of the rustics;* and afterwards displayed so much integrity, learning, and talents for business, that when Henry VIII. abolished the papal authority, he was sent into England to confer with the leading Protestants on ecclesiastical subjects. In 1541 he was brought, by a consumption, to the very edge of the grave; in which state Luther wrote to him so warm and affectionate a letter, and prayed for his life so vehemently, that Myconius himself attributed his recovery, and the lengthening of his life for six years, to the friendship and the supplications of Luther. He said, there was something so refreshing to him in Luther's letter, that he seemed, as it were, plainly to hear Christ call out, "Lazarus, come forth."†

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LEO X. 335.

Persons of an elegant taste, and of loose morals, who are sceptics in religion, and lovers of learning, will always be most disposed to treat this character with tenderness. However, all attempts to prove Leo a religious man are sure to fail: his religion consisted solely in promoting the opulence and grandeur of the See. It may be allowed that he protected learned men; but his unconquerable indolence, and his habits of luxury and pleasure, forbid us to believe that he himself could possibly have been learned.

Whatever might be his skill in judging of men's proficiency in the fine arts, there is no doubt that he encouraged them: and, as his situation must have exposed him to much adulation, he may possibly have been made to fancy that he had taste and knowledge in many subjects, when in reality he had not much either of the one or the other.

BUGENHAGIUS. Page 343.

He was a celebrated schoolmaster at Treptow in Pomerania, and hence he is often called Pomeranus.

When Luther's treatise on the Babylonish Captivity came out in 1521, and he had read only a few pages of it, he said, "The author of this book is the most pestilent heretic that ever infested the Church of Christ." After a few days close attention to the work, he ingenuously recanted his opinion, in the following strong terms: "The whole world is blind, and this man alone sees the truth."

During many years he had been much given to prayer and the study of the Scriptures. At the age of thirty-six he came to Wittemberg, was chosen parochial minister of the great church, and with much piety and usefulness discharged the duties of his station for thirty-six years. He always opposed the violent and seditious practices of Carolstadt; and lived on the most friendly terms with Luther and Melanethon.*

At first he thought Luther had been too violent in his answer to Henry VIII.† but he changed his opinion, and declared that the author had used the English monarch with too much lenity. "I am convinced," says he, "the Holy Ghost is with Luther; he is a man of an honest, holy, firm, and invincible spirit."‡

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GABRIEL. Page 357.

A zealous preacher of the Gospel, who had joined in some of the tumults raised by Carolstadt; but on his repentance and promises to abstain from innovations, was recommended by Luther to be the minister of Altenburg. The popish clergy there could not bear the man, and the timid elector did not dare to support him. "I know the prince's reason," said Luther; "we are yet in the flesh, and are frightened when there is nothing to fear. Let the prince and his courtiers see to it—I shall not oppose the Holy Spirit. My judgment is clear that Gabriel ought not to be removed. And I am also equally clear against supporting him by force."§

* Page 270.

† Melch. Add.

* Melch. Add.

† Page 334.

‡ Schmeel. in S. I. 189.

§ Ep. II. 80.

To Gabriel himself, Luther wrote thus; "I cannot say your letter pleased me. There was in it a degree of spiritual presumption. Do not boast of your readiness to do and to suffer for the Gospel. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. You have not yet had to contend with death. It is easier to talk than to do. How many fall away! How few stand! Walk in fear; distrust yourself: leave all to Christ. Preach faith and charity. The people are all prone to trust in externals. Do you lead them to prove by their fruits that they are branches of our vine."*

EMSER. Page 358.

Jerome Emser was one of the most early and bitter adversaries of Luther. He invited him to meet several persons at supper. Luther at first supposed himself to be among friends, but soon found there was an insidious plan laid to draw him to speak freely against the notions of Thomas Aquinas. This happened at Dresden, in January 1518, and afforded a handle for calumniators at the court of Duke George. Emser was one of the counsellors of this prince; and a professor of the canon laws at Leipsic. He paid little regard to truth; but never ceased snarling at Luther. His books are now food for moths in the libraries of some papists.†

SICKINGEN AND CRONEBERG.

Page 363.

Francis Sickingen, a powerful knight on the banks of the Rhine, who offered protection to Luther in the year 1520.‡ He is one of those alluded to in cap. v. cent. xvi.

It is not so clear that he was a humble Christian, as it is, that he had a high military spirit, and that, in defence of certain rights which he supposed to be violated, he attacked the archbishop of Treves with a large body of cavalry and infantry. In the end, his own castle was stormed, and himself mortally wounded.§

Hartmuth of Croneberg was the son-

in-law of Sickingen; and though involved in the military proceedings of his father-in-law, he appears to have been truly pious. In 1522 he wrote to the Pope Adrian in defence of the Reformation; and also exhorted the Imperial regency to promote the good cause. He would willingly, he said, be cut to pieces, provided the reception of the Gospel might be the consequence of his death.*

The violent measures of Sickingen afforded the papal party an occasion of calumniating the Reformers as turbulent and seditious; but the points in dispute had nothing to do with religion. Croneberg, from his connexion with Sickingen, suffered grievously in his temporal concerns, but remained firm in the faith. Luther wrote to him an admirable consolatory letter.†

Beausobre has confounded this part of the history, by mistaking Croneberg for Sickingen.‡

ADRIAN'S BRIEVE, IN 1522,

TO THE ELECTOR OF SAXONY. Page 370.

"Beloved in Christ.—We have borne enough, and more than enough. Our predecessor admonished you to have nothing more to do with that mischievous Luther, and we hoped you would have repented.

"Our piety and paternal love for you and your subjects, induce us to exhort you once more to repent, before you become reprobate silver, and the Lord reject you.§

"And what shall we say—Who hath bewitched you! you did run well.—Lift up your eyes, beloved son, and see how you are fallen.

"Is it not enough, that the Christian states should have bloody contests with one another, but you also must nourish a serpent in your bosom, who with the poison of his tongue, a poison worse than that of hell, has destroyed so many myriads of souls?

"All this desertion from the Church, and all this reviling of her sacred usages, is owing to you. It is owing to you that men die in their sins, and are hur-

* Ep. II. 80. † Com. de Luth. CXXVII.
† Ibid. LXXI. § Com. de Luth. CL.

* Ibid. CL. CXLVII. 6. CXXXII. 5. Seck.
Ad. II. 225. † Ep. II. 100. 126.
† Ibid. 270. § Jer. vi. 30.

ried away, unreconciled by penitence, to the terrible tribunal of God. Such are your merits:—I ought rather to say, What punishment do you not deserve?

“But the serpent deceived you.—You are duly rewarded for nourishing the serpent, and for believing him.

“But he produces Scripture—What heretic has not done the same? What diabolical blindness must it be to believe a drunkard and a glutton, rather than the whole world, and so many spiritual fathers! He tells the people, that no man by fastings, prayers, lamentations, can satisfy an angry God, or redeem his sins; and that even the Host in the Sacrament is not an offering for sin.

“Be it that you look on him as another Elisha or a Daniel: Does not the spirit of the man appear? Is he not bitter, virulent, arrogant and abusive? Does he not revile with infamous and abominable names and blasphemies the successor of St. Peter? And does not the Lord declare, in the book of Deuteronomy,* how he will have his priests to be honoured? and does not Christ say to his preachers, ‘He that despiseth you despiseth me.’†

“Beloved in Christ, we had hoped that you would not have been among the last to return to the bosom of your mother; but we have been disappointed. You have hardened your face beyond the hardness of a rock. Luther lurks under your protection, and his poison is spreading far and wide. We entreat you, therefore, beloved Son, through the bowels of our Redeemer, that before God’s anger shall consume you without remedy, you would pity and help the Church of Christ, oppressed as it now is on all sides, and chiefly by your fault; that you would pity also your country, yourself, and your deluded Saxons. If you repent not, Divine vengeance is at hand, both in this world and the world to come. Did you never read in the Scriptures of the terrible punishment inflicted on schismatics? Do you know nothing of the case of Dathan, Abiram, and Korah; or of king Saul and Uzziah?

“We therefore command and entreat you, beloved Son, to separate yourself from this Martin Luther, and take away this rock of offence. Purge out the old leaven which corrupts the whole mass of

your faith.* Deign, beloved, to imitate that St. Paul in your conversion, whom you have exceeded in persecuting the Church of God.

“If you listen to our entreaties, as we hope you will, we shall rejoice with the angels over the penitent sinner; and with delight shall carry back on our shoulders the lost sheep of the Lord’s sheepfold.

“But if you shall say, We will not walk in the good old paths, We will not hearken; the Lord’s answer is, I will bring evil upon this people.† And so we denounce against you, on the authority of God and the Lord Christ, whose vicar we are, that your impenitence shall not pass unpunished in this world; and that in the next world the burning of eternal fire awaits you. Adrian, the Pope, and the very religious Emperor Charles, my dear pupil and Son in Christ, are both alive: you have contemptuously violated his edict against Luther’s perfidy; and we, the Pope and Emperor, will not allow the Saxon children of our predecessors to perish through the contagion of heresies and schisms, thus protected by a schismatical and heretical prince. Repent, or expect to feel both the Apostolic and Imperial sword of vengeance.”‡

OLAUS PETRI. Page 382.

Laurentius and Olaus Petri were brothers, who had studied in the college of Wittemberg, and learnt from Luther’s own mouth the principles of the Reformation.§

It is worthy of notice, that after these Reformers had explained to Gustavus the numerous papal abuses, and had obtained his order for a translation of the Bible into the Swedish language,—in imitation of what Luther had done,||—this excellent monarch was so candid and equitable, as to direct the archbishop of Upsal, who was of the popish faction, to prepare another version of the Bible, that there might be no room to say the truth was obstructed.¶

The substance of Olaus’s chapter on Justification is this :

* Deut. xvii.

† Luke x. 16.

* 1 Cor. v. 7.

† Jerem. vi. 16—19.

‡ Labb. Con. XIV. 402. § Baaz. II. p. 150.

|| Ibid. 151, and 163. ¶ Baaz. II. 205.

“It is impossible that man, being born in sin, should fulfil the law of God.

“The first use of the law is, that man may know he is a sinner. The law is his schoolmaster: it teaches him that he is under condemnation, and he becomes ardent in his search after the righteousness of Christ. Then he obtains by faith, from the merit of Christ, what he never could have merited by any works of his own. The sinner is not justified on account of what HE DOES in the way of belief, but because he applies, in the way of acceptance, the righteousness of Christ to himself.

“Good works follow justification. They are not perfect; but they are accepted. When a believer is inclined to think anything of his works, he will do better to give the glory to God.”*

HESSE. Page 384.

The senate of Nuremberg, in reply to Adrian's censures, commended their minister, J. Hesse, in the strongest terms. “In him they had found a disinterested pastor, who fed his flock in their lifetime with the incorruptible nourishment of the Divine word; and who buried those that died in the Lord, as a pious clergyman ought to do, and not as his predecessors had done. For they aimed at nothing but gain; and in fact were more greedy in extracting money from the dead, than from the living; and all under the pretence of procuring pardon for sins.”†

Luther preserved an affectionate and uninterrupted correspondence with Hesse. In 1522, he tells him to stir up the people to the practice of faith and charity; for that at Wittemberg, they were in a fury to take the Sacrament in both kinds; while at the same time they neglected faith and charity, which are the two constituent parts of the Christian character.

In 1524, he writes thus: “May the Lord, who has called you to be a preacher, give you strength! That is my way of comforting you. You are in the ship with Christ, What do you expect? Fine weather? Nay,—rather winds and waves and tempests, even so that the vessel

may begin to sink. Call on Christ for help, for he sometimes sleeps; and then you will have a calm.*

DRACO. Page 385.

John Draco took his degree of A. M. at the University of Erfurt, where he was introduced to those learned Reformers, Hesse and Camerarius. He became doctor of divinity at Wittemberg.

He published in 1523, an account of the cruel treatment he had met with at Miltenburg; addressed it to cardinal Albert, and entreated him to deliver from prison his own deacon and some others that were also in confinement. He had taught nothing, he said, but what he would confess at the day of judgment.

Luther's letter to the afflicted people of Miltenburg is full of wisdom and consolation. He applies, verse by verse, the 120th Psalm to their case; and observes that they may well allow him to sympathize with them, because they were persecuted under the name of Lutherans: though, he adds, it always grieved him to hear his doctrine called by the name of Lutheranism, when, in fact, it was the Gospel of God himself.—The letter takes up seventeen quarto pages.†

VOES, ESCH, AND LAMBERT.
Page 385.

The learned writer of their martyrdom tells us, that all means were used to induce them to recant; and he then proceeds to describe what he himself saw at Brussels. On the day fixed for their execution, the youngest of the three was brought first into the market-place; and directed to kneel before a table, covered like a communion-table. Every body fixed their astonished eyes upon him; but he discovered not the least mark of fear or perturbation of mind. His countenance was placid and composed, yet mild and modest; he seemed entirely absorbed in prayers and holy contemplations. While they were stripping him of his sacerdotal dress, he did everything they ordered him to do with perfect readiness; and when they had thus made

* Baaz. XX. p. 250.

† Com. de Luth. CLI. 2.

* Ep. II. p. 240.

† Ibid. 185. b.

him a layman, he retired. Then the two others were produced; and they went through the same ceremonies with a cheerful firmness, as far as one may judge from the countenance. Soon after, one of these, together with the youngest first mentioned, came forward; and the two were led to the fire. At this moment, says the writer,—if they had not been heretics,—one would have owned, that they gave many most decisive proofs of a sound understanding and pious disposition, and of the joy which they experienced on the prospect of being freed from the body and joined to Christ. The fire was slow in kindling, and the martyrs stood almost naked; but showed not the least appearance of languor during this vexatious delay. You will ask, How did they behave when the flames broke out? Their constancy and alacrity certainly increased; and there appeared a cheerfulness, not to be described; insomuch, that many persons thought they saw them smile in the fire. They sang *Te Deum* in alternate verses, till at length the flame put an end to the scene. The third was not produced. It was suspected that he was put to death privately.

These men were condemned upon sixty-two articles, which need not be repeated, as they were, in the main, expressive of Luther's doctrine. One of them was, "They had obtained more light into the Scriptures from Luther's writings, than from those of other doctors."*

OSIANDER. Page 398.

Andreas Osiander began to preach at Nuremberg in February 1522,† in the character of a reformer; and he is generally numbered among the worthies who contributed to the deliverance of the Church of Christ from the chains of Popery.—He was a studious and an acute divine; but disposed to adopt novel and mystical opinions, and much disliked on account of his pride and arrogance. He shamefully treated the excellent Melancthon in his old age, who bore his insolence with a truly Christian spirit. Osiander, in 1552, died suddenly in

Prussia, at a time when he was raising great disturbances among the Lutheran churches.*

HENRY OF ZUTPHEN. Page 402.

The popish clergy were so provoked at the effect of Henry's preaching at Bremen, that they entreated the senate to expel the heretic from their city. Not succeeding in this way, they complained to the bishop; upon which Henry drew up the articles of his belief; sent the formulary to his Ordinary, and declared himself ready to recant anything which could be proved by Scripture to be heretical. Instead of receiving an answer, he soon after found the bull of Leo X. and the emperor's edict at Worms affixed to the doors of the church;—A procedure, the meaning of which could not be mistaken!

About two years after this, A. D. 1524, Henry was invited to preach the Gospel at Meldorf in Ditmarsia. The people of Bremen entreated him not to leave them; but Henry thought it his duty to obey the call. He said, They had had the Gospel two years at Bremen; whereas the Ditmarsians were in the midst of wolves, and without a shepherd. He could not therefore resist their prayers.

Henry was joyfully received at Meldorf. Immediately, however, even before he began to preach, the fury of Satan and of his agents broke out. What is to be done? said the Prior of the monastery to his clergy. We shall lose all our authority. We must go to work in a different way from that which our friends pursued at Bremen. To be short, he formed a conspiracy of forty-eight of the principal inhabitants of a neighbouring town; who concurred in the atrocious design of murdering Henry, whom the Prior called "The seditious monk from Bremen." He persuaded them they would thereby effectually gain the favour of the bishop.

The first measure of this wretched combination was to sign an instrument, in which they threatened to fine the parish of Meldorf 1,000 florins, if they should suffer Henry to preach. But the Meldorfians treated the insolent menace

* Ep. II. 142.

† Com. de Luth. CXXXIX. 3.

* Melch. Ad.

with contempt; and in the mean time Henry persisted in preaching the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and the people received the truth with wonder, joy and thankfulness.

In the mean time the Prior grew impatient for the death of Henry. He called together his dignified brethren, and applied also for assistance to the Franciscan monks, who were peculiarly well qualified for the wicked service in which they were to be employed. The party instantly agreed to lodge complaints before the magistrates concerning the doctrines of Henry; and to declare, that if such a heretic was not put to death, the worship of the Virgin Mary and of the Saints would soon be at an end, and the two monasteries would be pulled down. This was THEIR SCRIPTURAL way of convicting a heretic! One of the magistrates observed, that the preacher and his adherents had already been threatened in a written document: but that, if it was thought expedient, the admonition might be repeated. No, no, replied the Prior;—we must not proceed so in this business: if you admonish the heretic in writing, he will answer you; and you will not get the better of him. Nay, there is danger lest you yourselves should be seized with the heretical contagion. Upon which they all agreed that Henry should be taken by force, and burnt in the night-time, before the university should know anything of the affair, or the martyr be brought to trial.

To carry this plan into execution, the principal actors contrived to collect together in the evening, after it was dark, above five hundred rustics from the villages, whose minds, at first averse from so scandalous a transaction, they stirred up to the perpetration of it, partly by threats, and partly by the stimulus of several hogsheds of Hamburg ale. The clergy led the way with lighted torches. Then an armed body of men came to Meldorf about midnight, and made their first attack upon a parishioner, who was Henry's principal supporter. They hauled him by the hair of his head, and rolled him naked in the dirt. After this, they seized Henry himself, and dragged him, till, from fatigue, and from his feet being cut with sharp pieces of ice, he could no longer walk.

One of the magistrates of this scene of barbarity asked the martyr, Whether he would rather choose to receive his due

there at Meldorf, or be sent to the bishop of Bremen? "If," said Henry, "I have preached false doctrine, or committed any crime, they have me now in their power."—"He would rather die here," cried the manager; and then the multitude, who were heated with strong liquor, shouted aloud, Burn him! burn him! And thus this good man was condemned to the flames, without any previous hearing.

When brought to the pile of wood, Henry lifted up his hands to heaven, and said, "Forgive them, O Lord, they know not the sin they are committing." A lady of Meldorf was so much affected with the sight of this tragedy, that she offered one thousand florins to the mob, on condition that they would take Henry to prison, and remove him to an impartial trial. Instantly they trampled the lady under their feet, fell upon Henry with clubs, and beat him without mercy.

Almost two hours were spent before the fire could be made to burn, during all which time the barbarous rustics continued either to beat the martyr, or to thrust all kinds of instruments into his back, his sides, and his arms. At last they tied his body to a long ladder; and when he was beginning to pray, they forced his neck with a cord so close to one of the steps of the ladder, that the blood flowed plentifully from his mouth and nose. Their object throughout was, to prevent him from being heard either to speak or to pray. They now endeavoured to place the ladder almost upright, with Henry thus fastened to it; but in their attempt to support it by a sharp pointed pole, they missed their aim; and the good man fell upon the sharp pole, which pierced his body through, and put an end to his sufferings. The barbarians cast his remains into the fire: and one of them snatched up a club and beat his breast with hard blows as long as he could perceive him to breathe.*

* Ep. II. 252. b.

ADRIAN to ERASMUS. Page 433.

The letter is in substance as follows:

“Beloved Son,

“Do not be uneasy because calumny has represented you as belonging to the Lutheran faction. We do not listen to malignant insinuations against learned and good men. We entreat you, however, out of regard to your own reputation, to take up your pen against these novel heresies. God has bestowed on you a great genius, and a happy turn for writing; and it is your duty to use your gifts in support of the Church. In that way you will best silence the reports of your being a Lutheran. Hitherto, by your writings, you have adorned every branch of learning; and now, when your faculties are ripened and confirmed, you are called upon by the whole Christian world to exert yourself against the insidious attacks of heretics. Modesty inclines you to suppose you are unequal to the task; but every one knows to the contrary: moreover, you have truth on your side, and God will not fail to help you.—Then rouse, rouse yourself in the cause of God: Employ your talents in his service. Come cheerfully to Rome, as soon as the winter is over. Here you will have the advantage of books and of learned men; and we will take care, and soon too, that you shall not repent of your journey, or of the holy cause in which you engage. Our beloved Son, Faber, will explain my meaning more at length.”—Dec. 1, 1522.*

Erasmus, by his answer, on Dec. 22, showed that he would not be behind the Pope in compliments. He said, “The world looked to his Holiness alone for the restoration of peace and tranquillity in the Church. The danger was imminent; nevertheless, if a person of no rank might be permitted to speak, he himself would venture to communicate SECRETLY such advice as would put an end to all the dissensions. Then no harm could ensue from what he had to propose, because the secret would be in the possession of nobody but the Pope and himself.”†

Adrian’s answer, in the succeeding January 23, is full of the same sort of compliments as those in his former letter. He adds, moreover, that if ever he had entertained any suspicion of the in-

tegrity of Erasmus, it was now completely done away, by that piety, zeal, and respect for the Roman See, which his last letter breathed throughout.

He then entreats Erasmus to communicate his SECRET with all possible expedition. “There was nothing,” he said, “under the sun, which he more ardently wished for, than the extinction of the present evils in the Church.”*

At length, with much parade, the SECRET ADVICE of Erasmus is disclosed to the Pope, in an elaborate letter of several folio pages. After boasting of his own moderation, and of the proofs he had given that he was no Lutheran, he intimates, that if he had been of a factious turn of mind, or disposed to give way to solicitations, he could have done irreparable mischief to the established hierarchy; and he adds, that the requital which he had met with was such as tended to alienate the mind of any orthodox person, and make him a heretic. But, says he, you will ask me, To what purpose are these complaints, when I am expecting to hear your advice? “Part of my advice,” Erasmus answers, “is implied in what I have already said.” And he then discloses the remainder of his secret, in terms to this effect:

1. This evil is not to be cured by fire and sword. I do not say what the heretics deserve, but what is expedient to be done.

2. Some concessions ought to be made.

3. The causes of the evils should be investigated, and proper remedies applied, with an amnesty for the past.

4. The licentiousness of the press should be restrained.

5. Hopes should be given that certain grievances will be redressed. Men will breathe freely at the sweet name of liberty.

6. To settle these points, there should be called together, from different nations, men of integrity, ability, and cool judgment, and whose opinions——

Here Erasmus breaks off in the middle of a sentence: he probably did so on purpose, though he pretends to have wanted time. His letter is without date. †

The Pope and his Cardinals, no doubt disliked the advice.

* Eras. p. 744.

† Ibid. 745.

LUTHER'S LETTER to ERASMUS.
Page 436.

He begins in the Apostolical manner: Grace and peace to you from the Lord Jesus.

“I shall not complain of you,” says he, “for having behaved yourself as a man estranged from us, to keep fair with the Papists, my enemies. Nor was I much offended, that in your printed books, to gain their favour, or to soften their rage, you have censured us with too much acrimony. We saw that the Lord had not conferred upon you the discernment, the courage, and the resolution to join with us, and freely and openly to oppose those monsters; and therefore we dared not to exact from you that which surpasses your strength and your capacity. We have even borne with your weakness, and honoured that portion of the gift of God which is in you.

“The whole world must own with gratitude your great talents and services in the cause of literature, through the revival of which, we are enabled to read the Sacred Scriptures in their originals.

“I never wished that, forsaking or neglecting your own proper talents, you should enter into our camp. You might indeed have favoured us not a little by your wit, and by your eloquence; but forasmuch as you have not that courage which is requisite, it is safer for you to serve the Lord in your own way. Only we feared, lest our adversaries should entice you to write against us, and that necessity should then constrain us to oppose you to your face. We have withheld some persons amongst us, who were disposed and prepared to attack you; and I could have wished that the COMPLAINT of Hutton had never been published, and still more that your SPONGIA in answer to it had never come forth; by which you may at present, if I mistake not, see and feel how easy it is to say fine things about the duties of modesty and moderation, and to accuse Luther of wanting them; and how difficult and even impossible it is to be really modest and moderate, without a particular gift of the Holy Spirit. Believe me, or believe me not, Jesus Christ is my witness, that I am concerned as well as you, that the resentment and hatred of so many eminent persons hath been excited against you. I must suppose that this gives you no small uneasiness; for virtue

like yours, mere human virtue, cannot raise a man above being affected by such trials. To tell you freely what I think, there are persons who, having this weakness also about them, cannot bear, as they ought, your acrimony and your dissimulation, which you want to pass off for prudence and modesty. These men have cause to be offended; and yet would not be offended, if they possessed greater magnanimity. Although I also am irascible, and have been often provoked so as to use an asperity of style, yet I never acted thus, except against hardened and incurable reprobates; nay, some offenders even of this stamp, it is well known, have been treated by me with clemency and gentleness. Hitherto then, though you have provoked me, I have constrained myself; and I promised my friends, in letters which you have seen, that I would continue to do so, unless you should appear openly against us. For although you are not in our sentiments, and many pious doctrines are condemned by you with irreligion or dissimulation, or treated in a sceptical manner, yet I neither can nor will ascribe a stubborn perverseness to you. What can I do now? Things are exasperated on both sides; and I could wish, if I might be allowed to act the part of a mediator, that they would cease to attack you with such animosity, and suffer your old age to rest in peace in the Lord; and thus they would conduct themselves, in my opinion, if they either considered your weakness, or the magnitude of the controverted cause, which hath been long since beyond your capacity. They would show their moderation towards you so much the more, since our affairs are advanced to such a point, that our cause is in no peril, although even Erasmus should attack it with all his might; so far are we from fearing any of his strokes and strictures. On the other hand, my dear Erasmus, if you duly reflect upon your own imbecility, you will abstain from those sharp and spiteful figures of rhetoric; and if you cannot or will not defend our sentiments, you will let them alone, and treat of subjects which suit you better. Our friends, even you yourself must own, have some reason to be out of humour at being lashed by you; because human infirmity thinks of the authority and reputation of Erasmus, and fears it: and indeed there is much difference between him and the rest of

the Papists. He alone is a more formidable adversary than all of them joined together.

“My prayer is, that the Lord may bestow on you a spirit worthy of your great reputation but if this be not granted, I entreat you, if you cannot help us, to remain at least a spectator of our severe conflict, and not to join our adversaries; and in particular not to write tracts against us: on which condition I will not publish against you.”

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MELANCTHON'S COMMON-PLACES,
Page 463.

The learned author refers his reader to many parts of Scripture.

E. g. to Rom. xi. 36. 1 Sam. ii. 25.
Ephes. i. 11. ——— ix. 1—16.
Matt. x. 29. ——— x. 26.
Prov. xvi. 4. 1 Kings xii. 15.
——— xx. 21. Rom. ix. 15.
Jerem. x. 23. Eccles. viii. 16,
Gen. xv. 16. 17.

Some other things contained in this performance may be referred to with advantage on a future occasion. Vide Von dor Hardt. IV. 30.

—
JOHN DE BACKER, page 484.

The charges brought against this good man were,

1. That he had spoken lightly of papal indulgences.
2. That he had neglected to celebrate the mass.

3. That he had married a wife.*

On his examination, he boldly maintained that no man ought to submit to any other rule of faith than what was expressed in the Holy Bible; and that God allowed a chaste and honourable marriage, which however the governors of the church refused to tolerate. At the same time he put the court in mind how the fornication of the priests was every day connived at, or forgiven; then repeated, and forgiven again and again.

At his trial, the president used some expressions too indecent to be mentioned; and in particular, “He wished,” he said, “the poor man had lived with ten harlots, rather than that he should have married, and given the court all this trouble.” This declaration affected the audience with horror.

The father of Backer addressed his son thus: “Be strong and persevere: I am content, like Abraham, to offer up to God my dearest child that never offended me.”

As the martyr passed the prison in his way to execution, he said, “Courage, my dear brethren. From my example have courage, like brave soldiers of Christ.” The prisoners answered him with a shout of joy, clapping of hands, and singing of Te Deum. At the stake he cried, “O death, where is thy sting!” His last words were, “Lord Jesus, forgive them, for they know not what they do;—and have mercy on me!”†

* Scult. 318.

† Brandt. 53.

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