

HISTORY  
of the  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

by  
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THE GERMAN REFORMATION  
A.D. 1517—1530.

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## BOOK 1

### *THE GERMAN REFORMATION TILL THE DIET OF AUGSBERG, A.D. 1530.*

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#### CHAPTER II.

LUTHER'S TRAINING FOR THE REFORMATION, A.D. 1483–1517.

##### § 16. *Germany and the Reformation.*

Germany invented the art of printing and produced the Reformation. These are the two greatest levers of modern civilization. While other nations sent expeditions in quest of empires beyond the sea, the Germans, true to their genius of inwardness, descended into the depths of the human soul and brought to light new ideas and principles. Providence, it has been said, gave to France the dominion of the land, to England the dominion of the sea, to Germany the dominion of the air. The air is the region of speculation, but also the necessary condition of life on the land and the sea.

The characteristic traits which Tacitus ascribes to the heathen Germans, contain already the germ of Protestantism. The love of personal freedom was as strong in them as the love of authority was in the Roman race. They considered it unworthy of the gods to confine them within walls, or to represent them by images; they preferred an inward spiritual worship which communes directly with the Deity, to an outward worship which appeals to the senses through forms and ceremonies, and throws visible media between the finite and the infinite mind. They resisted the aggression of heathen Rome, and they refused to submit to Christian Rome when it was forced upon them by Charlemagne.

But Christianity as a religion was congenial to their instincts. They were finally Christianized, and even thoroughly Romanized by Boniface and his disciples. Yet they never felt quite at home under the rule of the papacy. The mediaeval conflict of the emperor with the pope kept up a political antagonism against foreign rule; the mysticism of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries nursed the love for a piety of less form and more heart, and undermined the prevailing mechanical legalism; dissatisfaction with the pope increased with his exactions and abuses, until at last, under the lead of a Saxon monk and priest, all the national forces combined against the anti-christian tyranny and shook it off forever. He carried with him the heart of Germany. No less than one hundred grievances against Roman misrule were brought before the Diet of Nürnberg in 1522.<sup>1</sup> Erasmus says that when Luther published his *Theses* all the world applauded him.<sup>2</sup> It is not impossible that all Germany would have embraced the Reformation if its force had not been weakened and its progress arrested by excesses and internal dissensions, which gave mighty aid to the Romanist reaction.

Next to Germany, little Switzerland, Holland, Scandinavia, England and Scotland, inhabited by kindred races, were most active in completing that

great act of emancipation from popery and inaugurating an era of freedom and independence.

Nationality has much to do with the type of Christianity. The Oriental church is identified with the Greek and Slavonic races, and was not affected by the Reformation of the sixteenth century; hence she is not directly committed for or against it, and is less hostile to evangelical Protestantism than to Romanism, although she agrees, in doctrine, discipline and worship, far more with the latter. The Roman Catholic Church retained her hold upon the Latin races, which were at first superficially touched by the Reformation, but reacted, and have ever since been vacillating between popery and infidelity, or between despotism and revolution. Even the French, who under Henry IV. were on the very verge of becoming Protestant, are as a nation more inclined to swing from Bossuet to Voltaire than to Calvin; although they will always have a respectable minority of intelligent Protestants. The Celtic races are divided; the Welsh and Scotch became intensely Protestant, the Irish as intensely Romanist. The Teutonic or Germanic nations produced the Reformation chiefly, but not exclusively; for the French Calvin was the greatest theologian among the Reformers, and has exerted a stronger influence in shaping the doctrine and discipline of Protestantism outside of Germany than any of them.

### § 18. *Luther's Youth and Training.*

In order to understand the genius and history of the German Reformation we must trace its origin in the personal experience of the monk who shook the world from his lonely study in Wittenberg, and made pope and emperor tremble at the power of his word.

All the Reformers, like the Apostles and Evangelists, were men of humble origin, and gave proof that God's Spirit working through his chosen instruments is mightier than armies and navies. But they were endowed with extraordinary talents and energy, and providentially prepared for their work. They were also aided by a combination of favorable circumstances without which they could not have accomplished their work. They made the Reformation, and the Reformation made them.

Of all the Reformers Luther is the first. He is so closely identified with the German Reformation that the one would have no meaning without the other. His own history is the formative history of the church which is justly called by his name, and which is the incarnation and perpetuation of his genius. No other Reformer has given his name to the church he reformed, and exercised the same controlling influence over its history. We need not discuss here the advantages and disadvantages of this characteristic difference; we are only concerned with the fact.

Martin Luther was born Nov. 10, 1483, an hour before midnight, at Eisleben in Prussian Saxony, where he died, Feb. 18, 1546.<sup>3</sup>

On the day following he was baptized and received the name of the saint of the day.

His parents had recently removed to that town<sup>4</sup> from their original home at Möhra near Eisenach in Thuringia, where Boniface had first preached the gospel to the Germans. Six months after Luther's birth they settled at Mansfeld, the capital of a rich mining district in the Harz mountains, which thus shares

with the Thuringian forest the honor of being the home of the Luther family. They were very poor, but honest, industrious and pious people from the lower and uncultivated ranks.

Luther was never ashamed of his humble, rustic origin. "I am," he said with pride to Melancthon, "a peasant's son; my father, grandfather, all my ancestors were genuine peasants."<sup>5</sup> His mother had to carry the wood from the forest on her back, and father and mother, as he said, "worked their flesh off their bones," to bring up seven children (he had three younger brothers and three sisters). Afterward his father, as a miner, acquired some property, and left at his death 1250 guilders, a guilder being worth at that time about sixteen marks, or four dollars.<sup>6</sup>

Luther had a hard youth, without sunny memories, and was brought up under stern discipline. His mother chastised him, for stealing a paltry nut, till the blood came; and his father once flogged him so severely that he fled away and bore him a temporary grudge;<sup>7</sup> but Luther recognized their good intentions, and cherished filial affection, although they knew not, as he said, to distinguish the *ingenia* to which education should be adapted. He was taught at home to pray to God and the saints, to revere the church and the priests, and was told frightful stories about the devil and witches which haunted his imagination all his life.

In the school the discipline was equally severe, and the rod took the place of kindly admonition. He remembered to have been chastised no less than fifteen times in one single morning. But he had also better things to say. He learned the Catechism, i.e.: the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and several Latin and German hymns. He treasured in his memory the proverbial wisdom of the people and the legendary lore of Dietrich von Bern, of Eulenspiegel and Markolf.

He received his elementary education in the schools of Mansfeld, Magdeburg, and Eisenach. Already in his fourteenth year he had to support himself by singing in the street.

Frau Ursula Cotta, the wife of the wealthiest merchant at Eisenach, immortalized herself by the benevolent interest she took in the poor student. She invited him to her table "on account of his hearty singing and praying," and gave him the first impression of a lady of some education and refinement. She died, 1511, but he kept up an acquaintance with her sons and entertained one of them who studied at Wittenberg. From her he learned the word: "There is nothing dearer in this world than the love of woman."<sup>8</sup>

The hardships of Luther's youth and the want of refined breeding show their effects in his writings and actions. They limited his influence among the higher and cultivated classes, but increased his power over the middle and lower classes. He was a man of the people and for the people. He was of the earth earthy, but with his bold face lifted to heaven. He was not a polished diamond, but a rough block cut out from a granite mountain and well fitted for a solid base of a mighty structure. He laid the foundation, and others finished the upper stories.

### § 19. *Luther in the University of Erfurt.*

At the age of eighteen, in the year 1501, he entered, as "Martinus Ludher ex Mansfeld," the University of Erfurt, which had been founded a hundred

years before (1392) and was then one of the best in Germany.<sup>9</sup> By that time his father was able to assist him so that he was free of care and could acquire a little library.

He studied chiefly scholastic philosophy, namely: logic, rhetoric, physics and metaphysics. His favorite teacher was Truttvetter, called “Doctor Erfordiensis.”<sup>10</sup> The palmy days of scholasticism which reared those venerable cathedrals of thought in support of the traditional faith of the church in the thirteenth century, had passed away, and were succeeded by the times of barren disputes about Realism and Nominalism or the question whether the general ideas (the *universalia*) had an objective reality, or a merely nominal, subjective existence in the mind. Nominalism was then the prevailing system.

On the other hand the humanistic studies were reviving all over Europe and opened a new avenue of intellectual culture and free thought. The first Greek book in Greek letters (a grammar) which was published in Germany, appeared in Erfurt. John Crotus Rubeanus (Jäger) who studied there since 1498 and became rector of the University in 1520 and 1521, was one of the leaders of humanism and the principal author of the first part of the famous anti-monkish *Epistolae obscurorum virorum* (1515); he was at first an intimate friend of Hutten and Luther, and greeted the latter on his way to Worms (1521) as the man who “first after so many centuries dared to strangle the Roman license with the sword of the Scripture,” but afterward he fell away from the Reformation (1531) and assailed it bitterly.<sup>11</sup>

Luther did not neglect the study of the ancient classics, especially Cicero, Vergil, Plautus, and Livy.<sup>12</sup> He acquired sufficient mastery of Latin to write it with clearness and vigor, though not with elegance and refinement. The knowledge of Greek he acquired afterward as professor at Wittenberg. In classical culture he never attained the height of Erasmus and Melancthon, of Calvin and Beza; but in original thought and in the mastery of his own mother tongue he was unrivalled. He always regarded the languages as the sheath for the sword of the Spirit.

Beside his literary studies he cultivated his early love for music. He sang, and played the lute right merrily. He was a poet and musician as well as a theologian. He prized music as a noble gift of God, as a remedy against sadness and evil thoughts, and an effective weapon against the assaults of the devil. His poetic gift shines in his classical hymns. He had a rich font of mother wit and quaint humor.

His moral conduct was unblemished; and the mouth of slander did not dare to blacken his reputation till after the theological passions were roused by the Reformation. He went regularly to mass and observed the daily devotions of a sincere Catholic. He chose for his motto: to pray well is half the study. He was a devout worshipper of the Virgin Mary.

In his twentieth year he first saw a complete (Latin) Bible in the University Library, and was surprised and rejoiced to find that it contained so much more than was ever read or explained in the churches.<sup>13</sup> His eye fell upon the story of Samuel and his mother, and he read it with delight. But he did not begin a systematic study of the Bible till he entered the convent; nor did he find in it the God of love and mercy, but rather the God of righteousness and wrath. He was much concerned about his personal salvation and given to gloomy reflections over his sinful condition. Once he fell dangerously ill, and was seized with a fit of despair, but an old priest comforted him, saying: “My dear Bacca-

laureus, be of good cheer; you will not die in this sickness: God will yet make a great man out of you for the comfort of many.”

In 1502 he was graduated as Bachelor of Arts, in 1505 as Master of Arts. This degree, which corresponds to the modern Doctor of Philosophy in Germany, was bestowed with great solemnity. “What a moment of majesty and splendor,” says Luther, “was that when one took the degree of Master, and torches were carried before him. I consider that no temporal or worldly joy can equal it.” His talents and attainments were the wonder of the University.

According to his father’s ambitious wish, Luther began to prepare himself for the profession of law, and was presented by him with a copy of the *Corpus juris*. But he inclined to theology, when a remarkable providential occurrence opened a new path for his life.

### § 20. *Luther’s Conversion.*

In the summer of 1505 Luther entered the Augustinian convent at Erfurt and became a monk, as he thought, for his life time. The circumstances which led to this sudden step we gather from his fragmentary utterances which have been embellished by legendary tradition.

He was shocked by the sudden death of a friend (afterward called Alexius), who was either killed in a duel,<sup>14</sup> or struck dead by lightning at Luther’s side. Shortly afterward, on the second of July, 1505, two weeks before his momentous decision, he was overtaken by a violent thunderstorm near Erfurt, on his return from a visit to his parents, and was so frightened that he fell to the earth and tremblingly exclaimed: “Help, beloved Saint Anna! I will become a monk.” His friend Crotus (who afterward became an enemy of the Reformation) inaptly compared this event to the conversion of St. Paul at the gates of Damascus.<sup>15</sup> But Luther was a Christian before he became a monk.

On the sixteenth of July he assembled his friends who in vain tried to change his resolution, indulged once more in social song, and bade them farewell. On the next day they accompanied him, with tears, to the gates of the convent. The only books he took with him were the Latin poets Vergil and Plautus.

His father almost went mad, when he heard the news. Luther himself declared in later years, that his monastic vow was forced from him by terror and the fear of death and the judgment to come; yet he never doubted that God’s hand was in it. “I never thought of leaving the convent: I was entirely dead to the world, until God thought that the time had come.”

This great change has nothing to do with Luther’s Protestantism. It was simply a transition from secular to religious life—such as St. Bernard and thousands of Catholic monks before and since passed through. He was never an infidel, nor a wicked man, but a pious Catholic from early youth; but he now became overwhelmed with a sense of the vanity of this world and the absorbing importance of saving his soul, which, according to the prevailing notion of his age, he could best secure in the quiet retreat of a cloister.

He afterward underwent as it were a second conversion, from the monastic and legalistic piety of mediaeval Catholicism to the free evangelical piety of Protestantism, when he awoke to an experimental knowledge of justification by free grace through faith alone.

## § 21. *Luther as a Monk.*

The Augustinian convent at Erfurt became the cradle of the Lutheran Reformation. All honor to monasticism: it was, like the law of Israel, a wholesome school of discipline and a preparation for gospel freedom. Erasmus spent five years reluctantly in a convent, and after his release ridiculed monkery with the weapons of irony and sarcasm; Luther was a monk from choice and conviction, and therefore all the better qualified to refute it afterward from deep experience. He followed in the steps of St. Paul, who from a Pharisee of the Pharisees became the strongest opponent of Jewish legalism.

If there ever was a sincere, earnest, conscientious monk, it was Martin Luther. His sole motive was concern for his salvation. To this supreme object he sacrificed the fairest prospects of life. He was dead to the world and was willing to be buried out of the sight of men that he might win eternal life. His latter opponents who knew him in convent, have no charge to bring against his moral character except a certain pride and combativeness, and he himself complained of his temptations to anger and envy.<sup>16</sup>

It was not without significance that the order which he joined, bore the honored name of the greatest Latin father who, next to St. Paul, was to be Luther's chief teacher of theology and religion; but it is an error to suppose that this order represented the anti-Pelagian or evangelical views of the North African father; on the contrary it was intensely catholic in doctrine, and given to excessive worship of the Virgin Mary, and obedience to the papal see which conferred upon it many special privileges.

St. Augustin, after his conversion, spent several weeks with some friends in quiet seclusion on a country-seat near Tagaste, and after his election to the priesthood, at Hippo in 391, he established in a garden a sort of convent where with like-minded brethren and students he led an ascetic life of prayer, meditation and earnest study of the Scriptures, yet engaged at the same time in all the public duties of a preacher, pastor and leader in the theological controversies and ecclesiastical affairs of his age.

His example served as an inspiration and furnished a sort of authority to several monastic associations which arose in the thirteenth century. Pope Alexander IV. (1256) gave them the so-called rule of St. Augustin. They belonged to the mendicant monks, like the Dominicans, Franciscans and Carmelites. They laid great stress on preaching. In other respects they differed little from other monastic orders. In the beginning of the sixteenth century they numbered more than a hundred settlements in Germany.

The Augustinian congregation in Saxony was founded in 1493, and presided over since 1503 by John von Staupitz, the Vicar-General for Germany, and Luther's friend. The convent at Erfurt was the largest and most important next to that at Nürnberg. The monks were respected for their zeal in preaching, pastoral care, and theological study. They lived on alms, which they collected themselves in the town and surrounding country. Applicants were received as novices for a year of probation, during which they could reconsider their resolution; afterward they were bound by perpetual vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience to their superiors.

Luther was welcomed by his brethren with hymns of joy and prayer. He was clothed with a white woollen shirt, in honor of the pure Virgin, a black

cowl and frock, tied by a leathern girdle. He assumed the most menial offices to subdue his pride: he swept the floor, begged bread through the streets, and submitted without a murmur to the ascetic severities. He said twenty-five Paternosters with the Ave Maria in each of the seven appointed hours of prayer. He was devoted to the Holy Virgin and even believed, with the Augustinians and Franciscans, in her immaculate conception, or freedom from hereditary sin—a doctrine denied by the Dominicans and not made an article of faith till the year 1854. He regularly confessed his sins to the priest at least once a week. At the same time a complete copy of the Latin Bible was put into his hands for study, as was enjoined by the new code of statutes drawn up by Staupitz.

At the end of the year of probation Luther solemnly promised to live until death in poverty and chastity according to the rules of the holy father Augustin, to render obedience to Almighty God, to the Virgin Mary, and to the prior of the monastery. He was sprinkled with holy water, as he lay prostrate on the ground in the form of a cross. He was greeted as an innocent child fresh from baptism, and assigned to a separate cell with table, bedstead, and chair.<sup>17</sup>

The two years which followed, he divided between pious exercises and theological studies. He read diligently the Scriptures, and the later schoolmen,—especially Gabriel Biel, whom he knew by heart, and William Occam, whom he esteemed on account of his subtle acuteness even above St. Thomas and Duns Scotus, without being affected by his sceptical tendency. He acknowledged the authority of Aristotle, whom he afterward denounced and disowned as “a damned heathen.”<sup>18</sup> He excited the admiration of his brethren by his ability in disputation on scholastic questions.

His heart was not satisfied with brain work. His chief concern was to become a saint and to earn a place in heaven. “If ever,” he said afterward, “a monk got to heaven by monkery, I would have gotten there.” He observed the minutest details of discipline. No one surpassed him in prayer, fasting, night watches, self-mortification. He was already held up as a model of sanctity.

But he was sadly disappointed in his hope to escape sin and temptation behind the walls of the cloister. He found no peace and rest in all his pious exercises. The more he seemed to advance externally, the more he felt the burden of sin within. He had to contend with temptations of anger, envy, hatred and pride. He saw sin everywhere, even in the smallest trifles. The Scriptures impressed upon him the terrors of divine justice. He could not trust in God as a reconciled Father, as a God of love and mercy but trembled before him, as a God of wrath, as a consuming fire. He could not get over the words: “I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God.” His confessor once told him: “Thou art a fool, God is not angry with thee, but thou art angry with God.” He remembered this afterward as “a great and glorious word,” but at that time it made no impression on him. He could not point to any particular transgression; it was sin as an all-pervading power and vitiating principle, sin as a corruption of nature, sin as a state of alienation from God and hostility to God, that weighed on his mind like an incubus and brought him at times to the brink of despair.

He passed through that conflict between the law of God and the law of sin which is described by Paul (Rom. vii.), and which ends with the cry: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?” He had not yet learned to add: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of

the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death.”

## § 22. *Luther and Staupitz.*

In this state of mental and moral agony, Luther was comforted by an old monk of the convent (the teacher of the novices) who reminded him of the article on the forgiveness of sins in the Apostles' Creed, of Paul's word that the sinner is justified by grace through faith, and of an incidental remark of St. Bernard (in a Sermon on the Canticles) to the same effect.

His best friend and wisest counsellor was Johann von Staupitz, Doctor of Divinity and Vicar-General of the Augustinian convents in Germany. Staupitz was a Saxon nobleman, of fine mind, generous heart, considerable biblical and scholastic learning, and deep piety, highly esteemed wherever known, and used in important missions by the Elector Frederick of Saxony. He belonged to the school of practical mysticism or Catholic pietism, which is best represented by Tauler and Thomas a Kempis. He cared more for the inner spiritual life than outward forms and observances, and trusted in the merits of Christ rather than in good works of his own, as the solid ground of comfort and peace. The love of God and the imitation of Christ were the ruling ideas of his theology and piety. In his most popular book, *On the Love of God*,<sup>19</sup> he describes that love as the inmost being of God, which makes everything lovely, and should make us love Him above all things; but this love man cannot learn from man, nor from the law which only brings us to a knowledge of sin, nor from the letter of the Scripture which kills, but from the Holy Spirit who reveals God's love in Christ to our hearts and fills it with the holy flame of gratitude and consecration. "The law," he says in substance, "makes known the disease, but cannot heal. But the spirit is hid beneath the letter; the old law is pregnant with Christ who gives us grace to love God above all things. To those who find the spirit and are led to Christ by the law, the Scriptures become a source of edification and comfort. The Jews saw and heard and handled Christ, but they had him not in their heart, and therefore they were doubly guilty. And so are those who carry Christ only on their lips. The chief thing is to have him in our heart. The knowledge of the Christian faith and the love to God are gifts of pure grace beyond our art and ability, and beyond our works and merits."

Staupitz was Luther's spiritual father, and "first caused the light of the gospel to shine in the darkness of his heart."<sup>20</sup> He directed him from his sins to the merits of Christ, from the law to the cross, from works to faith, from scholasticism to the study of the Scriptures, of St. Augustin, and Tauler. He taught him that true repentance consists not in self-imposed penances and punishments, but in a change of heart and must proceed from the contemplation of Christ's sacrifice, in which the secret of God's eternal will was revealed. He also prophetically assured him that God would overrule these trials and temptations for his future usefulness in the church.<sup>21</sup>

He encouraged Luther to enter the priesthood (1507), and brought him to Wittenberg; he induced him to take the degree of Doctor of Divinity, and to preach. He stirred him up against popery,<sup>22</sup> and protected him in the transac-

tions with Cardinal Cajetan. He was greeted by Scheurl in 1518 as the one who would lead the people of Israel out of captivity.

But when Luther broke with Rome, and Rome with Luther, the friendship cooled down. Staupitz held fast to the unity of the Catholic Church and was intimidated and repelled by the excesses of the Reformation. In a letter of April 1, 1524,<sup>23</sup> he begs Luther's pardon for his long silence and significantly says in conclusion: "May Christ help us to live according to his gospel which now resounds in our ears and which many carry on their lips; for I see that countless persons abuse the gospel for the freedom of the flesh."<sup>24</sup> Having been the precursor of the holy evangelical doctrine, I trust that my entreaties may have some effect upon thee." The sermons which he preached at Salzburg since 1522 breathe the same spirit and urge Catholic orthodoxy and obedience.<sup>25</sup> His last book, published after his death (1525) under the title, "Of the holy true Christian Faith," is a virtual protest against Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone and a plea for a practical Christianity which shows itself in good works. He contrasts the two doctrines in these words: "The fools say, he who believes in Christ, needs no works; the Truth says, whosoever will be my disciple, let him follow Me; and whosoever will follow Me, let him deny himself and carry my cross day by day; and whosoever loves Me, keeps my commandments .... The evil spirit suggests to carnal Christians the doctrine that man is justified without works, and appeals to Paul. But Paul only excluded works of the law which proceed from fear and selfishness, while in all his epistles he commends as necessary to salvation such works as are done in obedience to God's commandments, in faith and love. Christ fulfilled the law, the fools would abolish the law; Paul praises the law as holy and good, the fools scold and abuse it as evil because they walk according to the flesh and have not the mind of the Spirit."<sup>26</sup>

Staupitz withdrew from the conflict, resigned his position, 1520, left his order by papal dispensation, became abbot of the Benedictine Convent of St. Peter in Salzburg and died Dec. 28, 1524 in the bosom of the Catholic church which he never intended to leave.<sup>27</sup> He was evangelical, without being a Protestant.<sup>28</sup> He cared little for Romanism, less for Lutheranism, all for practical Christianity. His relation to the Reformation resembles that of Erasmus with this difference, that he helped to prepare the way for it in the sphere of discipline and piety, Erasmus in the sphere of scholarship and illumination. Both were men of mediation and transition; they beheld from afar the land of promise, but did not enter it.

### § 23. *The Victory of Justifying Faith.*

The secret of Luther's power and influence lies in his heroic faith. It delivered him from the chaos and torment of ascetic self-mortification and self-condemnation, gave him rest and peace, and made him a lordly freeman in Christ, and yet an obedient servant of Christ. This faith breathes through all his writings, dominated his acts, sustained him in his conflicts and remained his shield and anchor till the hour of death. This faith was born in the convent at Erfurt, called into public action at Wittenberg, and made him a Reformer of the Church.

By the aid of Staupitz and the old monk, but especially by the continued study of Paul's Epistles, he was gradually brought to the conviction that the sinner is justified by faith alone, without works of law. He experienced this truth in his heart long before he understood it in all its bearings. He found in it that peace of conscience which he had sought in vain by his monkish exercises. He pondered day and night over the meaning of "the righteousness of God" (Rom. 1:17), and thought that it is the righteous punishment of sinners; but toward the close of his convent life he came to the conclusion that it is the righteousness which God freely gives in Christ to those who believe in him. Righteousness is not to be acquired by man through his own exertions and merits; it is complete and perfect in Christ, and all the sinner has to do is to accept it from Him as a free gift. Justification is that judicial act of God whereby he acquits the sinner of guilt and clothes him with the righteousness of Christ on the sole condition of personal faith, which apprehends and appropriates Christ and shows its life and power by good works, as a good tree bringing forth good fruits. For faith in Luther's system is far more than a mere assent of the mind to the authority of the church: it is a hearty trust and full surrender of the whole man to Christ; it lives and moves in Christ as its element, and is constantly obeying his will and following his example. It is only in connection with this deeper conception of faith that his doctrine of justification can be appreciated. Disconnected from it, it is a pernicious error.

The Pauline doctrine of justification as set forth in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, had never before been clearly and fully understood, not even by Augustin and Bernard, who confound justification with sanctification.<sup>29</sup> Herein lies the difference between the Catholic and the Protestant conception. In the Catholic system justification (*dikaivwsi*) is a gradual process conditioned by faith and good works; in the Protestant system it is a single act of God, followed by sanctification. It is based upon the merits of Christ, conditioned by faith, and manifested by good works.<sup>30</sup>

This experience acted like a new revelation on Luther. It shed light upon the whole Bible and made it to him a book of life and comfort. He felt relieved of the terrible load of guilt by an act of free grace. He was led out of the dark prison house of self-inflicted penance into the daylight and fresh air of God's redeeming love. Justification broke the fetters of legalistic slavery, and filled him with the joy and peace of the state of adoption; it opened to him the very gates of heaven.

Henceforth the doctrine of justification by faith alone was for him to the end of life the sum and substance of the gospel, the heart of theology, the central truth of Christianity, the article of the standing or falling church. By this standard he measured every other doctrine and the value of every book of the Bible. Hence his enthusiasm for Paul, and his dislike of James, whom he could not reconcile with his favorite apostle. He gave disproportion to solifidianism and presented it sometimes in most unguarded language, which seemed to justify antinomian conclusions; but he corrected himself, he expressly condemned antinomianism, and insisted on good works and a holy life as a necessary manifestation of faith.<sup>31</sup> And it must not be forgotten that the same charge of favoring antinomianism was made against Paul, who rejects it with pious horror: "Let it never be!"

Thus the monastic and ascetic life of Luther was a preparatory school for his evangelical faith. It served the office of the Mosaic law which, by bringing

the knowledge of sin and guilt, leads as a tutor to Christ (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:24). The law convicted, condemned, and killed him; the gospel comforted, justified, and made him alive. The law enslaved him, the gospel set him free. He had trembled like a slave; now he rejoiced as a son in his father's house. Through the discipline of the law he died to the law, that he might live unto God (Gal. 2:19).

In one word, Luther passed through the experience of Paul. He understood him better than any mediaeval schoolman or ancient father. His commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians is still one of the best, for its sympathetic grasp of the contrast between law and gospel, between spiritual slavery and spiritual freedom.

Luther held this conviction without dreaming that it conflicted with the traditional creed and piety of the church. He was brought to it step by step. The old views and practices ran along side with it, and for several years he continued to be a sincere and devout Catholic. It was only the war with Tetzl and its consequences that forced him into the position of a Reformer and emancipated him from his old connections.

#### § 24. *Luther Ordained to the Priesthood.*

In the second year of his monastic life and when he was still in a state of perplexity, Luther was ordained to the priesthood, and on May 2, 1507, he said his first mass. This was a great event in the life of a priest. He was so overwhelmed by the solemnity of offering the tremendous sacrifice for the living and the dead that he nearly fainted at the altar.

His father had come with several friends to witness the solemnity and brought him a present of twenty guilders. He was not yet satisfied with the monastic vows. "Have you not read in Holy Writ," he said to the brethren at the entertainment given to the young priest, "that a man must honor father and mother?" And when he was reminded, that his son was called to the convent by a voice from heaven, he answered: "Would to God, it were no spirit of the devil." He was not fully reconciled to his son till after he had acquired fame and entered the married state.

Luther performed the duties of the new dignity with conscientious fidelity. He read mass every morning, and invoked during the week twenty-one particular saints whom he had chosen as his helpers, three on each day.

But he was soon to be called to a larger field of influence.

#### § 25. *Luther in Rome.*<sup>32</sup>

*"Roma qua nihil possis visere majus."*—(Horace.)

*"Vivere qui sancte vultis, discedite Roma.  
Omnia hic ecce licent, non licet esse probum."*

*"Wer christlich leben will und Rein,  
Der zieh am Rom und bleib daheim.  
Hie mag man thun was man nur will,  
Allein fromm sein gilt hier nicht viel."*

(Old poetry quoted by Luther, in Walch, XXII., 2372.)

*“Prächtiger, als wir in unserum Norden,  
Wohnt der Bettler an der Engelsporten,  
Denn er sieht das ewig einz’ge Rom:  
Ihn umgibt der Schönheit Glanzgewimmel,  
Und ein zweiter Himmel in den Himmel  
Steigt Sancte Peter’s wundersamer Dom.  
Aber Rom in allem seinem Glanze  
Ist ein Grab nur der Vergangenheit,  
Leben duftet nur die frische Pflanze,  
Die die grüne Stunde streut.”*

—(Schiller.)

An interesting episode in the history of Luther’s training for the Reformation was his visit to Rome. It made a deep impression on his mind, and became effective, not immediately, but several years afterward through the recollection of what he had seen and heard, as a good Catholic, in the metropolis of Christendom.

In the autumn of the year 1510,<sup>33</sup> after his removal to Wittenberg, but before his graduation as doctor of divinity, Luther was sent to Rome in the interest of his order and at the suggestion of Staupitz, who wished to bring about a disciplinary reform and closer union of the Augustinian convents in Germany, but met with factious opposition.

In company with another monk and a lay brother, as the custom was, he traveled on foot, from convent to convent, spent four weeks in Rome in the Augustinian convent of Maria del popolo, and returned to Wittenberg in the following spring. The whole journey must have occupied several months. It was the longest journey he ever made, and at the same time, his pilgrimage to the shrines of the holy apostles where he wished to make a general confession of all his sins and to secure the most efficient absolution.

We do not know whether he accomplished the object of his mission.<sup>34</sup> He left no information about his route, whether he passed through Switzerland or through the Tyrol, nor about the sublime scenery of the Alps and the lovely scenery of Italy.<sup>35</sup> The beauties of nature made little or no impression upon the Reformers, and were not properly appreciated before the close of the eighteenth century.<sup>36</sup> Zwingli and Calvin lived on the banks of Swiss lakes and in view of the Swiss Alps, but never allude to them; they were absorbed in theology and religion.

In his later writings and *Table-Talk*, Luther left some interesting reminiscences of his journey. He spoke of the fine climate and fertility of Italy, the temperance of the Italians contrasted with the intemperate Germans, also of their shrewdness, craftiness, and of the pride with which they looked down upon the “stupid Germans” and “German beasts,” as semi-barbarians; he praised the hospitals and charitable institutions in Florence; but he was greatly disappointed with the state of religion in Rome, which he found just the reverse of what he had expected.

Rome was at that time filled with enthusiasm for the renaissance of classical literature and art, but indifferent to religion. Julius II., who sat in Peter's chair from 1503 to 1513, bent his energies on the aggrandizement of the secular dominion of the papacy by means of an unscrupulous diplomacy and bloody wars, founded the Vatican Museum, and liberally encouraged the great architects and painters of his age in their immortal works of art. The building of the new church of St. Peter with its colossal cupola had begun under the direction of Bramante; the pencil of Michael Angelo was adorning the Sistine chapel in the adjoining Vatican Palace with the pictures of the Prophets, Sibyls, and the last judgment; and the youthful genius of Raphael conceived his inimitable Madonna, with the Christ-child in her arms, and was transforming the chambers of the Vatican into galleries of undying beauty. These were the wonders of the new Italian art; but they had as little interest for the German monk as the temples and statues of classical Athens had for the Apostle Paul.

When Luther came in sight of the eternal city he fell upon the earth, raised his hands and exclaimed, "Hail to thee, holy, Rome!"<sup>37</sup> Thrice holy for the blood of martyrs shed here." He passed the colossal ruins of heathen Rome and the gorgeous palaces of Christian Rome. But he ran, "like a crazy saint," through all the churches and crypts and catacombs with an unquestioning faith in the legendary traditions about the relics and miracles of martyrs.<sup>38</sup> He wished that his parents were dead that he might help them out of purgatory by reading mass in the most holy place, according to the saying: "Blessed is the mother whose son celebrates mass on Saturday in St. John of the Lateran." He ascended on bended knees the twenty-eight steps of the famous Scala Santa (said to have been transported from the Judgment Hall of Pontius Pilate in Jerusalem), that he might secure the indulgence attached to this ascetic performance since the days of Pope Leo IV. in 850, but at every step the word of the Scripture sounded as a significant protest in his ear: "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17).<sup>39</sup>

Thus at the very height of his mediaeval devotion he doubted its efficacy in giving peace to the troubled conscience. This doubt was strengthened by what he saw around him. He was favorably struck, indeed, with the business administration and police regulations of the papal court, but shocked by the unbelief, levity and immorality of the clergy. Money and luxurious living seemed to have replaced apostolic poverty and self-denial. He saw nothing but worldly splendor at the court of Pope Julius II., who had just returned from the sanguinary siege of a town conducted by him in person. He afterward thundered against him as a man of blood. He heard of the fearful crimes of Pope Alexander VI. and his family, which were hardly known and believed in Germany, but freely spoken of as undoubted facts in the fresh remembrance of all Romans. While he was reading one mass, a Roman priest would finish seven. He was urged to hurry up (*passa, passa!*), and to "send her Son home to our Lady." He heard priests, when consecrating the elements, repeat in Latin the words: "Bread thou art, and bread thou shalt remain; wine thou art, and wine thou shalt remain." The term "a good Christian" (*buon Cristiano*) meant "a fool." He was told that "if there was a hell, Rome was built on it," and that this state of things must soon end in a collapse.

He received the impression that "Rome, once the holiest city, was now the worst." He compared it to Jerusalem as described by the prophets.<sup>40</sup> All these sad experiences did not shake his faith in the Roman church and hierarchy, so

unworthily represented, as the Jewish hierarchy was at the time of Christ; but they returned to his mind afterward with double force and gave ease and comfort to his conscience when he attacked and abused popery as “an institution of the devil.”<sup>41</sup>

Hence he often declared that he would not have missed “seeing Rome for a hundred thousand florins; for I might have felt some apprehension that I had done injustice to the Pope; but as we see, so we speak.”

Six years after his visit the building of St. Peter’s Dome by means of the proceeds from papal indulgences furnished the occasion for the outbreak of that war which ended with an irrevocable separation from Rome.

In the Pitti Gallery of Florence there is a famous picture of Giorgione which represents an unknown monk with strongly Teutonic features and brilliant eyes, seated between two Italians, playing on a small organ and looking dreamily to one side. This central figure has recently been identified by some connoisseurs as a portrait of Luther taken at Florence a few months before the death of Giorgione in 1511. The identity is open to doubt, but the resemblance is striking.<sup>42</sup>

## § 26. *The University of Wittenberg.*

In the year 1502 Frederick III., surnamed the Wise, Elector of Saxony ( b. 1463, d. 1525), distinguished among the princes of the sixteenth century for his intelligence, wisdom, piety, and in cautious protection of the Reformation, founded from his limited means a new University at Wittenberg, under the patronage of the Virgin Mary and St. Augustin. The theological faculty was dedicated to the Apostle Paul, and on the anniversary of his conversion at Damascus a mass was to be celebrated and a sermon preached in the presence of the rector and the senate.

Frederick was a devout Catholic, a zealous collector of relics, a believer in papal indulgences, a pilgrim to the holy land; but at the same time a friend of liberal learning, a protector of the person of Luther and of the new theology of the University of Wittenberg, which he called his daughter, and which he favored to the extent of his power. Shortly before his death he signified the acceptance of the evangelical faith by taking the communion in both kinds from Spalatin, his chaplain, counsellor and biographer, and mediator between him and Luther. He was unmarried and left no legitimate heir. His brother, John the Constant (1525–1532), and his nephew, John Frederick the Magnanimous (1532–1547), both firm Protestants, succeeded him; but the latter was deprived of the electoral dignity and part of his possessions by his victorious cousin Moritz, Duke of Saxony, after the battle of Mühlberg (1547). The successors of Moritz were the chief defenders of Lutheranism in Germany till Augustus I. (1694–1733) sold the faith of his ancestors for the royal crown of Poland and became a Roman Catholic.

Wittenberg<sup>43</sup> was a poor and badly built town of about three thousand inhabitants in a dull, sandy, sterile plain on the banks of the Elbe, and owes its fame entirely to the fact that it became the nursery of the Reformation theology. Luther says that it lay at the extreme boundary of civilization,<sup>44</sup> a few steps from barbarism, and speaks of its citizens as wanting in culture, courtesy and kindness. He felt at times strongly tempted to leave it. Melanchthon who

came from the fertile Palatinate, complained that he could get nothing fit to eat at Wittenberg. Myconius, Luther's friend, describes the houses as "small, old, ugly, low, wooden." Even the electoral castle is a very unsightly structure. The Elector laughed when Dr. Pollich first proposed the town as the seat of the new university. But Wittenberg was one of his two residences (the other being Torgau), had a new castle-church with considerable endowments and provision for ten thousand masses per annum and an Augustinian convent which could furnish a part of the teaching force, and thus cheapen the expenses of the institution.

The university was opened October 18, 1502. The organization was entrusted to Dr. Pollich, the first rector, who on account of his extensive learning was called "*lux mundi*," and who had accompanied the Elector on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (1493), and to Staupitz, the first Dean of the theological faculty, who fixed his eye at once upon his friend Luther as a suitable professor of theology.

Wittenberg had powerful rivals in the neighboring, older and better endowed Universities of Erfurt and Leipzig, but soon overshadowed them by the new theology. The principal professors were members of the Augustinian order, most of them from Tübingen and Erfurt. The number of students was four hundred and sixteen in the first semester, then declined to fifty-five in 1505, partly in consequence of the pestilence, began to rise again in 1507, and when Luther and Melancthon stood on the summit of their fame, they attracted thousands of pupils from all countries of Europe. Melancthon heard at times eleven languages spoken at his hospitable table.

### § 27. *Luther as Professor till 1517.*

Luther was suddenly called by Staupitz from the Augustinian Convent of Erfurt to that of Wittenberg with the expectation of becoming at the same time a lecturer in the university. He arrived there in October, 1508, was called back to Erfurt in autumn, 1509, was sent to Rome in behalf of his order, 1510, returned to Wittenberg, 1511, and continued there till a few days before his death, 1546.

He lived in the convent, even after his marriage. His plain study, bed-room and lecture-hall are still shown in the "Lutherhaus." The lowliness of his work-shop forms a sublime contrast to the grandeur of his work. From their humble dwellings Luther and Melancthon exerted a mightier influence than the contemporary popes and kings from their gorgeous palaces.

Luther combined the threefold office of sub-prior, preacher and professor. He preached both in his convent and in the town-church, sometimes daily for a week, sometimes thrice in one day, during Lent in 1517 twice everyday. He was supported by the convent. As professor he took no fees from the students and received only a salary of one hundred guilders, which after his marriage was raised by the Elector John to two hundred guilders.<sup>45</sup>

He first lectured on scholastic philosophy and explained the Aristotelian dialectics and physics. But he soon passed through the three grades of bachelor, licentiate, and doctor of divinity (October 18th and 19th, 1512), and henceforth devoted himself exclusively to the sacred science which was much more congenial to his taste. Staupitz urged him into these academic dignities,<sup>46</sup>

and the Elector who had been favorably impressed with one of his sermons, offered to pay the expenses (fifty guilders) for the acquisition of the doctorate.<sup>47</sup> Afterward in seasons of trouble Luther often took comfort from the title and office of his doctorate of divinity and his solemn oath to defend with all his might the Holy Scriptures against all errors.<sup>48</sup> He justified the burning of the Pope's Bull in the same way. But the oath of ordination and of the doctor of theology implied also obedience to the Roman church (*ecclesiae Romanae obedientiam*) and her defence against all heresies condemned by her.<sup>49</sup>

With the year 1512 his academic teaching began in earnest and continued till 1546, at first in outward harmony with the Roman church, but afterward in open opposition to it.

He was well equipped for his position, according to the advantages of his age, but, very poorly, according to modern requirements, as far as technical knowledge is concerned.

Although a doctor of divinity, he relied for several years almost exclusively on the Latin version of the Scriptures. Very few professors knew Greek, and still less, Hebrew. Luther had acquired a superficial idea of Hebrew at Erfurt from Reuchlin's *Rudimenta Hebraica*.<sup>50</sup> The Greek he learned at Wittenberg, we do not know exactly when, mostly from books and from his colleagues, Johann Lange and Melanchthon. As late as Feb. 18th, 1518, he asked Lange, "the Greek," a question about the difference between *αναθημα* and *αναθεμα*, and confessed that he could not draw the Greek letters.<sup>51</sup> His herculean labor in translating the Bible forced him into a closer familiarity with the original languages, though he never attained to mastery. As a scholar he remained inferior to Reuchlin or Erasmus or Melanchthon, but as a genius he was their superior, and as a master of his native German he had no equal in all Germany. Moreover, he turned his knowledge to the best advantage, and always seized the strong point in controversy. He studied with all his might and often neglected eating and sleeping.

Luther opened his theological teaching with David and Paul, who became the pillars of his theology. The Psalms and the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians remained his favorite books. His academic labors as a commentator extended over thirty-three years, from 1513 to 1546, his labors as a reformer embraced only twenty-nine years, from 1517 to 1546. Beginning with the Psalms, 1513, he ended with Genesis, November 17th, 1545, three months before his death.

His first lectures on the Psalms are still extant and have recently been published from the manuscript in Wolfenbüttel.<sup>52</sup> They are exegetically worthless, but theologically important as his first attempt to extract a deeper spiritual meaning from the Psalms. He took Jerome's *Psalter* as the textual basis;<sup>53</sup> the few Hebrew etymologies are all derived from Jerome, Augustin (who knew no Hebrew), and Reuchlin's *Lexicon*. He followed closely the mediaeval method of interpretation which distinguished four different senses, and neglected the grammatical and historical interpretation. Thus Jerusalem means literally or historically the city in Palestine, allegorically the good, tropologically virtue, anagogically reward; Babylon means literally the city or empire of Babylon, allegorically the evil, tropologically vice, anagogically punishment. Then again one word may have four bad and four good senses, according as it is understood literally or figuratively.<sup>54</sup> Sometimes he distinguished six senses. He emphasized the prophetic character of the Psalms, and found

Christ and his work everywhere.<sup>55</sup> He had no sympathy with the method of Nicolaus Lyra to understand the Psalter from the times of the writer. Afterward he learned to appreciate him.<sup>56</sup> He followed Augustin, the *Glossa ordinaria*, and especially the *Quincuplex Psalterium* of Faber Stapulensis (Paris, 1508 and 1513). He far surpassed himself in his later comments on the Psalms.<sup>57</sup> It was only by degrees that he emancipated himself from the traditional exegesis, and approached the only sound and safe method of grammatico-historical interpretation of Scripture from the natural meaning of the words, the situation of the writer and the analogy of his teaching, viewed in the light of the Scriptures as a whole. He never gave up altogether the scholastic and allegorizing method of utilizing exegesis for dogmatic and devotional purposes, but he assigned it a subordinate place. "Allegories," he said, "may be used to teach the ignorant common people, who need to have the same thing impressed in various forms." He measured the Scriptures by his favorite doctrine of justification by faith, and hence depreciated important books, especially the Epistle of James and the Apocalypse. But when his dogmatic conviction required it, he laid too much stress on the letter, as in the eucharistic controversy.

From the Psalms he proceeded to the Epistles of Paul. Here he had an opportunity to expound his ideas of sin and grace, the difference between the letter and the spirit, between the law and the gospel, and to answer the great practical question, how a sinner may be justified before a holy God and obtain pardon and peace. He first lectured on Romans and explained the difference between the righteousness of faith and the righteousness of works. He never published a work on Romans except a preface which contains a masterly description of faith. His lectures on Galatians he began October 27th, 1516, and resumed them repeatedly. They appeared first in Latin, September, 1519, and in a revised edition, 1523, with a preface of Melancthon.<sup>58</sup> They are the most popular and effective of his commentaries, and were often published in different languages. John Bunyan was greatly benefited by them. Their chief value is that they bring us into living contact with the central idea of the epistle, namely, evangelical freedom in Christ, which he reproduced and adapted in the very spirit of Paul. Luther always had a special preference for this anti-Judaic Epistle and called it his sweetheart or his wife.<sup>59</sup>

These exegetical lectures made a deep impression. They were thoroughly evangelical, without being anti-catholic. They reached the heart and conscience as well as the head. They substituted a living theology clothed with flesh and blood for the skeleton theology of scholasticism. They were delivered with the energy of intense conviction and the freshness of personal experience. The genius of the lecturer flashed from his deep dark eyes which seem to have struck every observer. "This monk," said Dr. Pollich, "will revolutionize the whole scholastic teaching." Christopher Scheurl commended Luther to the friendship of Dr. Eck (his later opponent) in January, 1517, as "a divine who explained the epistles of the man of Tarsus with wonderful genius." Melancthon afterward expressed a general judgment when he said that Christ and the Apostles were brought out again as from the darkness and filth of prison.

## § 28. *Luther and Mysticism. The Theologia Germanica.*

In 1516 Luther read the sermons of Tauler, the mystic revival preacher of Strassburg (who died in 1361), and discovered the remarkable book called "*German Theology*," which he ascribed to Tauler, but which is of a little later date from a priest and *custos* of the *Deutsch-Herrn Haus* of Frankfort, and a member of the association called "Friends of God." It resembles the famous work of Thomas a Kempis in exhibiting Christian piety as an humble imitation of the life of Christ on earth, but goes beyond it, almost to the very verge of pantheism, by teaching in the strongest terms the annihilation of self-will and the absorption of the soul in God. Without being polemical, it represents by its intense inwardness a striking contrast to the then prevailing practice of religion as a mechanical and monotonous round of outward acts and observances.

Luther published a part of this book from an imperfect manuscript, December, 1516, and from a complete copy, in 1518, with a brief preface of his own.<sup>60</sup> He praises it as rich and over-precious in divine wisdom, though poor and unadorned in words and human wisdom. He places it next to the Bible and St. Augustin in its teaching about God, Christ, man, and all things, and says in conclusion that "the German divines are doubtless the best divines."

There are various types of mysticism, orthodox and heretical, speculative and practical.<sup>61</sup> Luther came in contact with the practical and catholic type through Staupitz and the writings of St. Augustin, St. Bernard, and Tauler. It deepened and spiritualized his piety and left permanent traces on his theology. The Lutheran church, like the Catholic, always had room for mystic tendencies. But mysticism alone could not satisfy him, especially after the Reformation began in earnest. It was too passive and sentimental and shrunk from conflict. It was a theology of feeling rather than of action. Luther was a born fighter, and waxed stronger and stronger in battle. His theology is biblical, with such mystic elements as the Bible itself contains.<sup>62</sup>

## § 29. *The Penitential Psalms. The Eve of the Reformation.*

The first original work which Luther published was a German exposition of the seven Penitential Psalms, 1517.<sup>63</sup> It was a fit introduction to the reformatory Theses which enjoin the true evangelical repentance. In this exposition he sets forth the doctrines of sin and grace and the comfort of the gospel for the understanding of the common people. It shows him first in the light of a popular author, and had a wide circulation.

Luther was now approaching the prime of manhood. He was the shining light of the young university, and his fame began to spread through Germany. But he stood not alone. He had valuable friends and co-workers such as Dr. Wenzeslaus Link, the prior of the convent, and John Lange, who had a rare knowledge of Greek. Carlstadt also, his senior colleague, was at that time in full sympathy with him. Nicolaus von Amsdorf, of the same age with Luther, was one of his most faithful adherents, but more influential in the pulpit than in the chair. Christoph Scheurl, Professor of jurisprudence, was likewise intimate with Luther. Nor must we forget Georg Spalatin, who did not belong to the university, but had great influence upon it as chaplain and secretary of the Elector Frederick, and acted as friendly mediator between him and Luther.

The most effective aid the Reformer received, in 1518, was in the person of Melanchthon.<sup>64</sup>

The working forces of the Reformation were thus fully prepared and ready for action. The scholastic philosophy and theology were undermined, and a biblical, evangelical theology ruled in Wittenberg. It was a significant coincidence, that the first edition of the Greek Testament was published by Erasmus in 1516, just a year before the Reformation.<sup>65</sup>

Luther had as yet no idea of reforming the Catholic church, and still less of separating from it. All the roots of his life and piety were in the historic church, and he considered himself a good Catholic even in 1517, and was so in fact. He still devoutly prayed to the Virgin Mary from the pulpit; he did not doubt the intercession of saints in heaven for the sinners on earth; he celebrated mass with full belief in the repetition of the sacrifice on the cross and the miracle of transubstantiation; he regarded the Hussites as “sinful heretics” for breaking away from the unity of the church and the papacy which offered a bulwark against sectarian division.

But by the leading of Providence he became innocently and reluctantly a Reformer. A series of events carried him irresistibly from step to step, and forced him far beyond his original intentions. Had he foreseen the separation, he would have shrunk from it in horror. He was as much the child of his age as its father, and the times molded him before he molded the times. This is the case with all men of Providence: they are led by a divine hand while they are leading their fellow-men.

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## NOTES.

The works of Luther written before the 95 Theses (reprinted in the Weimar ed., I. 1–238, III., IV.) are as follows: Commentary on the Psalms; a number of sermons; *Tractatus de his, qui ad ecclesias confugiunt* (an investigation of the right of asylum; first printed 1517, anonymously, then under Luther's name, 1520, at Landshut; but of doubtful genuineness); *Sermo praescriptus praeposito in Litzka*, 1512 (a Latin sermon prepared for his friend, the Provost Georg Mascov of Leitzkau in Brandenburg); several Latin Sermons from 1514–1517; *Quaestio de viribus et voluntate hominis sine gratia disputata*, 1516; Preface to his first edition of “*German Theology*,” 1516; *The seven Penitential Psalms*, 1517; *Disputatio contra scholasticam theologiam*, 1517. The last are 97 theses against the philosophy of Aristotle, of whom he said, that he would hold him to be a devil if he had not had flesh. These theses were published in September, 1517, and were followed in October by the 95 Theses against the traffic in Indulgences.

The earliest letters of Luther, from April 22, 1507, to Oct. 31, 1517, are addressed to Braun (vicar at Eisenach), Spalatin (chaplain of the Elector Frederick), Lohr (prior of the Augustinian Convent at Erfurt), John Lange, Scheurl, and others. They are printed in Latin in Löscher's *Reformations-Acta*, vol. . 795–846; in De Wette's edition of *Luther's Briefe*, I. 1–64; German translation in Walch, vol. XXI. The last of these ante-Reformation letters is directed to Archbishop Albrecht of Mainz, and dated from the day of the publication of the Theses, Oct. 31, 1517 (DeWette I. 67–70). The letters begin with the name of “Jesus.”

## FOOTNOTES

1 The famous “*centum gravamina adversus sedem Romanam totumque ecclesiasticum ordinem.*”

2 “*Totus illi magno consensu applausit.*” In a letter of Dec. 12, 1524, to Duke George of Saxony who was opposed to the Reformation.

3 His name is differently spelled: *Luder, Ludher, Lutter, Luttherr, Luther.* The Reformer himself varied. In his first book, on the Penitential Psalms, 1517, he signed his name after the preface *Martinus Luder*, but soon afterward he adopted the spelling Luther. In the University records of Erfurt he was inscribed as *Ludher* in the Wittenberg records, first as *Luder* and *Lüder*. He derived his name from *lauter*, clear, afterward from Lothar, which means laut (hlut), renowned, according to others *Leutherr*, i.e.: *Herr der Leute*, lord of the people. See *Erfurter Matrikel; Album Acad. Viteberg., and Lib. Decanorum facultatis theol. Acad. Viteb.* ed. Förstemann; Walch, L.’s Werke I., 46 sqq.; Jürgens I., 11-13; Knaake, in “*Zeitschr. f. hist. Theol.*,” 1872, p. 465; Köstlin, *Mart. Luther*, I. 21 (2d ed. 1883). The year of Luther’s birth rests on the testimony of his brother James; his mother distinctly remembered the day and the hour, but not the year. Melanchthon’s *Vita Luth.* 2; Köstlin, I. 25 and 776.

4 The story that they went to the fair at Eisenach cannot be proven.

5 “*Ich bin eines Bauern Sohn; mein Vater, Grossvater, Ahnherr sind rechte Bauern gewest. Darauf ist mein Vater gen Mansfeld gezogen und ein Berghauer worden: daher bin ich.*” Mathesius wisely remarks with reference to the small beginnings of Luther: “*Wass gross soll werden, muss klein angehen; und wenn die Kinder zärtlich und herrlich erzogen werden, schadet es ihnen ihr Leben lang.*”

6 Köstlin, I., 26; II., 498. In his small biography, pp. 6 and 7 (Engl. ed.), Köstlin gives the pictures of Hans and Margaret Luther. There is a striking resemblance between Luther and his mother, whom Melanchthon describes as a modest, God-fearing, and devout woman. Her maiden name was Ziegler (not Lindemann, as usually given). Luther’s father is said to have escaped by flight for murdering a peasant at Möhra in a fit of anger; but this tradition rests only on the testimony of J. Wicel (*Epist. libri quatuor*, Lips., 1537), who fell away from Protestantism. It is discredited by Köstlin (I., 24). Janssen (II. 66) leaves it in doubt.

7 *Table Talk* (Erl. Frkf. ed. LXI. 213): “*Man soll die Kinder nicht zu hart stäüpen; denn mein Vater stäüpet mich einmal so sehr, dass ich ihn flohe und ward ihm gram, bis er mich wieder zu ihm gewöhnete.*”

8 He says in his *Table Talk*: “*Darumb sagte meine Wirthin zu Eisenach recht, als ich daselbst in die Schule ging:*

*‘Es ist kein lieber Ding auf Erden  
Als Frauenlieb’, wem sie mag warden..’*”

See *Works*, Erl. Frkf. ed. LXI., 212; Jürgens, I., 281 sqq.; Kolde, I., 36; Janssen, II., 67. The relation of Luther to this excellent lady has been made the subject of a useful religious novel by Mrs. Eliz. Charles, under the title: *Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family. By two of themselves.* London and New York (M. W. Dodd), 1864. The diary is fictitious.

9 See the description by Jürgens, I., 351 sqq.; and Kampschulte, *Die Universität Erfurt in ihrem Verh. z. Humanismus u. Reformation*, Trier, 1358. Two parts. The university was abolished in 1816.

10 See Kampschulte, l.c. I., 43 sqq., and G. Plitt, *Jodocus Truttvetter, der Lehrer Luthers*, 1876.

- 11 Jürgens, I., 449; Kampschulte, *De Johanne Croto Rubiano*, 1862.
- 12 O. G. Schmidt, *Luther's Bekanntschaft mit den alten Classikern*, 1883.
- 13 “*Da ich zwanzig Jahre alt war, hatte ich noch keine Bibel gesehen; ich meinte, es wären kein Evangelien und Episteln mehr, denn die in den Postillen sind.*” Werke, Erl. ed., LX., 255. This was partly his own fault, for several editions of the Latin Vulgate and the German Bible were printed before 1500.
- 14 Mathesius: “*da ihm ein guter Gesell erstochen ward.*”
- 15 In a letter which Crotus wrote to Luther from Bologna, Nov., 1519: “*Perge, ut coepisti, relinque exemplum posteris. Nam ista facis non sine numine divum. Ad haec respexit divina providentia, cum te redeuntem a parentibus coeleste fulmen veluti alterum Paulum ante opidum Erfurdianum in terram prostravit, atque inter Augustiana septa compulit e nostro consortio.*” Döllinger I. 139.
- 16 Köstlin, I., 88 sq., 780.
- 17 The cell and furniture were destroyed by fire, March 7, 1872. The cell was reconstructed, and the convent is now an orphan-asylum (Martinsstift).
- 18 “*Der vermaladeite Heide Aristoteles.*” Luther’s attitude to scholasticism and the great Greek philosopher changed again when, in support of the eucharistic presence, he had to resort to the scholastic distinctions between various kinds of presence. Comp. Fr. Aug. Berthold Nitzsch, *Luther und Aristoteles*. Kiel, 1883.
- 19 It passed through three editions between 1518 and 1520. See Knaake, I., 86 sq. Keller says that it was often republished by the Anabaptists, whom he regards as the successors of the mediaeval Waldenses, or “Brethren.”
- 20 “*Per quem primum coepit Evangelii lux de tenebris splendescere in cordibus nostris.*” So Luther says in his letter to Staupitz, Sept. 17, 1518 (DeWette II., 408 sq.), where he addresses him as “*reverendus in Christo pater,*” and signs himself “*filius tuus Martinus Lutherus.*”
- 21 In a letter of comfort to Hieronymus Weller, Nov. 6, 1530 (DeWette, IV., 187), Luther says, that in his sadness and distress in the convent he consulted Staupitz and opened to him his “*horrendas et terrificas cogitationes,*” and that he was told by him: “*Nescis Martine, quam tibi illa tenatio sit utilis et necessaria. Non enim temere te sic exercet Deus, videbis, quod ad res magnas gerendas te ministro utetur.*”
- 22 Luther: “*D. Staupitius me incitabat contra papam (al. papatum).*” In *Colloquia*, ed. Bindseil, III., 188.
- 23 First published by K. Krafft, in “*Briefe und Documente aus der Zeit der Reformation,*” Elberfeld (1876), p. 54 sq.
- 24 “*Ad liberatum carnis video innumeros abuti evangelio.*”
- 25 Extracts from these sermons were first published by Kolde.
- 26 Knaake, l.c., I., 130 sqq.; Keller, *Reform.*, 346 sq. It must have been this book which Link sent to Luther in the year 1525, and which Luther returned with a very unfavorable judgment. Döllinger (l.c. I., 155) thinks that Luther looked upon the death of Staupitz as a sort of divine judgment, as he looked afterward upon the death of Zwingli.
- 27 Nevertheless his books were put in the Index by the Council of Trent, 1563, and were burnt as heretical with all his correspondence by order of his successor, Abbot Martin of St. Peter, in the court of the convent at Salzburg in 1584. See Fr. Hein. Reusch (Old Cath.), *Der Index der verbotenen Bücher*, Bd. I. (Bonn, 1883), p. 279: “*Staupitius ist in den Index gekommen, weil*

*Cochlaeus bei dem Jahre 1517 ihn neben Luther als Gegner Tetzels erwähnt. Er ist in der I. Classe geblieben bis auf diesen Tag, obschon man in Rom oder wenigstens in Trient, jedenfalls Benedict XIV. wohl hätte wissen können, dass er als guter Katholik, als Abt von St. Peter zu Salzburg gestorben.*” This is only one of several hundred errors in this papal catalogue of heretical books.

28 Or, as Luther expressed it in his letter to Staupitz of Feb. 9, 1521, he wavered between Christ and the Pope: “*Ich fürchte, ihr möchtet zwischen Christo und dem Papste in der Mitte schwaben, die ihr doch in heftigem Streit sehet.*” He told him in the same letter that he was no more that preacher of grace and of the cross (*ein solcher Gnaden-und Kreuzdiger*) as formerly.

29 Luther himself felt how widely he differed in this doctrine from his favorite Augustin. He said afterward in his *Table-Talk*: “*Principio Augustinum vorabam, non legebam; aber da mir in Paulo die Thür aufging, dass ich wusste was justificatio fidei wär, ward es aus mit ihm.*” Köstlin, I., 780. Yet if we reduce the doctrine of justification by faith to the more general term of salvation by free grace, it was held as clearly and strongly by Augustin and, we may say, is held by all true Christians. Janssen (II., 71) says: “Of all the books recognized and used by the (Catholic) Church, whether learned or popular, there is not one which does not contain the doctrine of justification by Christ alone (*die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung durch Christus allein*).” But the question between the Roman church and Luther turned on the subjective appropriation of the righteousness of Christ which is the objective ground of justification and salvation; while faith is the subjective condition.

30 Modern exegesis has justified this view of *δικαιωω* and *δικαιωσις*”, according to Hellenistic usage, although etymologically the verb may mean to make just, i.e., to sanctify, ... (i.e. to make manifest, etc.). See the Commentaries on Romans and Galatians.

31 The boldest and wildest utterance of Luther on justification occurs in a letter to Melancthon (De Wette’s ed. II. 37), dated Aug. 1, 1521, where he gives his opinion on the vow of celibacy and says: “*Esto peccator et pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide (crede) et gaude in Christo, qui victor est peccati, mortis et mundi.*” But it loses all its force as an argument against him and his doctrine, first by being addressed to Melancthon, who was not likely to abuse it, and secondly, by implying an impossibility; for the *fortius crede* and the concluding *ora fortiter* neutralize the *fortiter pecca*. Paul, of course, could never have written such a passage. He puts the antinomian inference: “Let us continue in sin that grace may abound” into the form of a question, and answers it by an indignant *μη γενοιτο* Rom. 6:1. This is the difference between the wisdom of an apostle and the zeal of a reformer.

32 Luther’s dicta about Rome and his Roman journey are collected in Walch’s ed., vol. XXII., 2372-2379; Köhler: *Luther’s Reisen* (1872), p. 2-20; Jürgens, II., 266-358; Koestlin, I., 100-107; Lenz, 45-47; Kolde, I., 73-79; and in Brieger’s “*Zeitschrift für Kirchengesch.*” II., 460 sqq. Comp. also, on the R. Cath. side, the brief account of Janssen, II., 72. Audin devotes his third chapter to the Roman journey (I., 52-65).

33 The chronology is not quite certain. The date 1511 is adopted by Köstlin and Kolde. Others date the Rome journey back to 1510 (Mathesius, Seckendorf, Jürgens, and Luther himself, in his tract *Against Popery invented by the Devil*, Erl. ed. XXVI., 125, though once he names the year 1511).

34 Kolde (I., 81) conjectures that the decision of Rome in the controversy among the Augustinians went against Staupitz, who soon after 1512 left Wittenberg.

35 He passed through Suabia and Bavaria, as we may judge from his description of the people (Walch, XXII., 2359): “*Wenn ich viel reisen sollte, wollte ich nirgends lieber, denn durch Schwaben und Baierland ziehen; denn sie sind freundlich und gutwillig, herbergen gerne, gehen Freunden und Wandersleuten entgegen, und thun den Leuten gütlich, und gute Ausrichtung um ihr Geld.*” He seems to have seen Switzerland also of which he says (ib., p. 2360): “*Schweiz ist ein dürr und bergig Land, darum sind sie endlich und hurtig, müssen ihre Nahrung anderswo suchen.*”

36 We seek in vain for descriptions of natural scenery among the ancient classics, but several Hebrew Psalms celebrate the glory of the Creator in his works. The Parables of our Lord imply that nature is full of spiritual lessons. The first descriptions of the beauties of nature in Christian literature are found in the Epistles of St. Basil, Gregory of Nazianzum and Gregory of Nyssa. See this *Ch. Hist.*, vol. III., 896 sqq. The incomparable beauties of Switzerland were first duly appreciated and made known to the world by Albrecht von Haller of Bern (in his poem, “*Die Alpen*”), Goethe (*Schweizreise*), and Schiller (in *Wilhelm Tell*, where he gives the most charming picture of the Lake of the Four Cantons, though he never was there).

37 “*Salve! Sancta Roma.*”

38 “*Auch ich war ein so toller Heiliger,*” he said, “*lief durch alle Kirchen und Kluften, glaubte alles was daselbst erlogen und erstunken ist.*”

39 This interesting incident rests on the authority of his son Paul, who heard it from the lips of his father in 1544. Modern Popes, Pius VII. and Pius IX., have granted additional indulgences to those who climb up the Scala Santa.

40 “*Es gehet uns wie den Propheten, die klagen auch über Jerusalem, und sagen: Die feine gläubige Stadt is zur Hure geworden. Denn aus dem Besten kommt allezeit das Aergste, wie die Exempel zeigen zu allen Zeiten.*” Walch, XXII., 2378.

41 This was the topic of one of his last and most abusive works: “*Wider das Papstthum zu Rom vom Teufel gestiftet.*” March, 1545.

42 Comp. “*Revista Christiana,*” Firenze, 1883, p. 422. The picture on the opposite page (in the text) is from a photograph made in Florence.

43 Probably, Weissenberg, from the white sand hills on the Elbe. So Jürgens II., 190. The original inhabitants of the region were Slavs (Wends), but expelled or absorbed by the Saxons. The town dates from the twelfth century.

44 “*In termino civilitatis.*”

45 “*Wäre es nicht geschehen,*” says Luther, “*so hatte ich nach meiner Verheirathung mir vorgenommen, für Honorar zu lesen. Aber da mir Gott zuvorkam, so habe ich mein Leben lang kein Exemplar [he means, of his writings] verkauft noch gelesen um Lohn, will auch den Ruhm, will's Gott, mit mir ins Grab nehmen.*” Jürgens, II., 248 sq.

46 Luther remembered the pear tree under which Staupitz overcame his objections to the labors and responsibilities of the doctorate. He thought himself unable to endure them with his frail body, but Staupitz replied playfully and in prophetic anticipation of the great work in store for him: “*In Gottes Namen! Unser Herr Gott hat grosse Geschäfte; Er bedarf droben auch kluger Leute; wenn Ihr nun sterbet, so müsset Ihr dort sein Rathgeber sein.*”

47 See K. F. Th. Schneider, *Luther's Promotion zum Doctor und Melanchthon's zum Baccalaureus der Theologie*, Neuwied, 1860 (38 pp.). He gives Luther's Latin oration which he delivered in honor of theology on the text: “I will give you a mouth and wisdom” (Luke 21:15). The expenses of the promotion to the degree of the baccalaureate, Luther never paid. The records of the dean note this fact: “*Adhuc non satisfecit facultati,*” and Luther afterward wrote on the margin: “*Nec faciet, quia tunc pauper et sub obedientia nihil habuit.*” Schneider, p. 6.

48 See his utterances on the importance of his doctorate in Mathesius (I. and XV.) and Jürgens (II., 405-408). Jürgens points out and explains (p. 424 sqq.) the inconsistency of Luther in his appeal to human authority and overestimate of the official title. Every step in his public career was accompanied by scruples of conscience which he had to solve the best way he could.

49 Köstlin says (Engl. transl. of the short biography, p. 65): “Obedience to the Pope was not required at Wittenberg, as it was at other universities.” But it is implied in obedience to the Roman church. The university was chartered by the Emperor Maximilian, but the Elector had not neglected to secure the papal sanction. See Jürgens II. 207.

50 This book, published at Pforzheim, 1506, at the author’s expense, is the first Hebrew grammar written by a Christian, and broke the path for Hebrew learning in Germany. So far Reuchlin was right in calling it a *monumentum aere perennius*.

51 DeWette, I. 34: “*Petimus a te, Graece, ut controversiam nostram dissolvas, quae sit distantia inter anathema per epsilon, et anathema per h ... Nescio figuras literarum pingere.*” In his *Table Talk* he says: “*Ich kann weder griechisch noch hebräisch; ich will aber dennoch einem Griechen und Hebräer ziemlich begegnen.*” Comp. on his linguistic studies and accomplishments, Jürgens, I. 470 sqq.; II. 428 sqq.

52 He had the Latin text of the Psalms printed, and wrote between the lines and on the margin his notes in very small and almost illegible letters. Köstlin gives a facsimile page in *Luther’s Leben*, p. 72 (Engl. ed. p. 64). The whole was published with painstaking accuracy by Kawerau in the third volume of the Weimar ed. (1885).

53 The innumerable references to the *Hebraeus* are never intended for the original, but for Jerome’s *Psalterium juxta Hebraeos*. Paul de Lagarde has published an edition, Lips., 1874.

54 Luther illustrates this double four-fold scheme of exegesis by the following table (Weimar ed. III. 11):

LITERA OCCIDENS

Mons Zion

*hystorice terra Canaan*

*Allegorice Synagoga vel  
persona eminens in eadem*

*tropologice Justitia phari-  
saica et legalis  
anagogice Gloria futura  
secundum carnem*

SPIRITUSVIVIFICANS *de corpore*

Mons Zion

*hystorice populus in Zion existens Babylonico Ecclesiastico  
Allegorice Ecclesia vel quilibet {doctor Episcopus eminens}  
Tropologice Justitia fidei  
vel alia excellen ...  
Anagogice gloria  
eterna in celis.*

*Econtra VALLIS CEDRON per oppositum.*

55 This fanciful allegorizing and spiritualizing method of interpreting the Psalms by which they are made to teach almost anything that is pious and edifying, is still popular even in some Protestant churches, especially the Church of England. Comp. e.g. Dr. Neale and Dr. Little-

dale's *Commentary on the Psalms from primitive and mediaeval writers*. London, fourth ed., 1884, 4 vols. The celebrated Baptist preacher, Spurgeon, has written a commentary on the Psalms, in seven volumes, which is likewise full of allegorizing interpretation, but mostly derived from older Protestant and Puritan sources.

56 Hence the saying: "*Si Lyra non lyrasset, Lutherus non saltasset.*"

57 Ed. by Dr. Bertheau in the fourth vol. of the Weimar ed. (1886).

58 See the first ed. in the Weimar ed. of his works, vol. II. 436-618. This commentary of 1519 must be distinguished from the larger work of 1535 which has the same title, but rests on different lectures.

59 In December, 1531: "*Epistola ad Galatas ist meine Epistola, der ich mich vertraut habe, meine Kethe von Bora.*" Weimar ed. II. 437. Melanchthon called Luther's commentary the thread of Theseus in the labyrinth of N. T. exegesis.

60 Both prefaces are printed in the Weimar ed. of his works I. 153 and 378 sq. The book itself has gone through many editions; the best is by Franz Pfeiffer, *Theologia deutsch*, Stuttgart. 1851, third ed. 1855. There is a English translation by Susanna Winkworth, *Theologia Germanica*, with additions by Canon Kingsley and Chevalier Bunsen, (London, 1854, new ed. 1874; reprinted at Andover, 1846). Several characteristic mystic terms, as Entwerdung, Gelasenheit, Vergottung, are hardly translatable.

61 Ed. von Hartmann, the pessimist says (*Die Philos. des Unbewussten*, Berlin, 1869, p. 276): "*Die Mystik ist eine Schlingpflanze, die an jedem Stabe emporwuchert und sich mit den extremsten Gegensätzen gleichgut abzufinden weiss.*"

62 See Hermann Hering, *Die Mystik Luthers im Zusammenhange seiner Theologie und in ihrem Verh. zur älteren Mystik*. Leipzig, 1879. He distinguishes three periods in Luther's relation to mysticism: (1) Romanisch-mystische Periode; (2) Germanisch-mystische Periode; (3) Conflict with the false mysticism of Münzer, Carlstadt, the Zwickau Prophets, and Schwenkfeldt.

63 Weimar ed., vol. I. 154-220. A Latin copy had appeared already in 1513 and is preserved in the library at Wolfenbüttel, from which Prof. E. Riehm of Halle published it: *Initium theologiae Lutheri. S. exempla scholiorum quibus D. Lutherus Psalterium interpretari coepit. Part. I. Septem Psalms paenitentiales. Textum originale nunc primum de Lutheri autographo exprimentum curavit*. Halle, 1874. Luther's closing lectures of 1516 exist likewise in MS. at Dresden, from which they were published by J. C. Seidemann in: *Doctoris M. Lutheri scholae ineditae de Psalmis annis 1513-1516*. Dresden, 1876, in 2 vols.

64 On the early colleagues of Luther, see Jürgens, II. 217-235.

65 Luther made good use of it for his translation, but was not pleased with the writings of Erasmus. As early as March 1, 1517, he wrote to John Lange: "I now read our Erasmus, but he pleases me less every day. It is well enough that he should constantly and learnedly refute the monks and priests, and charge them with a deep-rooted and sleepy ignorance. But I fear he does not sufficiently promote Christ and the grace of God, of which he knows very little. He thinks more of the human than the divine .... Not every one who is a good Greek and Hebrew, is also for this reason a good Christian. The blessed Jerome with his five tongues did not equal the one-tongued Augustin, although Erasmus thinks differently."—*Briefe*, ed. De Wette, I. 52.