

PROVIDENCE AND THE GREAT REFORMATION

[Contributed]

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - November 15, 1930)

“HISTORY,” says D’Aubigne, Swiss historian, “must live by that principle of life which is proper to it and that life is God. He must be acknowledged and proclaimed in history; and the course of events must be displayed as the annals of the government of a Supreme Disposer. “I have descended into the lists to which the recitals of our historians attracted me. I have there seen the actions of men and of nations developing themselves with power, and encountering in hostile collision; I have heard I know not what clangor of arms; but nowhere has my attention been directed to the majestic aspect of the Judge who provides over the struggle. “And yet there is a principle of movement emanating from God Himself in all the changes among nations. God looks upon that wide stage on which the generations of men successively meet and struggle. He is there, it is true, an invisible God; but if the profaner multitude pass before Him without noticing Him, because He is ‘a God that hideth Himself,’ thoughtful spirits, and such as feel their need of the principle of their being, seek Him with the more earnestness, and are not satisfied until they lie prostrate at His feet. And their search is richly rewarded. For, from the heights to which they are obliged to climb ‘to meet their God, the world’s history, instead of offering, as to the ignorant crowd, a confused chaos, appears a majestic temple, which the invisible hand of God erects, and which rises to His glory above the rock of humanity.”

Working Out His Sovereign Will

And to these words of the Christian historian, written more than fourscore years ago, may be added today the further testimony of those students of God’s Holy Word, who, with a finger touching the inspired pages of Daniel, trace with earnest eye the corresponding events in the chronicles of earth; or, gazing with John on Patmos at the visions “that must shortly come to pass,” note the marvelous unfolding of those signs and symbols adown the succeeding ages. And these realize more than all others that the God who “plants His footsteps on the sea, and rides upon the storm,” who ordains that even the wrath of man shall praise Him, as the flying shuttles of men and affairs weave a pattern now light, now dark, on the great loom of time, is indeed, in history, working out His most gracious and sovereign will. “The Gospel,” says von Muller, another distinguished historian, “is the fulfillment of all hopes, the perfection of all philosophy, the interpreter of all revolutions, the key to all the seeming contradictions of the physical and moral world-it is life -- it is immortality. Since I have known the Savior, everything is clear -- with Him, there is nothing I cannot solve.”

The two greatest revolutions of history are Christianity and the Reformation. In their far-reaching results and the numbers affected, they stand high pinnacled and supreme in the annals of time. They were not limited to one nation as the various revolutions of the past, political in nature, which witnessed the overthrow of an individual or a party. Nor were they anything in the nature of a revolt as the term revolution has come to mean in our present day usage of the word. A revolution is a change wrought in human affairs. “It is something new which unrolls itself from the bosom of humanity; and the word, previous to the close of the last century [17th], was more frequently understood in a good sense than in a bad one: ‘a happy – a wonderful Revolution’ was the expression.”

“The history of the Reformation,” says D’Aubigne, “directs men to God, who orders all events in history; to that Divine Word, ever ancient in the eternal nature of the truths it contains, ever new in the regenerative influence it exercises-that Word which, three centuries ago [now four

centuries] purified society, brought back the faith of God to souls enfeebled by superstition, and which, in every age of man's history, is the source whence cometh salvation."

The greatest event of all history is recorded in six brief words by the beloved Apostle John: "And the Word was made flesh." Backward, from that humble cradle in Bethlehem, roll the ages that were themselves but preparatory to it; and forward, forever stamped with the impress of the cross that marks the boundary line between, lie the ensuing centuries.'

A Breath of Life

Jesus of Nazareth lived thirty-three years upon earth. "He suffered, He died, He rose again, He ascended into heaven, His disciples, beginning at Jerusalem, traveled over the Roman Empire and the world, everywhere proclaiming their Master the author of everlasting salvation. From the midst of a people who rejected intercourse with others, proceeded a mercy that invited and embraced all . . . A breath of life moved over this vast field of death. A new, a holy people was formed upon the earth; and the astonished world beheld in the disciples of the despised Galilean a purity, a self-denial, a charity, a heroism, of which they retained no idea."

This new religion had two main features entirely distinguished from other religions before it: First, it declared the direct relationship and communication of each child of God, through Christ, to his Maker. Secondly, it declared no need of officiating priests between. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Quoting again from D'Aubigne: "Such were the two principles that composed the religion which then took possession of the Empire and of the whole world. The standing of a Christian is in them, and apart from them, Christianity itself disappears. On their preservation or their loss depended its decline or its growth."

The historian then proceeds to make clear to us how these two principles which presided in the beginning were lost. He pictures the Church as it was in the beginning—a community of brethren whose members were taught of God, each with the full liberty of drinking for himself from the fountain of life. The question of doctrine was settled by the various Epistles. These had no pompous name or names attached, but began simply with these words, "The Apostles, elders, and brethren to our brethren."

Beginning of Apostasy in Rome

Paul of Tarsus had arrived at Rome, the great seat of the Empire and of the world, preaching the salvation that cometh from God only, and had formed a church “beside the throne of the Caesars.” For some time its simple faith was spoken of everywhere as it shone forth like a light set upon a hill, and then it began to decline from its first simplicity.

At first the conversion of neighboring cities and towns occupied its bishops and pastors. These smaller churches naturally looked to the larger church with confidence and gratitude. Soon the ministers in Rome began to accept as their due the homage voluntarily offered by the lesser congregations and began to thirst for more deference and power as is the common human failing of man. Then, not content with the position held over these churches, ambitious thoughts began to possess the pastors and bishop of Rome: “Since our majestic city is queen of all earth, why should not we, the Church of Rome, be pre-eminent over all churches? Ought not these to be regarded as our children and subject to our rulings and decisions?”

Bishops of various parts of the Empire helped these aspiring thoughts to bear fruit by extending to the Church at Rome something of the pride felt in the reigning city itself, not as dependents, but as admiring equals. “But usurped power swells like the avalanche,” and soon the friendly advice and spiritual help extended by the Roman bishop became **commands** and “a chief place among equals appeared to him a throne.”

Churches of the East began to appeal to the leading Church hoping to gain an interest there, envious of the churches of the West who had favored the encroachments of the Roman pastors. To the ambitious Church of Rome these flattering consultations and exaggerated compliments from others became as credentials of her authority. “Such is the heart of man exalted to a throne; flattery intoxicates him, and his head grows dizzy. What he possesses impels him to aspire after more.”

The Living Church Retired to the lonely Sanctuary

The pretensions of Rome were favored by a doctrine that had begun to gain foothold in the third century -- the doctrine of “the Church” and the “necessity for its visible unity.” The loving, living faith which joined believers as one to Christ their blessed Head was not enough. “The semblance of identical and external organization was gradually substituted in place of the internal and spiritual unity which is the very essence of a religion proceeding from God. Men suffered the precious perfume of faith to escape while they bowed themselves before the empty vase that had held it. Faith in the heart no longer knit together in one the members of the Church. Then it was that other ties were sought; and Christians were united by the means of bishops, archbishops, popes, mitres, ceremonies, and canons. The Living Church retiring by degrees to the lonely sanctuary of a few solitary souls, an exterior church was substituted in place of it, and installed in all its forms as a Divine institution. Salvation no longer flowed from that Word which was now hidden -- it began to be affirmed that it was conveyed by means of certain invented forms, and that none could obtain it without resorting to such means. No one, it was said, can by his faith attain to everlasting life: Christ communicated to the Apostles, and the Apostles to the Bishops, the unction of the Holy Spirit; and this Spirit is found only in this order of communication. In the beginning of the Gospel, whosoever had received the Spirit of Jesus Christ was esteemed a member of the Church: now the order was inverted; and no one, unless a member of the Church, was counted to have received the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

“As soon as the notion of a supposed necessity for a visible unity of the Church had taken root, another error began to spread: namely that it was needful that there should be some outward representative of that unity. Though no trace of any primacy of St. Peter above the rest of the Apostles appears in the Gospel; although the idea of a primacy is at variance with the mutual relations of the disciples as ‘brethren,’ and even with the spirit of the dispensation which requires

all the children of the Father to minister one to another (1 Pet. 4:10), acknowledging but one Master and Head; and though the Lord Jesus had rebuked His disciples whenever their carnal hearts conceived desires of pre-eminence; a primacy of St. Peter was invented, and supported by misinterpreted texts, and men proceeded to acknowledge in that Apostle, and in his pretended successor, the visible representative of visible unity-and head of the whole Church!”

(To be continued)

PROVIDENCE AND THE GREAT REFORMATION

Contributed-continued from last issue

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - December 1, 1930)

AS EARLY as the third century, churches of the large and important cities had been held in special honor. The Council of Nice agreed that ancient, special authority over the provincial churches about them belonged to the Churches of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria. Then the patriarchate of Constantinople -- a new Rome, a second capital of the Empire -- was established. But when, under the Mahomet invasions, the bishoprics of Antioch and Alexandria were swept away and later Constantinople fell away and separated from the West, Rome, alone, unrivaled, queen of all, surveyed the world about her from her throne of seven hills.

At the beginning of the seventh century, at the same point of time that the Mohammedan power arose in the East and spread over that particular part of the earth, barbarous hordes poured forth from the forests, of the North and settled in the West, which they had already invaded. These, but lately converts to Christianity, devoid of spiritual understanding, found all the external pomp and mysterious ceremonies their half-heathen souls required in the Church at Rome, and fell at the feet of its chief priest in something of savage adoration.

Then the Vandals, the Ostrogoths, the Burgundians, the Lombards, and the Anglo-Saxons came to mingle their idolatrous worship before the throne of the Roman Pontiff. Thus, "new and more powerful partisans than all the rest soon came to her assistance. Ignorance and superstition took possession of the Church, and delivered it up to Rome, blindfold and manacled."

Apostate Church Begins Her Reign

The Pope whose power had been from the beginning subordinate to political rulers now freed himself and assumed the place of an equal if not a superior. The Church, whose kingdom was to be not of this world, begins its reign! "The kingdoms and principalities of the earth were to be her domain; and kings were to tremble before the thunders of the Jupiter of New Rome," says D'Aubigne. "Woe to those who should resist her. Their subjects were released from their oaths of allegiance their whole country placed, under interdict -- public worship was to cease--the churches to be closed the bells mute -- the sacrament no longer administered -- and the malediction extended even to the dead, to whom, at the command of the proud pontiff, the earth refused the peace and shelter of the tomb.

"Thus everything was changed in the Church. At the beginning it was a society of brethren, and now an absolute monarchy is reared in the midst of them. All Christians were priests of the living God (1 Pet. 2:9), with humble pastors for their guidance. But a lofty head is uplifted from the midst of these pastors, a mysterious voice utters words full of pride; an iron hand compels all men, small and great, rich and poor, freemen and slaves, to take the mark of its power. The holy and primitive equality of souls before God is lost sight of. Christians are divided into two strangely unequal camps: on the one side a separate class of priests daring to usurp the name of the Church, and claiming to be possessed of peculiar privileges in the sight of the Lord; on the other, timid flocks reduced to a blind and passive submission -- a people gagged and silenced and delivered over to a proud caste. Every tribe, language, and nation of Christendom submitted to the dominion of this spiritual king who had received power to overcome."

The blessed doctrine of Salvation by Grace given to the early Church began to be dimmed by a prevailing error. St. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, had declared, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it, is the gift of Cod." But this all-embracing view of

faith was forgotten. Soon it came to be regarded as a mere act of the understanding, and the fact that works naturally followed faith as its fruits, was lost sight of. Faith, robbed of its resulting works could no longer be said to save. Its practical character done away with, the Church was now taught that justification comes to the sinner by Faith and by Works.

Salvation in the Custody of Priests

St. Augustine had said that no action good in itself is worthy of approval unless the seat of the action, deep in the heart, is holy. But, more and more, the error of placing value in the external act rather than in the hidden affections gained favor and as a natural and following sequence, legal observances and acts of penance were emphasized, rather than inward holiness. "The more of such works the greater the reputed sanctity; heaven was to be obtained by means of them; and (extravagant as such a thought must appear to us) it was not long before certain persons were believed to have made attainments in holiness beyond that which was required of them.

"Thus did the proud heart of man refuse to give the glory to that God to whom all glory belongs. Thus did man claim to deserve, what God had decreed to give freely! He essayed to find in himself the salvation which the Gospel brought to him ready wrought out from heaven. He spread a veil over the saving truths of salvation which cometh from God, and not from man -- a salvation which God gives -- but barter not; and from that day all the other truths of religion were overclouded; darkness spread over the Church, and from this deep and deplorable gloom were seen to arise innumerable errors.

"As soon as salvation was taken out of the hands of God, it fell into the hands of the priests. The latter put themselves in the place of the Lord; and the souls of men thirsting for -- pardon were no longer taught to look to heaven, but to the Church, and especially to its pretended Head. The Roman Pontiff was in the place of God to the blinded minds of men. Hence all the grandeur and authority of the popes, and hence also unutterable abuses.

"Doubtless the doctrine of salvation by faith was not entirely lost to the Church. We meet with it in some of the most celebrated Fathers after the time of Constantine; and in the middle ages. The doctrine was not formally denied. Councils and popes did not hurl their bulls and decrees against it; but they set up beside it something which nullified it. Salvation by faith was received by many learned men, by many a humble and simple mind, but the multitude had something very different. Men had invented a complete system of forgiveness. The multitude flocked to it and joined with it, rather than with the Grace of Christ; and thus the system of man's devising prevailed over that of God."

À Controlling Mania

When the life of faith declines, then the moral conduct of man also declines. The sale of indulgences in itself was a stimulation to the ignorant masses towards greater immorality. When for a small sum of money or a contribution to the building of a church one can sin with all fear of future retribution erased from the mind, what crimes must follow! what eager reaching out for all the secretly coveted works of darkness!

The priests also shared in the general corruption as did the higher orders of the Church on lip to the very popes themselves. Dark indeed are some of the blots such as these have made on the pages of history. The higher the pretensions man makes before his God, the greater he sinks when he embraces evil. Yet at no time, no matter how "dark" may be described the ages, was there a lack on earth. of many of great piety and personal purity of conduct as the Reformation later disclosed. This particular evil, the sale of indulgences, had its beginning in the works of penance that had been substituted for the forgiveness of God. In Italy this doctrine of self-purification had become a controlling mania. "Nobles and peasants, old and young, even children of five years old, went in pairs, through the villages, the towns, and the cities, by hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands, without any other covering than a cloth tied round the middle, and visiting the

churches in procession in the very depth of winter. Armed with scourges, they lashed themselves without pity, and the streets resounded with cries and groans, which drew forth tears of compassion from all who heard them.”

In time men became tired of all this priestly imposed suffering and the priests, fearful of losing power, began to look about for a remedy. “You are too weak to bear these necessary penances,” they exclaimed to the people. “We are stronger than you and we will bear them for you. We will kneel for you and recite your psalms. We will fast for your sins. We will shoulder your heavy burdens. But in consideration for our services, you who are rich must pay twenty pence for a seven weeks’ fast. You who are less wealthy shall pay ten pence. And the poor need pay but three pence.”

Voices of Protest

Some voices were raised in protest against the traffic, but it offered to the Church an easy source of income and soon became a system. Philosophers of Alexandria had spoken of a purifying fire where men’s sins, unforgiven on earth, might find expiation after death. The idea had gained some foothold in the church and the money-making idea was extended beyond the realms of the living to the supposed realms of the dead, and the doctrine of Purgatory was added to the pitiful list of defiling errors. Who now would hold back his gold when by the purchasing of an indulgence, the buying of a mass, the loved and departed might be saved that further pain and anguish beyond the bound of life? The pockets of the priests were now filled with the offers of the compassionate. **Wickedness had come to the full.**

“The evils,” says the historian, “which then afflicted Christendom, namely superstition, incredulity, ignorance, unprofitable speculation, and corruption of morals -- evils naturally engendered in the hearts of men -- were not new on the earth. They had made a great figure in the history of nations. They had invaded, especially in the East, different religious systems, which had seen their times of glory. Those enervated systems had sunk under these evils, and not one of them had ever arisen from its fall.

“And was Christianity now to undergo the same destiny? Was it to be lost like those old religions of the nations? Was the blow that doomed them to death to be of power to destroy it? Was there nothing to secure its preservation? And these opposing forces which overflowed it, and which had already dethroned so many various systems of worship, were they indeed to have power to seat themselves without resistance on the ruins of the Church of Jesus Christ?

“No! there is in Christianity that which there was not in any of these national systems. It does not, like them, offer certain general ideas, mixed with traditions and fables, destined, sooner or later, to, fall before the march of human reason; but it contains within it, pure Truth built upon facts which challenge the scrutiny of any upright and enlightened mind. Christianity has for its object not merely to excite in man certain vague religious feelings, of which the impression, once forgotten, can never be revived; its object is to satisfy, and it does in reality satisfy, all the religious wants in human nature, in whatever degree that nature may be developed. It is not the contrivance of man, whose works pass away and are forgotten, but it is the work of God, who upholds what He creates; and it has the promises of its Divine Author for the pledge of its duration.

Christianity in the Sixteenth Century,

“it is impossible that human nature can ever be above the need of Christianity. And if ever man has for a time fancied that he could do without it, it has soon appeared to him clothed in fresh youth and vigor, as the only cure for the human soul; and the degenerate nations have returned with new ardor to those ancient, simple, and powerful truths, which in the hour of their infatuation they despised.

“In fact, Christianity displayed, in the sixteenth century, the same regenerative power which it had exercised in the first. After the lapse of fifteen hundred years, the same truths produced the same effects. In the days of the Reformation, as in the days of Peter and Paul, the Gospel, with invincible energy, overcame mighty obstacles. The efficacy of its sovereign power was displayed from north to south, amidst nations differing most widely in manners, in character, and in civilization. Then, as in the times of Stephen and James, it kindled the fire of enthusiasm and devotion in the midst of the general deadness, and raised on all sides the spirit of martyrs.” At the time when the Reformation was about to break forth, all seemed quiet and safe for Rome. The knees of the common people bowed before her altar, and kings of earth dared utter not so much as a word against her lest they be held guilty of sacrilege. Not a cloud appeared on the horizon, the future looked peaceful and assured. But this appearance was but outward; inwardly, weakening forces had been at work. Often faint cries had been heard for a reformation in the Church. Temporal princes had resisted Rome. Men of literature had dared to assail her. Dante, the great Italian poet, had given the most powerful of the popes a very prominent seat in the vivid word picture of Hell his imagination had created. He described St. Peter in heaven sternly rebuking his unworthy successors. Others of learning and letters brought their talents to bear upon the weaknesses of the Church, but the pope with invitations and flatteries brought them abject and subdued to his feet.

Influences During the Reformation

With the nations of Christendom ranking low in intellectual and religious development, the many errors and superstitions that the Church had introduced did not endanger her. But she had stepped down from her high spiritual position and had become earthy. She had lain aside the Heaven allowed implements of her warfare and grasped the carnal. Her priests, who could stand in the eyes of the multitude only so long as the halo of illusion shone above their heads, had forsaken the spirit for the flesh. The glamour and charm of the Church had vanished, and with it must go her power. But as yet no loud voice had been raised against her. Men may have wished to retain what small faith in the visible Church they still possessed, or feared that at one large, reproachful breath the honey-combed edifice might collapse and destroy them and all Christianity with it. Then sovereign heads, though bred themselves within the Church's walls, began to awaken to something of the real character of the Roman pontiffs. They saw in their dealings with them little of that Truth, whose representatives they set themselves up to be, but much of deceit, lying, dissimulation, and hypocrisy. First one and then another uttered complaint until the respected Maximilian of Austria, grieved at the treachery of Leo X, exclaimed, “This Pope, like the rest, is in my judgment a scoundrel. Henceforth I can say that in all my life no pope has kept his faith or word with me. I hope, if God be willing, that this one will be the last of them.”

The effect of this began to be felt by the people. Rumors were heard far and wide of corrupt living that made even the dissolute Romans shudder, and the conviction grew that the Bishop of Rome was just a man after all, and rather a bad one at that. In fact, no better than their own local bishops, whose characters were most doubtful.

Human minds were also advancing. In many ways God was preparing the nations for the great change. Long shut eyes were opening and demanding a why and a wherefore from this boastful keeper of their souls. Credulity gave place to an intelligent curiosity. While some of the laity had advanced in intelligence, the priesthood had slipped behind, so busy were they in the pursuit of things of earth.

Printing, a recent invention, aided in the earnest protests against the corruption in the Church. A searching light was turned upon vain ceremonies and errors, and pointed the human intellect to brighter paths. In France and Italy, ridicule of everything now, even of things held sacred, made up the prevailing wit of the day. But in Germany the effects of awakening were quite different. The rays of light entered into and warmed hearts bringing a corresponding uplift to lives and

habits.. Where men of letters in Italy and in France were given over to levity and often immorality, in Germany this same class, with grave and thoughtful spirit, searched for truth. Gradually they endeavored to cleanse the “passages of the temple, hitherto obstructed by so many superstitions.”

Doctrine of justification as a Factor

When the doctrine of all doctrines, justification through faith, was lost, the Church fell. The necessary condition then for her arising lay in the restoration of this precious truth. Restore this fundamental teaching and the long train of errors that had so defiled the sanctuary would in a great measure fade away in its blessed light. What need of penance, of indulgences, of masses, of the intercession of saints beside the pure truth -- “by grace are ye saved **through faith, and that not of yourselves.**”

At no time from the first hours of Rome’s usurped power had the Light been entirely extinguished. In days so marked with error in doctrinal belief and with ignorant and superstitious fears that they are termed in history the **Dark Ages**, the torch once lighted by the Apostles burned with a steady flame here and there. “And,” says one, “many eminent servants of Christ diffused through these ages a beneficent light; and in the humble convent -- the sequestered parish -- there were found poor monks and poor priests to alleviate bitter sufferings.” Papacy, the oppressor, was not the church **Catholic**, the oppressed. The Reformation declared war against the former that the latter might be set free.

(To be Continued)

THE GREAT REFORMATION

(Contributed - continued from last issue)

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - December 15, 1930)

EVERY MOVEMENT that changes the current of history has back of its triumphant victories a long record of preparatory events. And back of the four great leaders of the Reformation -- Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Knox, shine lights perhaps less brilliant but used of God to brighten a time when the daylight was all but obscured by the heavy vapor of error and the darkness of superstition. Many of these concerned themselves, however, with questionings of exacted tribute, of transubstantiation, of the adoration of saints and images -- endeavoring to prune away the false branches of a yellowing tree, but overlooking the great root error itself whose one healing remedy lay in the blessed doctrine of Salvation by Faith.

Pierre Vaud, or Peter Waldo, A. D. 1170, a rich merchant of Lyons, looking back to the simple ways of primitive Christianity, and desiring to copy in his own walk the way of the Master, sold his goods and gave all to the poor. Then he and his followers, who became known as the Poor of Lyons, went forth preaching voluntary poverty. Divested of earthly comforts, like gentle Francis of Assisi and the kindly monk, Dominic, they went about doing good, although Peter Waldo, unlike the latter, believed the church to be utterly corrupt, and, with no intention of seceding, he strove to restore it to its original purity. Commanded to be silent by the first archbishop of Lyons and then the Pope himself, he and his followers continued to preach and were excommunicated. Yet he, as others, failed to note the transcendent importance of the underlying error regarding it as one of the many false branches.

The Waldenses

In the heights of the Alps of Piedmont, a well irrigated part today of northwestern Italy, lived men freer from the church than others. Something of the breeze-swept height of their earthly habitation above the seven hills of Rome seemed to have entered into their spiritual vision, and truth found in them successive witnesses. Their numbers were increased, and their doctrines were further cleansed, by disciples of Peter Waldo, and from the very mountain tops, these Waldenses, as they were known, protested for centuries against the superstitions of Rome, earnestly claiming for themselves, "the merits of Christ, and the all-sufficiency of His grace and righteousness." But this great and primal truth-justification through Christ alone-which should have formed the very burden of their plea, was not given a sufficiently important place in their system. Yet high above all other doctrines, as Mt. Blanc in towering heavenward outstrips the seven hills, stands that Divine declaration, "By grace are ye saved, . . . and not of yourselves."

In the 16th and 17th centuries the Waldenses of Piedmont were terribly persecuted. After French and Italian soldiers had slain 3,000 of their number, imprisoned 10,000 more, and carried off several thousand of their children to various Papal towns and villages, they were given the privilege of emigrating, which they accepted.

Their descendants form ten churches today in Wurtemberg, with more than 16,000 members. Italy having been thrown open to them in 1858, they established their headquarters in Florence, and they maintain there a theological school and a printing press.

It is to be noted with interest that, while these claim the Bible as their only guide, they hold their Confession of Faith, published in 1655, as the most correct interpretation of it. Thus it would seem that the light "that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" has been sadly hindered from continuing the cleansing that was theirs in earlier days; and the measure of truth and light that their forefathers flung forth from the heights, and for which they stood ready to give even life itself, has been stifled and hindered from all further progress by the deadening, binding creed of

their adoption. Down through the pages of history may be seen this same repetition in the annals of the church; content with the bright gems already unearthed from a deep and never-failing mine, the church settles down, satisfied with the comforting glitter of that already possessed, forgetful that the source from which the jewels came has never, can never, be exhausted.

Morning Star of the Reformation

In the latter half of the 14th century, John Wycliffe came forth using the Word of God as a reproof for Papal wrongs. But again the real malady was overlooked, and his efforts were directed against the many symptoms manifested. Many Papal decrees were issued against him and there came a special warning to him to be careful what he preached. He then began the first English version of the Bible and sent copies of portions of it from village to village. Nearly a half century after his death it was ordered by the Council of Constance that his bones be taken up and burned and the ashes scattered into the river. But this burning of that which remained of his mortal body had no power to arrest the wave of his influence that swept on and aroused Huss in Bohemia and, through Huss, powerfully influenced the awakening monk, Martin Luther. Thus, historically, Wycliffe has been called "The Morning Star of the Reformation."

A century before Luther appeared in Saxony, a powerful preacher arose in Bohemia -- John Huss. "He seemed to enter more deeply than all who had gone before him into the essence of Christian truth. He besought Christ to grant him grace to glory only in His cross, and in the inestimable humiliation of His sufferings. But he attacked rather the lives of the clergy than the errors of the church. And yet he was, if we may be allowed the expression, the John the Baptist of the Reformation. The flames of his martyrdom kindled a fire which shed an extensive light in the midst of the general gloom, and was destined not to be speedily extinguished.

"John Huss did more: Prophetic words resounded from the depths of his dungeon. He foresaw that a real reformation of the Church was at hand. When driven from Prague, and compelled to wander in the fields of Bohemia, where he was followed by an immense crowd eager to catch his words, he exclaimed: 'The wicked have begun by laying treacherous snares for the **goose** (the word Huss in Bohemian signifying goose). But if even the goose, which is only a domestic fowl, a tame creature, and unable to rise high in the air, has yet broken their snares, other birds, whose flight carries them boldly toward heaven, will break them with much more power. Instead of a feeble goose; the truth will send forth eagles and keen-eyed falcons.' The Reformation fulfilled this prediction."

Sparks from the Ashes

In the great public square of Prague, formerly the capital of old Bohemia, but now of that new land, Czecho-Slovakia, which was born of the travail of the World War, stands a magnificent statue erected by a jubilant people at the first notes that proclaimed their freedom from Austria-Hungary. The traveler may pause for a moment in his admiration of this impressive memorial to reflect, perhaps in wonder, that a country, Catholic in character, has held in its heart the image of John Huss, and found no other emblem so fitting an expression of its rejoicing in and its love of liberty than the figure of the martyred Reformer.

And not only from its opposers, but now and then from those who were loyal and devout members of the Roman Church, came words pregnant with the spirit of truth and life-sparks, as it were, emitted from the blanket of ashes that had all but extinguished the primitive and holy fire enkindled by the Apostles. Let us listen to some of these voices, feeble, almost inarticulate, though they are

Anselm of Canterbury exhorted the dying in a work he had prepared for the purpose "to look solely to the merits of Jesus Christ."

Arnoldi, a monk, offered up in the seclusion of his cell this daily, earnest prayer, "Oh, Lord Jesus Christ! I believe that in Thee alone I have redemption and righteousness."

Untenheim, a bishop of Basle, had written around his name, which he had inscribed on a picture, these words which he kept always before him: "My hope is in the cross of Christ; I seek grace and not works."

On December 21, 1776, in tearing down a building which had been a part of the old Carthusian convent at Basle, a confession of faith was found in a wooden box enclosed in a hole made in the cell wall. It bore this explanation, "If I cannot confess these things with my tongue, I at least confess them with my pen and with my heart." In part it was this: "Oh, most merciful God! I know that I can only be saved, and satisfy Thy righteousness by the merit, the innocent suffering and death of Thy well beloved Son. Holy Jesus, my salvation is in Thy hands. Thou canst not withdraw the hands of Thy love from me; for they have created and formed, and redeemed me." And there were those who, if the doctrine of salvation was not openly confessed to the world, at least boldly denounced the corruption within the church in which they stood; sometimes paying the extreme penalty for their bold faithfulness.

Vast Preparations for the Reformation

In Florence, Savonarola cried aloud against the vices of the Roman clergy and the Pope. Through the unholy power of the Inquisition he was condemned, to the stake. A large metal star set in the pavement at Florence today reminds all who pass that way of his martyrdom.

"If," says the historian, "in the time of St. Paul, or of Ambrose, of Austin, of Chrysostom, or even in the days of Anselm and Bernard, the question had been asked, what people or nation God would be likely to use to reform the church, the thought might have turned to the countries honored by the Apostle's ministry – to Asia, to Greece, or to Rome, perhaps to Britain or to France, where men of great learning had preached; but none would have thought of the barbarous Germans. All other countries of Christendom had, in their turn, shone in the history of the Church; Germany alone had continued dark. Yet it was Germany that was chosen.

"God, who prepared during four thousand years the Advent of Messiah, and led through different dispensations, for many ages, the people among whom He was to be born, also prepared Germany in secret and unobserved, unknown indeed even to itself, to be the cradle of a Religious Regeneration, which, in a later day, should awaken the various nations of Christendom.

"As Judea, the birthplace of our religion, lay in the centre of the ancient world, so Germany was situated in the midst of Christian nations. She looked upon the Netherlands, England, France, Switzerland, Italy, Hungary, Bohemia, Poland, Denmark, and the whole of the north. It was fit that the principle of life should develop itself in the heart of Europe -- that its through all the arteries of the body the generous blood designed to vivify it

After reviewing the general circumstances throughout the European countries, especially of Germany, and noting those conditions peculiar to the days just prior to the Reformation -- conditions that were under Providence preparatory to the great and impending crisis, the historian continues:

"If man designs a shade or a shelter upon earth, we look to see preparations -- materials, scaffolding, and workmen. But God when He will give shade or shelter, takes the small seed which the new-born infant might clasp in its feeble hand, and deposits it in the bosom of the earth, and from that seed, imperceptible in its beginning, He produces the majestic tree, under whose spreading boughs the families' of men may find shelter. To achieve great results by imperceptible means is the law of the Divine dealings . . . that religion than which there is nothing nobler under the vault of heaven -- nay, in the very universe of creation -- what was its commencement? -- a child born in the meanest town of the most despised country of the earth; a child whose mother had not even what falls to the lot of the most indigent and wretched woman of our cities -- a room to bring forth in; a child born in a stable and placed in an ox's crib -- O God! I acknowledge Thee there, and I adore Thee,"

Reuchlin and Erasmus as Factors

And thus, not to the princes and bishops of earth, although, as we have noted, many of these had exerted a goodly influence, but to men of lower station was it given to become the chief instruments in God's great providence. Yea, He hath chosen the mean things, and things that are despised, to bring to nought things that are.

We have seen how the Lord had prepared the field for the coming battle. Silent forces had been at work, more or less unnoticed through the long years. And the bright weapon of warfare itself is ready, a weapon most necessary that the truth may triumph -- a two-edged sword, sharply pointed, yet not carnal -- the blessed Word of God.

The love and study of sacred Greek and Hebrew texts had been revived, and the instrument God had chosen to bring this about was John Reuchlin. To John Reuchlin, Luther penned these appreciative words, "The Lord has wrought in you, that the light of His Holy Word may again shine forth in Germany, where, for so many ages, it has been, alas! not only stifled, but extinct." When Reuchlin was about twelve years old, a great genius was born, one of the greatest of the age -- Erasmus of Rotterdam. High in reputation among scholars, he denoted himself to the searching of truth and learning. He attacked the abuses in the church by brilliant satire and earned the hatred of the monks. He eloquently exhorted the Roman clergy to turn from the study of theology to the study of the Scriptures. He published his New Testament with corrections on the Vulgate and thus did for the New Testament what Reuchlin had done for the old. Scholars might now read the Word of God in the original language. It has been said that "Reuchlin and Erasmus gave the Scriptures to the learned -- Luther to the people."

Wavering Characters in Every Crisis

Erasmus though had not that courage of faith necessary to serve as the great instrument of the Reformation. He served rather as a stepping stone for others. "Erasmus knows very well how to expose error," said Luther, "but he does not know how to teach the truth." In him learning was paramount to Christianity. He weighed the effect each step might have on his own reputation., "A disadvantageous peace," Erasmus used to say, "is better than the most righteous war." He feared a Reformation which would shake the existing order of things, might overturn it -- that the mighty wave once on its way would sweep on, uncontrollable, and engulf all. And the historian adds, "How many Erasmuses have lived since and are living in our own days." There have been many such characters in religious crises, able, yet desiring to offend none, they in the end offend all and bring actual harm to the cause of truth.

"Ultimately Erasmus knew not what party, to adopt. None pleased him, and he feared all. 'It is dangerous to speak,' said he, 'and it is dangerous to be silent.' In every great religious movement there will be found these wavering characters respectable on many accounts, but injurious to the truth, and who, from their unwillingness to displease any, offend all.

"Such was Erasmus. He needed that inward emancipation which alone gives perfect liberty. How different would he have been had he abandoned **self**, and sacrificed all for truth! But after having endeavored to effect certain reforms with the approbation of the heads of the Church; after having deserted the Reformation for Rome, when he saw that these two things could not go hand in hand; he lost ground with all parties . . . This at least seems to be indicated by those bitter tears, those painful vigils, that broken sleep, that tasteless food, that loathing of the study, of the Muses (formerly his only consolation); those saddened features, that pale face, those sorrowful and downcast eyes, that hatred of existence which he calls 'a cruel life,' and those longings after death, which he describes to his friends. Unhappy Erasmus! . . .

"Erasmus and Luther, viewed in connection with the Reformation, are the representatives of two great ideas -- of two great parties in their age, and indeed in every age. The one is composed of men of timid prudence; the other, of men of resolution and courage. These two parties were in existence at that epoch, and they are personified in their illustrious chiefs. The men of prudence

thought that the study of theological science would gradually bring about a reformation of the Church, and that, too, without violence. The men of action thought that the diffusion of more correct ideas among the learned would not put an end to the superstitions of the people, and that the correction of this or of that abuse, so long as the whole life of the Church was not renewed, would be of little effect.”

(To be continued)

PROVIDENCE AND THE GREAT REFORMATION

(Contributed -- continued from December 15th issue)

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - January 15, 1931)

WHILE the Reformation must be traced in various nations, it is in Germany especially that we follow its thrilling chapters. Says the historian, "The German Reformation is the true and fundamental Reformation. It is the great planet, and the rest revolve in wider or narrower circles around it, like satellites drawn after it by its movement. And yet the Reformation in Switzerland must, in some respects, be considered as an exception, both because it took place at the very same time as that of Germany, and independently of it; and because it bore, especially at a later period, some of those grander features which are seen in the latter

"There was at this time something in every class of society that presaged a Reformation. In every quarter signs were manifest, and events were pressing forward that threatened to overturn the work of ages of darkness, and to bring about 'a new order of things.' The light discovered in that age had communicated to all countries, with inconceivable rapidity, a multitude of new ideas. The minds of men, which had slept for so many ages, seemed resolved to redeem by their activity the time they had lost The mind of man saw clearly what was, and what was coming, and surveyed with daring eye the immense gulf that separated these two worlds. Great princes were seated upon the throne, the ancient colossus of Rome was tottering under its own weight; the bygone spirit of chivalry was leaving the world, and giving place to a new spirit which breathed at the same time from the sanctuaries of learning and from the dwellings of the common people. The art of printing had given wings to the written Word, which carried it, like certain seeds, to the most distant regions. The discovery of the Indies enlarged the boundaries of the world. Everything proclaimed a mighty revolution at hand.

"But whence was the stroke to come that should throw down the ancient edifice, and call up a new structure from the ruins? : . . . Learned men, princes, warriors, the Church itself, all had undermined some of the old foundations; but there they had stopped: and no where was seen the hand of power that was to be God's instrument.

"However, all felt that it would soon be seen. Some have pretended to have discovered in the stars sure indications of its appearing. Some, seeing the miserable state of religion, foretold the near approach of Antichrist [not recognizing the clear-cut features of that Man of Sin in the doomed edifice before them]. Others, on the contrary, presaged some reformation at hand. The world was in expectation. Luther appeared."

Marks of the True Reformer

We pause at this juncture to observe how it is often the case in connection with the revelation and exposure of political and spiritual corruption in high places, various factors enter in and various temperaments and types, play their parts. The highest type, the one who is the real man of God and the real Reformer, is he who deals with the underlying facts and principles and not in personalities, in scandalous stories and bitter invective. He is concerned with the violation of those fundamental principles and facts which involve the cause of the Lord and His people, with apostasy in regard to the vitals of religion itself, and with the misrepresentation of the Truth. The value of such type of leadership amongst God's faithful people can hardly be overestimated. Their counsel and ministry are such as to enable the true sheep to discern clearly the difference between

right and wrong, good and evil, truth and, error, and to recognize the utmost importance of taking a stand on the side of the right and in defense of the underlying principles of the Divine government. Such has been the true Reformer in every age.

Some from Envy and Strife

But not all who take part in the overthrow of great wrongs and the exposure of evil, are animated by lofty purposes. There is another kind of leadership, than that just described, that puts in its appearance and is often felt in reform movements: There are those who out of selfishness and from baser motives -- envy, jealousy and bitterness -- are often very active, and are important factors in dealing the death-blow to gigantic evils. In this regard it may be seen how the wrath of man is made to work out the purposes of God. Such as are of this sort are generally found making their assaults not from the standpoint of the violation of the principles and sacred truths that are concerned; they deal not with the fundamental facts and truths involved in the wrong and apostasy of those whom they assail. Rather are they concerned with the personal, wrongful acts, and the moral corruption of those they would see overthrown; they deal in personalities and are vigorous in the spread of scandalous stories and in bitterly assailing those whom they oppose.

Thus we find in the sixteenth-century Reformation agencies and examples of this kind much in evidence, and the historian presents these to our attention. One of these, Ulrich of Hutten, was amongst the militant leaders and has been called the German Demosthenes, on account of his philippics, his bitter, fighting spirit against the Papacy.

"He distinguished himself by his writings not less than by his sword. Descended from an ancient Franconian family, he was sent at the age of eleven years to the convent of Foulda, in which he was to become a monk. But Ulrich, who felt no inclination for this profession, ran away from the convent at sixteen, and repaired to the university of Cologne, where he devoted himself to the study of languages and poetry. Somewhat later he led a wandering life, and was present, as a common soldier, at the siege of Padua in 1513, beheld Rome and all her scandalous abuses, and there sharpened those arrows which he afterwards discharged against her.

"On his return to Germany, Hutten composed a treatise against Rome, entitled 'The Roman Trinity.' In this work he unveils the disorders of the papal court, and points out the necessity of putting an end to her tyranny by force. 'There are three things,' says a traveler named Vadiscus, who figures in the treatise -- 'there are three things that are usually brought away from Rome: a bad conscience, a disordered stomach, and an empty purse. . . . There are three things in which Rome traffics: the grace of Christ, ecclesiastical dignitaries, and women.' The publication of this work compelled Hutten to leave the court of the Archbishop of Mentz, where he had composed it."

"The Letters of Obscure Men"

The historian goes on to tell us that there were a considerable number of this stamp of character. They were men of prominence in the world's affairs and presented a united front in the way of a "league" in combating the influences and corrupt practices of the Papacy. They prepared certain writings that were designated "The Letters of Obscure Men." It appears that Ulrich of Hutten, mentioned above, was one of the leaders and principal authors of these "Letters." These letters dealing deadly blows to the Papacy were said to be "a bold sketch; a caricature often too rudely colored, but full of truth and strength, of striking resemblance, and in characters of fire. Its effect was prodigious." In these letters the monks it appears were personified and presented in such a way as to be the supposed writers of the letters, and by way of exposing their mode of life, their

ignorance, narrowness and small intellectuality, they are shown as discussing the affairs of the day and theological matters after their own fashion and in barbarous latinity.

"They address the silliest and most useless questions to their correspondent Ortuin Gratus, professor at Cologne, and a friend of Pfefferkorn. With the most artless simplicity they betray their gross ignorance, incredulity, and superstition; their low and vulgar spirit; . . . and at the same time their pride, and fanatical, persecuting zeal. They relate many of their droll adventures, of their excesses and profligacy, with various scandalous incidents in the lives of Hochstraten, Pfefferkorn, and other chiefs of their party. The tone of these letters -- at one time hypocritical, at another quite childish -- gives them a very comic effect: and yet the whole is so natural, that the English Dominicans and Franciscans received the work with the greatest approbation, and thought it really composed on the principles and in the defense of their orders. A certain prior of Brabant, in his credulous simplicity, even purchased a great number of copies,, and sent them as presents to the most distinguished of the Dominicans. The monks, more and more exasperated, applied to the pope for a severe bull against all who should dare to read these letters; but Leo X would not grant their request. They were forced to bear with the general ridicule, and to smother their anger. No work ever inflicted a more terrible blow on these supporters of the Papacy."

Not by Weapons of Carnal Warfare

At this point it is most interesting to note the conclusions of the historian who goes on to say, "But it was not by satire and by jests that the Gospel was to triumph. Had men continued walking in this path; had the Reformation had recourse to the jeering spirit of the world, instead of attacking error with the arms of God, its cause would have been lost. Lather boldly condemned these satires. One of his friends having sent him "The Tenour of Pasquin's Supplication," he replied, 'The nonsense you have forwarded me seems to have been composed by an ill-regulated mind. I have communicated it to a circle of friends, and all have come to the same conclusion.' And speaking of the same work, he writes to another correspondent: 'This Supplication appears to me to have been written by the author of the Letters of Obscure Men. I approve of his design, but not of his work, since he cannot refrain from insults and abuse.' This judgment is severe, but it shows Luther's disposition, and how superior he was to his contemporaries. We must add, however, that he did not always follow such wise maxims."

But concerning this interesting character, Ulrich of Hutten, the historian offers this bit of significant observation in the words, "If Truth cannot acknowledge Hutten as one of her children, **for her walk is ever with holiness of life and charity of heart**, she will at least accord him honorable mention as one of the most formidable antagonists of error."

Naming another of the militant warriors who fought rather in the energy of the flesh with carnal weapons than in the armor of the Truth, Sickingen, who is said to have declared war against an eminent Archbishop in those days, in order as he said, "To open a door for the Gospel," we read that it was in vain that Luther strove to dissuade him from his indiscreet purpose. Sickingen persisted in this carnal warfare and was finally overwhelmed by his adversaries, the supporters of the Papacy. When Luther heard of his death he exclaimed, "The Lord is righteous and greatly to be praised! It is not by the sword that He will have His Gospel propagated." And the historian remarks

"Such was the melancholy end of a warrior, who, as elector or emperor, might perhaps have raised Germany to a high degree of glory; but, who, confined within, a narrow circle, wasted the great powers with which he had been endowed. But it was not in the tumultuous bosoms of these warriors that the Divine Truth, coming down from heaven, was to take up her abode. It was not by their arms that she was to prevail; and God, by bringing to nought Sickingen's mad projects,

confirmed anew the testimony of St. Paul: **'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.'** -- 2 Cor. 10:4."

How Shall We Deal with Present Apostate Conditions

Farther down the stream of time and laboring under similar circumstances today, in the presence of spiritual decay and general apostasy, those who would minister according to the example of the true reformer will follow in the course of their Divine Master; guided by His Spirit, their conduct in dealing with the elements of apostasy will be upon a high plane of spiritual power. Such will not join in any bitter denunciation and invective against the agencies of evil and of error, however well founded may be the rumors and scandalous accounts that are given out. The true reformer today as in the past will deal not in personalities and surmises, but in those sacred principles and facts. He will be concerned how the essential truths and doctrines of Christ are cast down in the street. He will, in the Spirit of Christ, sound the note of warning, calling attention to departures from the faith, and in that same connection, with holy endeavor, will seek to hold up the banner of the Truth, that all who really possess the Master's Spirit may be enabled to recognize the voice of the Good Shepherd in the midst of apostate conditions and the din and confusion of voices.

God Prepares His Workmen

And such are the solemn circumstances of this hour! Surely we will with the historian recognize today that whatever conditions of evil and spiritual decline we may uncover, it will be undertaken and carried forward, not in the energy of carnality and the fleshly mind, but in the Spirit of God and through the power of the Gospel of Christ, as was the case with those noble reformers who served acceptably to God in the great Reformation of four hundred years ago. Concerning that time, the historian has again well observed:

"God who prepares His work for ages, accomplishes it, when His time is come, by the feeblest instruments. It is the method of God's providence to effect great results by inconsiderable means God chose the Reformers of the Church from the same condition, and worldly circumstances, from whence He had before taken the Apostles. He chose them from that humble class which, though not, the lowest, can hardly be said to belong to the middle ranks. Everything was thus to make manifest to the world, that the work was not of man, but of God. The reformer, Zwingli, emerged from a shepherd's hut among the Alps: Melancthon, the greatest theologian of the Reformation, from an armorer's [maker of arms] workshop: and Luther from the cottage of a poor miner."

When we view the far-reaching results of a life which, inspired by some great thought or purpose, has left behind some monumental work or change in the affairs of man, for his higher good, we shall find in the formative period of that life, circumstances which have molded and shaped both heart and mind for the future work. God Himself so orders the environment of His chosen, that Paul, the Apostle, glancing backward over the early years that had been his, could declare with all earnestness, "Yea, from my earliest moments, was I chosen to show forth the praises of Him who would call me in His own good time out of darkness into marvelous light. His was the hand that so wisely blended joy and sorrow, blessing and adversity, softening influences and strength giving experiences, until the vessel made fit for His use could bear the name of the risen Lord to the distant Gentile." And this was perhaps no less true in the case of Martin Luther; and, who can doubt, that the Reformation that was to change the very face of Christendom was cradled in the early years of his own life and was first wrought within his own truth-loving soul.

PROVIDENCE AND THE GREAT REFORMATION

(Continued from last issue)

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - February 1, 1931)

THOUGH Luther came from parentage of very lowly circumstances, his father it was said was a hard laborer, a woodcutter and a miner,* yet his parents were evidently of noble birth, and their lives showed distinctly the marks of strong and upright Christian characters. The historian relates that Martin Luther's father, John Luther, "was an upright man, diligent in business, frank, and carrying the firmness of his character even to obstinacy. With a more cultivated mind than that of most men of his class, he used to read much. Books were then rare; but John omitted no opportunity of procuring them. They formed his relaxation in the intervals of repose, snatched from his severe and constant labors. Margaret [his wife] possessed all the virtues that can adorn a good and pious woman. Her modesty, her fear of God, and her prayerful spirit, were particularly remarked. She was looked upon by the matrons of the neighborhood as a model whom they should strive to imitate."

* "My parents," said the Reformer, "were very poor. My father was a poor wood-cutter, and my mother has often carried wood upon her back, that she might procure the means of bringing up her children. They endured the severest labor for our sakes."

As would have been expected of godly parents, they gave earnest attention to rearing their son Martin in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. "As soon as he was old enough to receive instruction, his parents endeavored to impart to him the knowledge of God, to train him up in His fear, and to mold him to Christian virtues. They exerted all their care in this earliest domestic education. The father would often kneel at their child's bedside, and fervently pray aloud, begging the Lord that his son might remember His name and one day contribute to the propagation of the truth. The parent's prayer was most graciously listened to. And yet his tender solicitude was not confined to this."

In the Days of His Youth

Receiving during his first years, instructions from his parents in the knowledge of God (a knowledge inspiring something of reverence and perhaps much of fear) and in the Christian virtues, he was then taken while yet a small child, to a school, carried in the arms of his father or a family friend. Something of the determination that would in riper days be used to the glory of God seems to have been his in his tenderer years, and Luther's parents, fearful perhaps that in sparing the rod they might spoil the lad, were firm even to unjust severity.

At school also the future Reformer was sternly punished, receiving on one clay, it is alleged, fifteen floggings. "We mast," said Luther, when relating this circumstance- "we must whip children, but we must at the same time love them," It is not to be wondered at that with such strict discipline Luther, early in his life, learned to despise the charms of a merely sensual life, and one of his biographers wrote: "What is to become great, should begin small, and if children are brought up too delicately and with too much kindness from their youth, they are injured for life."

Along with other studies in his childhood days at school, Luther was taught the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Apostles' Creed, some hymns, and some forms of prayer. "But it appears," says the historian, "that the child was not yet led to God. The only religious feeling that he manifested was that of fear. Every time that he heard Jesus Christ spoken of, he turned pale with terror; for He had been represented to him only as an angry judge. This servile fear which is so far removed from true religion, perhaps prepared his mind for the good tidings of the Gospel, and for that joy which, he afterwards felt when he learned to know Christ as meek and lowly of heart."

Hardships and Privations

It was when Luther had reached the age of fourteen years that his father, ambitious for the son to attain the best scholarship of that time, resolved to part with him and send him to the Franciscan school at Magdeburg. His mother was forced to consent, and Martin prepared to quit the paternal roof. Many privations and hardships attended the young life in this new world in which he found himself. He was cast upon his own resources, inasmuch as the labor of his father could provide only for the remainder of the family at home. And so at times, with other boys as poor as himself, Luther was obliged to beg his daily bread; and it was then that often in place of the requested bread harsh treatment was given them, and in sequence he would shed tears of discouragement and humiliation.

But Luther, far from regretting the hardness of his early student days, or feeling shame that he had been forced in his struggle for knowledge to beg bread, thanked God that this had been so. The heights reached were the richer, the resultant vision more glorious, for the strength-giving hindrances of that upward climb. In God alone could the Christian scholar glory, whose hand had prepared the cup so necessary for the preparation of His chosen messenger.

When Luther had reached his 18th year, his father, now in more favorable circumstances, decided to send him to the University of Erfurth. Here he began to study the philosophy of the time, a philosophy which he in later years looked upon with abhorrence. With his fine intelligence and retentive memory, he soon distinguished himself at the university and his genius was greatly admired by his associates. But not alone for the academical degree of a bachelor did he study. There was in him a thoughtful heart that reached upward, above and beyond mere earthly culture. He felt his great dependence on God, and each morning offered up a prayer for Divine blessing upon his labors. He often was heard to say that to pray well was the better half of study.

Luther Finds the Bible

His spare moments from regular duties were spent in the University library. One day while he was opening one volume after another and examining the title pages, he came upon one unlike any he had ever seen before. What intense drama, what transcendent issues, what infinite events, lie in that moment as the young student curiously lifts the outer cover of the book! History gives a thrilling account of this occurrence: "He reads the title -- it is a Bible! a rare book, unknown at that time. His interest is strongly excited; he is filled with astonishment at finding more in this volume than those fragments of the Gospels and Epistles which the Church has selected to be read to the people in their places of worship every Sunday in the year. Till then he had thought that they were the whole Word of God. And here are so many pages, so many chapters, so many books, of which he had no idea! His heart beats as he holds in his hand all the Scriptures divinely inspired. With eagerness and indescribable feelings he turns over these leaves of God's Word. The first page that arrests his attention, relates the history of Hannah and the young Samuel. He reads, and can scarcely restrain his joyful emotion. This child whom his parents lend to the Lord as long as he liveth; Hannah's song in which she declares that the Lord raiseth up the poor out of

the dust and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set him among princes; the young Samuel who grows up in the temple before the Lord; all this history, all this revelation which he has discovered, excites feelings till then unknown. He returns home with a full heart. 'Oh,' thought he, 'if God would but give me such a book for my own.' Luther did not yet understand either Greek or Hebrew. It is not possible that he should have studied those languages during the first two or three years of his residence in the university. The Bible that filled him with such transport was in Latin. He soon returned to the library to find his treasure again. He read and re-read, and then in his surprise and joy, he went back to read again. The first gleams of a new truth then arose in his mind.

"Thus has God caused him to find His Word! He has now discovered that book of which he is one day to give to his countrymen, that admirable translation in which the Germans for three centuries have read the oracles of God. For the first time, perhaps, this precious volume has been removed from the place that it occupied in the library at Erfurth. This book, deposited upon the unknown shelves of a dark room, is soon to become the book of life to a whole nation. The Reformation lay hid in that Bible."

Retreats to the Monastery

The thirst for learning which was Luther's, had been satisfied, but a new hunger assailed him; he began to feel a great concern for his soul. Death and eternity lay at the end of the road whose length each passing day diminished. Could he, with sinful soul, appear before a just and holy judge? He must attain holiness but how? Thoughts of a monastic life now appeal to him: shut away from the world and its ambitions, he can surely purify his desires, and overcome the faults that so beset him.

One day while nearing Erfurth on his way from a visit in the parental home at Mansfield, he was overtaken by a violent electrical storm. The lightning cut jagged streaks in the sky, the thunders crashed, and a thunder-bolt struck the ground very near to him. In terror he realized that at any moment and without warning, death may strike even him in the full strength of years. He promises God if He will spare his life, he will give his days to His service. True to that promise according to his understanding, he bids farewell to his regretful and astonished school friends and enters the convent of the hermits of the order of St. Augustine.

Nothing of the future Reformer was in this act. He, as others, blindly followed the superstition of the time and sought to bring about salvation in, self by works and observances. There was at that time in Luther no realization that in God alone lies salvation. And yet, to the All-seeing eye, the experiences of convent life would prove but a further schooling to the mind and heart in preparation, and thus the blindness of man as well as his wrath be used to God's glory.

While the monks received him joyfully at first, and felt much gratification at this eminent scholar forsaking the greatest institution of learning to enter their cloister, yet, either through envy or with a desire to properly humble this learned doctor of philosophy, they assigned him to the meanest of tasks, and when these were finished a bag was given him and he was sent out to beg food.

His Search after God and Holiness

However, it was evidently not God's purpose to permit this chosen servant to have his talents buried in the various menial and useless tasks forever; so at the request of the University he was permitted to continue his studies. He turned to such books as the work of St. Augustine; he sought for an understanding of true piety. And while he understood but little of the Word of God to which he had constant recourse, still it was his midst absorbent study. In fact so much time was given in this direction that he found himself neglecting some of the required observances, prayers,

etc. Then in alarm he would shut himself up, and without food or sleep, attempt to redeem by constant prayers and application, the omission of observance to the rules of his order. In fact the historian goes on to say that "burning with the desire after that holiness Which he sought in the cloister, Luther gave himself up to all the rigor of an ascetic life." He endeavored by fastings, lacerations, watchings, etc., to crucify the flesh; he contented himself with the poorest food, and would go for days without eating or drinking. Nothing was too great a sacrifice at the period we speak of for the sake of becoming holy to gain heaven.

But the man who was to become the world's renowned Reformer did not find in the tranquility of the cloister and in monkish perfection, the peace that he so earnestly sought. And so the historian goes on to say, "This was the great want of his soul; without it he could not rest. But the fears which had shaken him in the world, pursued him to his cell. Nay, more, they increased there, and the least cry of his conscience seemed to resound beneath the vaulted roofs of the cloister. God had led him thither, that he might learn to know himself, and to despair of his own strength or virtues. His conscience, enlightened by the Divine Word, taught him what it was to be holy; but he was filled with terror at finding, neither in his heart nor in his life, the transcript of that holiness which he contemplated with wonder in the Word of God. Melancholy discovery! and one that is made by every sincere man. No righteousness within; no righteousness in outward action; everywhere omission of duty -- sin, pollution. The more ardent Luther's natural character, the more powerful was this secret and constant resistance of his nature to that which is good, and the deeper did it plunge him into despair . . . 'I tormented myself to death,' says he, 'to procure for my troubled heart and agitated conscience peace in the presence of God: but encompassed with thick darkness, I nowhere found peace.'"

Some Pious Souls Who Shone Brightly

He, within the walls of a cloister, was finding that the remedies for sin which he had believed from his early youth to be efficacious were useless. He had donned a new garment and entered a sanctuary, but his heart remained the same. All the prescribed observances and acts of penance that had had the approval of the Church for centuries did not give his guilty conscience peace. He felt that his need lie in the Gospel which is the voice of God, and he searched untiringly the messages of the Apostles and Prophets. Luther was not the only monk who had passed through this sorrow. Even in those monasteries where evil existed to a great degree there were some of upright Christian character, pious. souls who shone brightly although often unknown except to each other and to God. But when one of these was called to some important post outside, then those virtues became manifest and the influence was widely shed.

We read of another, John Staupitz, in this connection, from one of the German convents. His experience was similar evidently to that of Luther, and at length finding nothing in ordinary studies that would assist toward eternal salvation and bring him into that relationship and touch with God that his soul desired, he also was led to study the Bible and the writings of those masters of Divine truth that had the effect of imparting spiritual illumination and the true knowledge of God. Concerning this man Staupitz we further read that "he found in faith in Christ, peace to his soul. The doctrine of the Election by Grace especially engaged his thoughts. The uprightness of his life, the depth of his learning, the eloquence of his speech, no less than a striking exterior and dignified manners, recommended him to his contemporaries."

Light Dawns upon His Soul

John Staupitz saw and was deeply grieved by the corrupt morals and the doctrinal errors in the Church, but the former evil seemed much worse to him than the latter. He had been now made Vicar-general of the Augustines for all Germany. Arriving at the convent of Erfurth on the regular

visit of inspection, he noticed a monk sunken-eyed, wasted with much fasting, his face marked with inner conflicts and sadness. Staupitz, having suffered also, understood, and feeling drawn toward him, approached him affectionately, hoping to gain his confidence. Luther responded to the kind advances and unburdened his heart to his benevolent superior, "It is in vain," he said, "that I make promises to God; sin is always too strong for me." To which the gentle Staupitz answered, "Oh, my friend, I have vowed to the holy God more than a thousand times that I would live a holy life, and never have I kept my vow! I now make no more vows, for I know well that I shall not keep them. If God will not be merciful to me for Christ's sake, and grant me a happy death when I leave this world, I cannot, with all my vows and good works stand before Him. I must perish."

Luther tells him of his terror at the very thought of Divine justice. The great majesty and unspeakable holiness of God fill his soul with awe and fear. "Why," said Staupitz, "do you distress yourself with these speculations and high thoughts? Look to the wounds of Jesus Christ, to the blood which He has shed for you; it is there you will see the mercy of God. Instead of torturing yourself for your faults, cast yourself into the arms of the Redeemer. Trust in Him -- in the righteousness of His life, in the expiatory sacrifice of His death. Do not shrink from Him; God is not against you; it is you who are estranged and averse from God.

There is no true repentance but that which begins in the love of God and of righteousness In order to be filled with the love of that which is good, you must first be filled- with the love of God. If you **wish to be really converted**, do not follow these mortifications and penances. Love Him who has wisd first loved you."

The consoling words of Staupitz seemed to the hear of Luther to be the words of the Savior to him. In the light of these words he carefully consulted the Scriptures and the passages on repentance which had been a dread to him, now became rays of comfort. The good Vicar-general now advised him to lay aside all systems of study and consult the Scriptures alone. This best of all advice Luther eagerly followed. Great was his delight when Staupitz presented him with a Bible. Now he himself possessed the treasure which hitherto he had been obliged to read in the library of the university or at a chain's end in the convent.

(To be continued)

Providence and the Great Reformation

(Continued from last issue -- sixth of the series)

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - February 15, 1931)

WHEN Luther had been two years in the Convent at Erfurth; he was ordained a priest. A year later Frederic, Elector of Saxony, who had founded a new university at Wittemberg at the recommendation of Staupitz, invited the young priest to become professor of the university. He showed such brilliancy and aptitude for teaching that he was appointed to daily lecture on the Bible. "Every day," says the historian, "at one in the afternoon Luther was called to lecture on the Bible: a precious hour both for the professor and his pupils, and which led them deeper and deeper into the Divine meaning of those revelations so long lost to the people and to the schools!

Builds upon the Word of Christ

"He began his course by explaining the Psalms, and thence passed to the Epistle to the Romans. It was more particularly while meditating on this portion of Scripture, that the light of truth penetrated his heart. In the retirement of his quiet cell, he used to consecrate whole hours to the study of the Divine Word, this Epistle of St. Paul lying open before him. On one occasion, having reached the seventeenth verse of the first chapter, he read this passage from the Prophet Habakkuk: "The just shall live, by faith." This precept struck him. There is then for the just a life different from that of other men: and this life is the gift of faith. This promise, which he received into his heart, as if God Himself had placed it there, unveils to him the mystery of the Christian life, and increases this life in him. Years after, in the midst, of his numerous occupations, he imagined he still heard these words: "The just shall live by faith."

"Luther's lectures thus prepared had little similarity with what had been heard till then. It was not an eloquent rhetorician or a pedantic schoolman that spoke; but a Christian who had felt the power of revealed truths -- who drew them forth from the Bible -- poured them out from the treasures of his heart and presented them all full of life to his astonished hearers. It was not the teaching of a man, but of God.

"This entirely new method of expounding the truth made a great noise; -- the news of it spread far and wide, and attracted to the newly established university a crowd of youthful foreign students. Even many professors attended Luther's lectures, and among others Mellerstadt, frequently styled 'the light of the world,' first rector of the university, who already at Leipsic, where he had been previously, had earnestly combated the ridiculous instructions of scholasticism, had denied that 'the light created on the first day was Theology,' and had maintained that the study of literature should be the foundation of science. 'This monk,' said he, 'will put all the doctors to shame; he will bring in a new doctrine, and reform the whole Church; for he builds upon the Word of Christ, and no one in the world can either resist or overthrow that Word, even should he attack it with all the arms of philosophy, of the sophists, Scotists Albertists, Thomists, and with all the Tartaretus.'"

Thus Luther's prestige grew, and Staupitz, the vicar-general, invited him to preach to the church of the Augustines, but the modest scholar remonstrated repeatedly and made many excuses until at last he was obliged to yield.

"In the middle of the square of Wittemberg," relates the historian, "stood an old wooden chapel, thirty feet long and twenty broad, whose walls, propped on all sides, were falling, to ruins. A pulpit made of planks, raised three feet above the ground, received the preacher. It was in this chapel that the Reformation was first preached. It was the will of God that this work for the

restoration of His glory should have the humblest beginnings. The foundation of the church of the Augustines was only just laid, and till it should be completed they made use of this mean place of worship. 'That building;' adds the contemporary of Luther, who relates these circumstances, may be aptly compared to the stable in which Christ was born. It was in that enclosure that God willed, if we may so speak, that His well-beloved Son should be born a second time. Amongst the thousand cathedrals and parish churches with which the world is filled, not one was chosen for the glorious announcement of everlasting life."

"The Beginning of a New Life"

Luther proved to be a preacher of such power and eloquence that his audiences were carried along with him. Soon the small chapel could not hold the crowds that came. "Luther preaches:" wrote the historian. "Everything is striking in the new minister. His expressive countenance, his noble air, his clear and sonorous voice, captivate all his hearers.. Before his time, the majority of preachers had sought rather what might amuse their congregation, than what would convert them. The great seriousness that pervaded all Luther's sermons, and the joy with which the knowledge of the Gospel had filled his heart, imparted to his eloquence. an authority, a warmth, and an unction that his predecessors had not possessed. 'Endowed with a ready and lively genius,' says one of his opponents, 'with a good memory, and employing his mother tongue with wonderful facility, Luther was inferior to none of his contemporaries in eloquence. Speaking from the pulpit, as if he were agitated by some violent emotion, suiting the action to his words, he affected his hearers' minds in a surprising manner, and carried them like a torrent wherever he pleased. So much strength, grace, and eloquence are rarely found in these children of the North.' -- 'He had,' says Bossuet, 'a lively and impetuous eloquence that charmed and led away the people.'

"Soon the little chapel could not hold the hearers who crowded to it. The counsel of Wittemberg then nominated Luther their chaplain, and invited him to preach in the city church. The impression he there produced was greater still. The energy of his genius, the eloquence of his style, and the excellency of the doctrines that he proclaimed, equally astonished his hearers. His reputation extended far and wide, and Frederick the Wise himself came once to Wittemberg to hear him.

"This was the beginning of a new life for Luther. The slothfulness of the cloister had been succeeded by great activity. Freedom, labor, the earnest and constant action to which he could now devote himself at Wittemberg, succeeding in re-establishing harmony and peace within him. Now he was in his place, and the work of God was soon to display its majestic progress."

Luther's Call to Rome

In the midst of these many labors, there was to be an interruption, for at this juncture the brilliant orator was requested to go to Rome as a representative of seven convents of his order that were in dispute with the vicar-general. "The acuteness of Luther's mind, his powerful language, and his talent for discussion were the cause of his selection as agent for these monasteries before the Pope. This Divine dispensation was necessary for Luther. It was requisite that he should know Rome. Full of the prejudices and delusions of the cloister, he had always imagined it to be the abode of sanctity." To him the holy city had ever stood as the seat of holiness. It was now pleasing to God that he should view it as it was, the reality alone could destroy the convent-bred illusion.

When he had crossed the Alps and entered Italy he was entertained at a rich convent of the Benedictines. The magnificent apartments, the costly dresses, the tables laden with rich food were astonishing to the poor monk. On Friday the table lay spread with an abundance of meats. "The

Church and the Pope forbid such things," said Luther. This criticism from the ill-mannered German was most offensive to the self-indulgent monks and he was invited to be on his way.

After a fatiguing journey, with a severe sickness along the way, he approached the city of the seven hills. In a transport of reverence he threw himself on the ground, saying, "Holy Rome, I salute thee!" In Rome his heart rejoiced in Christian recollections. In this very place: the Epistle was received which contained those words that had become so dear to Luther's soul, "The just shall live by faith." The pious monk continued to hold his delusions for some time, visiting all the churches and listening in credulity to the miraculous tales, going through with all the observances required of the devout: But he saw among the priests, levity, dissolute morals, and a contempt for things considered most sacred. They laughed at his simplicity. The sanctuary that he expected to find was desolate indeed, empty and profaned. As Luther saw into the inner life and conduct of Roman Catholicism, his expectations were most sorely disappointed. " 'No one can imagine what sins and infamous actions are committed in Rome,' said he at another time; 'they must be seen and heard to be believed. Thus, they are in the habit of saying, If there is a hell, Rome is built over it; it is an abyss whence issues every kind of sin.'

Rome the Citadel of Spiritual Corruption

"This spectacle made a deep impression even then upon Luther's mind; it was increased ere long. 'The nearer we approach Rome, the greater number of bad Christians we meet with,' said he, many years after. 'There is a vulgar proverb, that he who goes to Rome the first time, looks out for a knave; the second time, he finds him; and the third, he brings him away with him. But people are now become so clever, that they make these three journeys in one.' Machiavelli, one of the most profound geniuses of Italy, but also one of unenviable notoriety, who was living in Florence when Luther passed through that city on his way to Rome, has made the same remark: 'The strongest symptom,' said he, 'of the approaching ruin of Christianity (by which he means Roman Catholicism) is, that the nearer people approach the capital of Christendom, the less Christian spirit is found in them. The scandalous examples and the crimes of the court of Rome are the cause why Italy has lost every principle of piety and all religious feeling. 'We Italians,' continues this great historian, 'are indebted principally to the Church and the priests for having become impious and immoral.' Luther, somewhat later, was sensible of the very great importance of this journey. 'If they would give me one hundred thousand florins,' said he, 'I would not have missed seeing Rome!'

One day wishing to obtain an indulgence promised by the Pope to those who would ascend "Pilate's staircase"* on bended knee, Luther climbing slowly and painfully, upward, heard reverberating suddenly through his brain those loved but heretofore partially understood words of Paul, "**the just shall live by faith.**" He sprang to his feet, in shame that he in superstition had resorted to degrading acts, and hurried away.

* Pilate's staircase, or Scala Sancta, is the supposed, stairway which Christ trod in the house of Pilate. Discovered by Queen Helena and miraculously transported to Rome, it is still ascended by the doing devout on headed knee, chanting and praying as they go. Not finding the 28 steps able to accommodate the crowds at the Lenten season, and other holidays, four additional staircases have been placed beside it, properly blessed by the Pope. At the foot of Scala Sancta is a framed notice which states that to one ascending in the proper manner with an earnest and contrite heart, an indulgence will be given of nine less years in Purgatory. In 1908 Pope Plus also decreed that such indulgence could be granted for the souls already in Purgatory.

Into the very Paradise of God

That great text wove itself in and out Luther's future life, character, and work. He comprehended clearly now the justification by faith he had read often in the Epistle to the Romans -- that righteousness which alone can stand before God. Not only had this pure doctrine become a power of salvation to him, but it was the mighty weapon placed in his hand at the moment he arose to his knees on Scala Sancta -- a weapon by the Apostle Paul and now brought forth again from the heavenly arsenal to reform a decadent Church. The truth, covered by a mass of superstition, error, and Roman decretals, arose to fall no more.

Let us hear Luther's own words, "Though as a monk I was holy and irreproachable, my conscience was still filled with trouble and torment. I could not endure the expression -- the righteous justice of God. I did not love that just and holy Being who punishes sinners. I felt a secret anger against Him; I hated Him because, not satisfied with terrifying by His law, and by the miseries of life, poor creatures already ruined by original sin, He aggravated our sufferings by the Gospel. But when by the Spirit of God, I understood these words -- when I learnt how the justification of the sinner proceeds from God's mere mercy by the way of faith -- then I felt myself born again as a new man, and I entered by an opened door [Rev. 3:8. Compare also "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," Vol. I, page 209] into the very paradise of God. From that hour I saw the precious and holy Scriptures with new eyes. I went through the whole Bible. I collected a multitude of passages which taught me what the work of God was. And as I had before heartily hated that expression, 'the righteousness of God,' I began from that time to value and love it, as the sweetest and most consolatory truth. Truly this text of St. Paul was to me as the very gate of heaven."

Thus it was that Luther came into possession of that necessary truth that had been overlooked by other teachers and reformers. In Rome, where it was first spoken, God gave to him a clear understanding of this **fundamental doctrine** of Christianity. "He had come to seek in that city of the Pontiffs, the solution of some difficulties concerning a monastic order; he brought back in his heart, that which was to emancipate the Church."

As the corrupt Church and its claims lost ground in Luther's life, the Word of God gained its hold upon his heart, and as it then happened, another scholarly honor was offered him and he became Doctor of Theology. Before the degree was conferred, he was required to take this oath, "I swear to defend the truth of the Gospel with all my strength." This was a solemn vow to one so conscientious, so earnest of heart, and the recollection of it, in times of stress and danger, comforted and upheld him.

The Truths that Luther Labored to Restore

Luther at times spoke against the many superstitions, the abominations of Christendom, but his best effort was to establish true faith as the false gods were cast down. Explaining the Scriptures, pointing out the difference between the Law and the Gospel, refuting the error that men by their own efforts or by any discipline can obtain remission of sins or righteousness, he continually pointed as had John the Baptist to the Lamb of God that had taken away the sin of the world -- to Him, who bore it all for mankind on Calvary's hill.

"Oh, my dear brother," he writes to George Spenlein a friend of convent days, "learn to know Christ, and Him crucified. Learn to sing a new song -- to despair of your own work, and to cry unto Him, Lord Jesus, Thou art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken on Thee what was mine, and given to me what is Thine; what Thou wast not, Thou becamest, that I might become what I wast not. Beware, my dear George, of aspiring after such purity as that thou mayst not have to acknowledge thyself a sinner; for Christ dwells only with sinners Meditate often on this love of Christ, and you will taste its unspeakable comfort. If our labors and afflictions could give peace to the conscience, why did Christ die upon the cross? You will find peace in

Him alone; despairing of yourself and of your works, and beholding with what love He spreads His arms to you; taking all your sins on Himself, and bestowing on you all His righteousness."

The authority with which he taught rested in the appeal which he made to the Word of God and the firm acceptance of that which he found there. His power was further strengthened by his own daily walk, which was in strict conformity to his discourses. These were no- idle words, but were brought forth from the treasure house of a devout heart. The impotence of man -- the almighty power of God -- these were the two truths that Luther labored to restore.

(To be Continued)

Providence and the Great Reformation

Seventh of the Series

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - March 1, 1931)

IT IS October 31, 1517. All is bustle and excitement in what has been the quiet town of Wittenberg. It is a most important day -- the day of the feast of All Saints. Pilgrims have come from all around. Those who visit the church and gaze on the relics brought from many lands, lying in their finely jeweled cases, may, as they confess their sins, be sure of full forgiveness. In the evening of this day, a monk approaches the church and tacks upon its heavy wooden door a manuscript. There is nothing so strange about this for notices of various kinds have often been so placed.

But soon the whole town is in excited discussion. They are the propositions of one Martin Luther written against the sale of indulgences, bearing the opening declaration that they are penned in a spirit of sincere charity and with the desire to bring truth to light. But in those ninety-five theses was a principle not then clearly seen by the excited readers -- a principle that was destined to one day overthrow Papacy. The cardinal doctrine of justification by faith -- the evangelic doctrine of a free and gracious remission of sins, lay in the theses of Luther. "Often," says the historian, "did Luther, in after times, when he contemplated the vast and unexpected consequences of this courageous step, feel amazed at himself, and unable to comprehend how he dared to take it. The truth, an invisible and all-powerful hand, held the guiding rein, and urged on the herald of truth in a road which he knew not, and from the difficulties of which he would perhaps have shrunk, had he been aware of them and advanced alone and of his own will. 'I entered on this controversy,' said he, 'without any settled purpose or inclination, and entirely unprepared . . . I call God to witness this who sees the heart.'"

He Seemed to Stand Alone Against Rome

Luther's theses spread quickly. In a fortnight they were over Germany, and before a month elapsed they were in Rome. They brought light to many a cell, to humble cottages, and even to palaces. Those monks whose lives were spent in prayer, fastings, and penance, thanked God for the voice raised in the defense of truth. Those who had entered monasteries for an indolent life, plenty to eat, and spiritual honor, lifted up their voices in reproach to the author of the disturbing theses. At Erfurth, Luther was accused of rudeness and pride in the way he condemned the opinions of others, but those whose strength of conviction is inspired by the Word of God are apt to be so judged. "Who does not know," said Luther in reply to this complaint, "that we can seldom advance a new idea without an appearance of pride, and without being accused of seeking quarrels? If humility herself attempted any thing new, those of a different opinion would exclaim that she was proud. Why were Christ and all the martyrs put to death? Because they appeared proud despisers of the wisdom of the times in which they lived, and because they brought forward new truths without having first humbly consulted the oracles of the old opinions."

Luther was deceived in his expectations. He had thought many high in the Church, distinguished and scholarly, would join him. The best those who favored him offered in his behalf was a hasty word of praise and commendation. Many whom he had venerated condemned him greatly. He seemed to stand alone against Rome. He, a lowly monk, had set himself in opposition to the Church he had revered from infancy. But he trusted in the Word of God; he had drawn from that pure spring by humble, prayerful inquiry of the Author Himself, who alone can rightly interpret that Word. "I know," said he, "that from the beginning the Word of God has been such as that

whosoever would carry it into the world, must, like the Apostles, leave everything, and be delivered unto death. If it were not so, it would not be the Word of Christ."

Tetzel and His Indulgences

As is well known Luther's theses were intended to deal a deadly blow to the principle of the Catholic faith which claims that power of forgiveness of sins is vested in its dignitaries, popes, and priests, and that they have the power to grant indulgences, etc. The Church had opened up an amazing business upon earth. The salvation of souls was offered in exchange for silver and gold. The head merchant of it all, John Tetzel by name, arrived at each German city in royal equipage and was met by the entire populace headed by clergy, priests, nuns and various prominent citizens, while music played and bells rang. Immediately then the procession would start towards the church. On a velvet cushion or cloth of gold lay the Pope's bull of grace which was born in front of the crowd; Tetzel followed, supporting a large wooden cross of red. After erecting the cross in front of the altar, the sixty-three year old vendor of indulgences would ascend the pulpit and with tempting, enticing words explain his wares. "Indulgences," said he, "are the most precious and sublime of God's gifts." And, pointing to the red cross, he said, "This cross has as much efficacy as the cross of Jesus Christ." . . . Draw near, and I will give you letters, duly sealed, by which even the sins you shall hereafter desire to commit shall all be forgiven you." And again, "But more than all this: indulgences save not the living alone, they also save the dead." He continues, "The very moment that the money clinks against the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory, and flies free to heaven."

He then as a further inducement, relates how the bodies of St. Peter and St. Paul are not suitably housed in their present building, and the money from the sale of the indulgences will be used to restore the ruined Church of St. Peter. "Our Lord God," said he, "no longer deals with us as God. He has given all power to the Pope."

"Then," says the historian, "the people came in crowds to the confessors. They came, not with contrite hearts, but with money in their hands." Tetzel had arranged a scale according to each person's income, and another scale for particular sins. Witchcraft cost two ducats; murder, eight ducats; and polygamy, six ducats.

Seated in the Temple of God

Tetzel replied to Luther's theses in denunciations and sweeping affirmations. By this he furthered the cause of the Reformation in that according to the words of Tetzel's propositions, the Pope seemed actually "seated in the temple of God, showing himself to be God." For, the shameless dealer in indulgences used the robe of the Pope 'to cover' his own disgraceful words and doings. "Christians should be taught," said he, in these theses, "that the Pope alone has the right to decide in questions of Christian doctrine; that he alone, and no other, has power to explain, according to his judgment, the sense of Holy Scripture, and to approve or condemn the words and works of others." "Christians should be taught," said he, "that the pope, in the plenitude of his power, is higher than the universal church, and superior to councils; and that entire submission is due to his decrees."

The monks, stirred by Tetzel's attack, denounced Luther's name from every Dominican pulpit. He was a "madman, a seducer, a wretch possessed by the Devil." They prophesied that before a month elapsed, he would be burned alive as a heretic, as had Huss. Had the wish that fathered this thought been granted, such would, no doubt, have happened to him, but God willed otherwise. The death of Huss had furthered His cause, but now He would use the life of His servant.

"The Bible had decided Luther's destiny: it had molded the Reformer and commenced the Reformation. Luther's belief depended not on the testimony of the Church. His faith had come from the Bible itself: from within, and not from without. He was so deeply convinced that the evangelic doctrine was immovably built upon the Word of God that all external doctrine was to him superfluous.

The living spring which had gushed forth for the refreshment of the monk of Wittemberg, was to become a mighty river that should slake the thirst of nations."

If Any Preach another Gospel

Leo X did not condescend to interfere in the theological controversy. "A squabble among the monks," said he, "the best way is to take no notice of it." And again, "It is a drunken German that has written these theses": when he is sober he will talk very differently." But a voice from Rome is raised against the theses of Luther, none other than that of Prierias, master of the pontifical palace; who filled the office of censor. His office gave him power to determine what doctrines Christians should profess, and on what points they should be silent. He published a dialogue, dedicated to the Pope, in which he attacked Luther's propositions, using by turns ridicule, revilings, and even threats. The Reformer answered in the words of St. Peter, "If any one preach unto you another Gospel than that is preached, though he should be an angel from heaven, let him be accursed." And this, written by Augustine to Jerome: "I have learned to render to the inspired Scriptures alone the homage of a firm belief, that they have never erred; as to others, I do not believe in the things they teach, simply because it is they who teach them." Here in Luther's answer is the fundamental principle of the Reformation -- the Word of God -- the whole Word of God -- and nothing but the Word of God.

The stronger the opposition grew the more firmly did Luther stand. Men at the head of government or a party often break under the strain, but to the Christian new strength generally comes with conflict. There is for him in the Gospel a hidden source of courage and refreshment, unknown to the natural man. There is a rest, even in life's most heartbreaking experiences, for the child of God.

The Reformer, had he so desired, could have, by a few words, excited the fury of the public against his enemies, the Dominicans, but such was not the spirit that animated him. To instruct his hearers, to open the eyes of a blinded people -- this, and not personal triumph over his opposers, absorbed him. Something of the beauty of his quieter teaching is seen in the following expression on the opening words of the Lord's Prayer: " **Our Father.**" Of all names there is not one which more inclines us toward God than the name of Father. We should feel less love, and derive less consolation, from addressing Him as Lord, or God, or judge. By that word **Father**, His bowels of compassion are moved; for there is no sound more sweet or prevailing with a father than the voice of his child.

The Breath of Life given Christendom

'Who art in heaven': Whosoever professes that he has a father in **heaven**, acknowledges himself to be a stranger upon earth; hence, there is in his heart, an ardent longing, like that of a child that is living among strangers in want and grief, afar from its fatherland. Alas! my Father, Thou art **in heaven**, and I, Thy suffering child, am **on earth**, far from Thee, encompassed with dangers, wants, and mourning."

But especially was his eloquence directed towards that which **had so desolated the sanctuary** -- a Church which had presumed to put itself in the place of God and His Word. "All the superstructures which presumptuous priests had raised for their own gain between God. and the

soul of man were thrown down; and man brought face to face with his God. The word of forgiveness now descended pure from on high without passing through a thousand corrupting channels. That the witness of God should be received, it was no longer necessary that men should attach to it their delusive seal. The monopoly of the priestly caste was abolished; the Church was delivered from her thralldom."

Steadily, although not entirely recognized by him, Luther's power increased among the people and his reputation became strengthened. That sharp two-edged sword which he could use so skillfully -- the blessed Word of God -- pierced the very hearts of men, and wrought in them the desire for personal pardon and the hope of gaining eternal life. Since the first days of the Church there had not been such hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Multitudes had been induced during the middle ages to assume outwardly the symbol of the cross, but now, under the eloquent appeal of the Reformer, hearts were opened to enfold the true cross, the knowledge of the efficacy of the blood shed forth on Calvary. These rallied around the one who had been instrumental in their awakening to spiritual life, yet how feeble, how little, these combined forces seemed beside that great superstructure, magnificent in form and pretense, and with all the prestige of past ages in its favor. But form devoid of spirit is weak, though reared with outward splendor; and spirit without form is strong, although to human eyes it may seem weak indeed. The breath of life now given Christendom was destined to overturn the proud edifice of man's building the while it gently inflated the hearts of feeble ones, hearts that had first been pierced by the sword of truth -- the pure, unadulterated Word of God, much as a steady, prevailing wind upturns the mighty tree whose roots have suffered decay but leaves the tender, yielding reed unharmed.

Luther called to Trial

But now the princes and nobles of the empire and the Church began to bestir themselves to silence this troublesome monk. Luther now was not standing alone, although he had asked for and expected no support but that of God. The whole German nation had heard his voice and frozen hearts had thawed to the heavenly warmth. The superstitions of Rome were losing ground daily and men's thoughts were directed towards Luther as the upholder of truth and freedom, and before he was aware of the influence he had acquired he had been acknowledged as their leader. Leo X, who until now had allowed matters to take their course, became aroused by the outcry, and appointed an ecclesiastical court to judge Luther, with his enemy, Prierias, as both accuser and judge, and he was summoned -- to Rome to appear before it.

Luther asked that he be heard in Germany, and members of the university of Wittemberg sent a letter to the Pope himself interceding for him, pleading his frail health as an excuse against the long trip to the Imperial City. Circumstances having arisen that made it seem advantageous to the Pope to grant this, he did so, but in words that were audacious in power, and harsh in judgment, branding the annoying monk as a heretic even before trial, and enjoining those who should try him in these words, "If he should persist in his stubbornness, and you fail to get possession of his person, we give you power to proscribe him in all places in Germany; to put away, curse, and excommunicate all those who are attached to him, and to enjoin all Christians to shun their society." All those holding positions of power -- religious orders, universities; nobles, potentates, the Emperor Maximilian himself excepted, were ordered excommunicated at any neglect to seize his person. Any town or place or community offering him refuge should be under interdict during the time of his stay and for three days after his departure. Any of the laity who failed to obey the Papal orders would be disentitled to even Christian burial.

Truth Cast Down in the Streets

Thus Rome set the entire stage to crush the Reformer. From every human outlook his ruin was assured but, as the Sadducees of old, they erred, not knowing the power of God and of the Scriptures. God was for His brave messenger, therefore all the pride, power, and glory of Rome set against him were powerless.

"Even the semblance of a just and impartial inquiry had been disregarded; and Luther had already been declared a heretic," says the Swiss historian, "not only before he had been heard, but even long before the expiration of the time allowed for his personal appearing. The passions (and never are they more strongly excited than in religious discussions) break through all forms of justice. Not only in the Roman Church, but in those Protestant Churches which have departed from the Gospel, and in every place where truth has been forsaken, do we find it treated in this way. All means seem good against the Gospel. We frequently see men, who, in any other case, would shrink from committing the least injustice, not hesitating to trample under foot all rule and equity, when Christianity, or her witnesses, are concerned."

About this time there came to Wittenberg, a young man, delicate in build, as professor of ancient languages. This was Philip Schwarzerd, re-named Melancthon by Reuchlin, his relative, friend, and instructor. The professors at Wittenberg were not impressed with the delicate appearing youth, but the brilliancy of mind which they soon found to be his, melted all prejudice, and he and Luther began a friendship that ended only at death. "If there be any one," said Melancthon, "that I love and embrace with my whole heart, it is Martin Luther." **Different**, yet necessary to each other, God in all His kindness and wisdom has brought them together. Melancthon was calm, prudent, and gentle; Luther, impetuous and energetic. Melancthon moderated Luther – Luther gave strength to Melancthon. Both were upright and generous and possessed that love for the Divine Word that caused them to proclaim it faithfully and let it govern their lives.

(To be Continued)

Providence and the Great Reformation

Eighth of the Series

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - March 15, 1931)

MELANCTHON WITH all his learning in Greek and Latin, became a valuable help to Luther in the translation of the Scriptures. His fellowship meant much in the days just preceding his hearing at Augsburg, where it was agreed by the Pope that his trial should take place, instead of at Rome. At Augsburg he must face a greater wrath than that which brought Huss to the stake. But full of faith in the power and goodness of God, Luther did not tremble: "What I have undertaken to defend," said he, "I hope I shall, by Christ's help, be enabled to maintain. As to force, we must needs yield to that, but without forsaking the truth."

Staupitz, that good, but timid, friend, moved at the thought of his danger and feeling himself responsible, who had urged him from the cloister out in the troubles and dangers of life, wrote him, imploring him to flee and take refuge with him in his convent. "It seems to me," he wrote, "that the whole world is up in arms, and combined against the truth. Even so was the crucified Jesus hated! I see not that you have anything else to expect than persecution. Ere long no one without the Pope's permission, will be allowed to search the Scriptures, and to learn Christ from them, which yet is Christ's injunction. Your friends are few in number. God grant to those few friends courage to declare themselves in opposition to your formidable enemies! Your most prudent course is to leave Wittemberg for a time, and come and reside with me. Then let us live and die together . . ."

Luther's Indomitable Courage

Still others who sympathized with Luther reasoned with him and endeavored to dissuade him from his purpose to meet his adversaries at Augsburg. One of these, John Kestner, purveyor to the Coredeliers aroused with grave fear at the thought of the immense peril to which Luther was subjecting himself, said to him, "Brother, in Augsburg you will meet with Italians, who are learned men and subtle antagonists, and who will give you enough to do. I fear you will not be able to defend your cause against them. They will cast you into the fire, and their flames will consume you." To this Luther replied, "Dear Friend, pray to our Lord God who is in heaven, and put up a 'paternoster' for me and for His dear Son Jesus, whose cause is mine, that He may be favorable to Him. If He maintain His cause, mine is maintained, but if He will not maintain it, of a truth it is not I who can maintain it, and it is He who will bear the dishonor."

Thus, says the historian, "The courage of the Wittemberg doctor [Luther], who was going quietly on foot to answer a summons which had terminated in death to so many of his predecessors, astonished all who saw him. Interest, admiration and sympathy prevailed by turns in their hearts."

En route to Augsburg Luther stopped at Nuremberg, where he, had conference with a number of notable characters, and the historian says, "He derived strength from the conversation of these excellent ones of the earth, while many monks and laymen felt alarm at his journey, and endeavored to shake his resolution, beseeching him to retrace his steps. The letters he wrote from this city show the spirit which then animated him: 'I have met,' said he, 'with pusillanimous men who wish to persuade me not to go to Augsburg; but I am resolved to proceed. The Lord's will be done! Even at Augsburg, even in the midst of His enemies, Christ reigns. Let Christ live; let Luther die, and every sinner, according as it is written! May the God of my salvation be exalted! Farewell! Persevere, stand fast; for it is necessary to be rejected either by God or by man: but God is true, and man is a liar.'"

The facts bearing upon Luther's examination and trial at Augsburg are most interesting; we briefly note some of the more outstanding features: The supreme Pontiff at Rome had delegated as his envoy and representative, before whom Luther should appear at Augsburg, Cardinal De Vio. He was from the town of Gaeta, in the Kingdom of Naples, where he had arisen to the distinction of a Cardinal; and the historian says that Cardinal De Vio was not of a character calculated to encourage Luther.

Wily and Subtle Methods

Preceding the trial, and as intending to intimidate Luther and dissipate his courage, an Italian courtier named Urban of Serra Longa was sent to confer with the reformer. He hoped to make short work with the German monk. He arrived, attended by two domestics, and after having most cordially saluted Luther, the diplomatist added in an affectionate manner:

"I am come to offer you good advice. Be wise, and become reconciled with the Church. Submit to the cardinal without reserve. Retract your offensive language. Remember the Abbot Joachim of Florence: he had published, as you know, many heretical things, and yet he was declared no heretic, because he retracted his errors."

"Upon this Luther spoke of justifying what he had done.

"Serra Longa.--Beware of that! Would you enter the lists against the legate of his holiness?"

"Luther. -- 'If they convince me of having taught anything contrary to the Roman Church, I shall be my own judge, and immediately retract. The essential point will be to know whether the legate relies on the authority of St. Thomas more than the faith will sanction. If he does so, I will not yield.'

"Serra Longa.--'Oh, oh ! You intend to break a lance then !'

"The Italian then began to use language which Luther styles horrible. He argued that one might maintain false propositions, provided they brought in money and filled the treasury; that all discussion in the universities against the pope's authority must be avoided; that, on the contrary, it should be asserted that the Pope could, by a single nod, change or suppress articles of faith; and so he ran on, in a similar strain. But the wily Italian soon perceived that he was forgetting himself; and returning to his mild language, he endeavored to persuade Luther to submit to the legate in all things, and to retract his doctrine, his oaths, and his theses.

"The doctor, who was at first disposed to credit the fair professions of the orator Urban (as he calls him in his narrative), was now convinced that they were of little worth, and that he was much more on the legate's side than on his. He consequently became less communicative, and was content to say, that he was disposed to show all humility, to give proofs of his obedience, and render satisfaction in those things in which he might have erred. At these words Serra Longa exclaimed joyfully: 'I shall hasten to the legate; you will follow me presently. Everything will go well, and all will soon be settled.'

"He went away. The Saxon monk, who had more discernment than the Roman courtier, thought to himself : 'This crafty Sinon has been badly taught and trained by his Greeks.' Luther was in suspense between hope and fear; yet hope prevailed. The visit and the strange professions of Serra Longa, whom he afterwards called a bungling mediator, revived his courage."

Two days later this same courtier, Serra Longa made another attempt, hoping to overpower Luther's determination, when the conversation in part went on as follows

"Serra Longa. -- 'When all forsake you, where will you take refuge?'

"Luther, looking to heaven with an eye of faith, 'Under heaven.'

"Serra Longa was silent for a moment, struck with the sublimity of this unexpected answer. He then resumed the conversation

"What would you do if you held the legate, pope, and cardinals in your hands, as they have you in theirs?"

"Luther. -- 'I would show them all possible honor and respect. But with me, the Word of God is before everything.'

"Serra Longa, smiling, and snapping his fingers in the manner of the Italians 'Eh, eh! all honor! I do not believe a word of it.' "

Luther and the Inquisition

At last the day having arrived for the hearing before the Papal representative, Cardinal De Vio, Luther repaired to the legate's palace, and we read:

"He had scarcely entered the legate's palace, when all the Italians who formed the train of this prince of the Church, crowded round him; every one desired to see the famous doctor, and they thronged him so much that he could with difficulty proceed. Luther found the apostolic nuncio and Serra Longa in the hall where the cardinal was waiting for him. His reception was cold, but civil, and conformable with Roman etiquette. Luther, in accordance with the advice he had received from Serra Longa, prostrated himself before the cardinal; when the latter told him to rise, he remained on his knees; and at a fresh order from the legate, he stood up. Many of the most distinguished Italians in the legate's court found their way into the hall in order to be present during the interview; they particularly desired to see the German monk humble himself before the pope's representative.

"The legate remained silent. He hated Luther, as an adversary of the theological supremacy of St. Thomas, and as the chief of a new, active, and hostile party in a rising university, whose first steps had disquieted the Thomists. He was pleased at seeing Luther fall down before him, and thought, as a contemporary observes, that he was about to recant. The doctor on his part humbly waited for the prince to address him; but as he did not speak, Luther understood this silence as an invitation to begin, and he did so in these words

"Most worthy Father, in obedience to the summons of his papal holiness, and in compliance with the orders of my gracious lord the Elector of Saxony, I appear before you, as a submissive and dutiful son of the holy Christian Church, and acknowledge that I have published the propositions and theses ascribed to me. I am ready to listen most obediently to my accusation, and if I have erred, to submit to instruction in the truth.'

"The cardinal, who had determined to assume the appearance of a tender and compassionate father towards an erring child; then adopted the most friendly tone; he praised and expressed his delight at Luther's humility, and said to him: 'My dear son, you have disturbed all Germany by your dispute on indulgences. I understand that you are a very learned doctor in the Holy Scriptures, and that you have many followers. For this reason, if you desire to be a member of the Church, and to find a gracious father in the pope, listen to me:'

"After this prelude, the legate did not hesitate to declare at once what he expected of him, so confident was he of Luther's submission. 'Here are three articles,' said he, 'which by the command of our holy Father, Pope Leo X, I have to set before you. First, you must bethink yourself, own your faults, and retract your errors, propositions, and sermons; secondly; You must promise to abstain in future from propagating your opinions; and, thirdly, Bind yourself to behave with greater moderation, and avoid everything that may grieve or disturb the Church.'

"Luther. -- 'Most holy Father, I beg you will show me the pope's brief, by virtue of which you have received full powers to treat of this matter.'

"Serra Longa and the other Italians opened their eyes with astonishment at this demand, and although the German monk had already appeared to them a very strange kind of man, they could not conceal their amazement at such a daring request. Christians, accustomed to ideas of justice, desire that justice should be observed towards others and towards themselves; but those who act habitually in an arbitrary manner, are surprised when they are called upon to proceed according to the usual rules, formalities, and laws.

"De Vio. -- 'This request, my dear son, cannot be granted. You must confess your errors, keep a strict watch upon your words for the future, and not return like a dog to his vomit, so that we may sleep without anxiety or disturbance; then, in accordance with the order and authorization of our most holy Father the Pope, I will arrange the whole business.'

"Luther. -- 'Condescend, then, to inform me in what I have erred.'

"At this new request, the Italian courtiers, who had expected to see the poor German fall down on his knees and beg pardon, were still more astonished than before. None of them would have deigned to reply to so impertinent a question. But De Vio, who thought it ungenerous to crush this petty monk with the weight of his authority, and who, besides, trusted to gain an easy victory by his learning, consented to tell Luther of what he was accused, and even to enter into discussion with him. We must do justice to the general of the Dominicans. We must acknowledge that he showed more equity, a greater sense of propriety, and less passion, than have been often shown in similar matters since. He replied in a condescending tone

"'Most dear son! here are two propositions that you have advanced, and which you must retract before all: 1st, The treasure of indulgences does not consist of the sufferings and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ; 2nd, The man who receives the holy sacrament must have faith in the grace that is presented to him.'"

Struck a Mortal Blow at Romish Commerce

Both of the propositions mentioned by the cardinal had struck a mortal blow at Romish commerce, for if the pope did not possess the power of giving at will, the merits of the Savior, and if in receiving money from the financial agents of the Church, men were not benefited by the so-called indulgences and commissions of sin, then this paper money would lose its value and be worthless. As a matter of fact, the revenue they had produced was no little amount, and the historian continues, "By attacking these two doctrines, Luther had imitated Jesus Christ, who at the very beginning .of His ministry had overthrown the tables of the moneychangers, and driven the dealers out of the temple. **Make not My Father's house a house of merchandise, He had said.**

"'In confuting your errors,' said De Vio, 'I will not appeal to the authority of St. Thomas and other doctors of the schools; I will rely entirely on Holy Scripture, and talk with you in all friendliness.'

"But De Vio had scarcely begun to bring forward his proofs before he departed from the rule he had declared that he would follow. He combated Luther's first proposition by an Extravagance of Pope Clement, and the second by all sorts of opinions from the schoolmen. The discussion turned first on this papal constitution in favor of indulgences. Luther indignant at hearing what authority the legate ascribed to a decree of Rome, exclaimed:

"'I cannot receive such constitutions as sufficient proofs on matters so important. For they pervert the Holy Scriptures, and never quote them to the purpose.'

"De Vio. -- 'The pope has power and authority over all things.'

"Luther, quickly. -- 'Except Scripture!'

"De Vic, sneering -- Except Scripture! Do you not know that the pope is above councils; he has recently condemned and punished the Council of Basle.'

"Luther. -- 'The University of Paris has appealed from this sentence.'

"De Vio. -- 'These Paris gentlemen will receive their deserts.'

"The dispute between the cardinal and Luther then turned upon the second point, namely, the faith Luther declared necessary for the efficacy of the sacraments. Luther, according to his custom, quoted various passages of Scripture in favor of the opinion he maintained; but the legate treated them with ridicule. 'It is of faith in general that you are speaking,' said he. -- 'No,' replied Luther. . . .'

"'As for indulgences,' said Luther to the legate, 'if it can be shown that I am mistaken, I am very ready to receive instruction. We may pass over that and yet be good Christians. But as to the article of faith, if I made the slightest concession, I should renounce Jesus Christ. I cannot -- I will not yield on this point, and with God's grace I will never yield.'

"De Vio, **growing angry**. -- 'Whether you will, or whether you will not, you must retract that article this very day, or, upon that article alone, I shall reject and condemn your whole doctrine.'

"Luther. -- I have no will but the Lord's. Let Him do with me as seemeth good to Him. But if I had four hundred heads, I would rather lose them all than retract the testimony which I have borne to the holy Christian faith.'

"De Vio. -- 'I did not come here to dispute with you. Retract, or prepare to suffer the penalty you have deserved.'

"Luther saw clearly that it was impossible to put an end to the subject by a conference. His opponent, sat before him as if he were himself pope, and pretended that he would receive humbly and submissively all that was said to him; and yet he listened to Luther's replies, even when they were founded on Holy Scripture, with shrugging of shoulders and every mark of irony and contempt. He thought the wiser plan would be to answer the cardinal in writing. This means, thought he, gives at least one consolation to the oppressed. Others will be able to judge of the matter, and the unjust adversary, who by his clamors remains master of the field of battle, may be frightened at the consequences."

(To be Continued)

Providence and the Great Reformation

Ninth of the Series

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - June 1, 1931)

THE RESULT of Luther's first examination before the legate plainly appeared to be in the Reformer's favor. He was given opportunity to prepare a statement in writing. But the examination and trial continued the following day. Luther's friends accompanied him to the legate's palace. Amongst these was Staupitz who remained loyal to Luther and fully comprehended his position, and was confident that unless Luther continued steadfast in his faith in the Lord as his deliverer, he must fall. Staupitz said, "My dear brother, bear constantly in mind that you have begun these things in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." "Thus did God environ His humble servant with consolation and encouragement."

Arriving at the legate's palace, Luther found all in order once more for the continuance of the trial. Luther had written his answers and after the customary salutation he was permitted to read the following declaration with a loud voice:

"I declare that I honor the holy Roman Church, and that I shall continue to honor her, I have sought after truth in my public disputations, and everything that I have said I still consider as right, true, and Christian. Yet I am but a man, and may be deceived. I am therefore willing to receive instruction and correction in those things wherein I may have erred. I declare myself ready to reply orally or in writing to all the objections and charges that the lord legate may bring against me. I declare myself ready to submit my theses to the four universities of Basle, Friburg in Brisgau, Louvain, and Paris, and to retract whatever they shall declare erroneous. In a word, I am ready to do all that can be required of a Christian. But I solemnly protest against the method that has been pursued in this affair, and against the strange pretension of compelling me to retract without having refuted me."

Apparently the cardinal was not expecting just such a protest as Luther had read in his hearing. And in consequence he sought to hide his confusion by affecting to smile and by assuming an appearance of moderation.

"This protest," said he to Luther, with a smile, "is unnecessary; I have no desire to dispute with you, either privately or publicly; but I propose arranging this matter with the kindness of a parent."

"Continuing with the most affectionate air, De Vio said: 'My dear friend, abandon, I beseech you, so useless an undertaking; bethink yourself, acknowledge the truth, and I am prepared to reconcile you with the Church and the sovereign bishop. . . . Retract, my friend, retract; such is the pope's wish. Whether you will or whether you will not, is of little consequence. It would be a hard matter for you to kick against the pricks.'

"Luther, who saw himself treated as if he were already a rebellious child and an outcast from the Church, exclaimed: 'I cannot retract! but I offer to reply, and that too in writing. We had debating enough yesterday.'

"De Vio was irritated at this expression, which reminded him that he had not acted with sufficient prudence; but he recovered himself, and said with a smile: 'Debated! my dear son, I have not debated with you: besides, I have no wish to debate; but, to please the most serene Elector Frederick, I am ready to listen to you, and to exhort you in a friendly and paternal, manner.'

“Luther could not understand why the legate was so much scandalized at the term he had employed; for (thought he), if I had not wished to speak with politeness, I ought to have said, not **debated**, but **disputed** and **wrangled**, for that is what we really did yesterday.

Error Seeks Vindication in Abuse

“De Vio, who felt that in the presence of the respectable witnesses who attended this conference, he must at least appear anxious to convince Luther, reverted to the two propositions, which he had pointed out as fundamental errors, being firmly resolved to permit the reformer to speak as little as possible. Availing himself of his Italian volubility, he overwhelmed the doctor with objections, without waiting for any reply. At one time he jeered, at another scolded; he declaimed with passionate warmth; mingled together the most heterogeneous matters; quoted St. Thomas and Aristotle; clamored, stormed against all who thought differently from himself; and apostrophized Luther. More than ten times did the latter try to speak; but the legate immediately interrupted him and overwhelmed him with threats. Retract! retract! this was all that was required of him. He raved, he domineered, he alone was permitted to speak. Staupitz took upon himself to check the legate. ‘Pray, allow Brother Martin time to reply to you,’ said he. But De Vio began again; he quoted the Extravagances and the opinions of St. Thomas; he had resolved to have all the talk to himself during this interview. If he could not convince, and if he dared not strike, he would do his best to stun by his violence.

“Luther and Staupitz saw very clearly that they must renounce all hope, not only of enlightening De Vio by discussion, but still more of making any useful confession of faith. Luther therefore reverted to the request he had made at the beginning of the sitting, and which the cardinal had then eluded. Since he was not permitted to speak, he begged that he might at least be permitted to transmit a written reply to the legate. Staupitz seconded this petition; several of the spectators joined their entreaties to his, and Cajetan, notwithstanding his repugnance to everything that was written, for he remembered that such writings are lasting (*scripta manent*) at length consented. The meeting broke tip. The hopes that had been entertained of seeing the matter arranged at this interview were deferred; they must wait and see the issue of the next conference.

Victory Gained by Humility and Firmness

“The permission which the general of the Dominicans had given Luther to take time for his reply, and to write his answer, to the two distinct accusations touching indulgences and faith, was no more than strict justice required, and yet we must give De Vio credit for this mark of moderation and impartiality.”

Two days later the examination before the legate proceeded again; and again the same tactics of cajoling, browbeating, and threatening on the part of Cardinal De Vio were utterly unavailing. Luther remained steadfast to his conviction under the cruel fire and bombarding of the Cardinal whose final words to Luther were: “ ‘Retract, or return no more.’ ”

“These words struck Luther. This time he will reply in another way than by speeches: he bowed and left the hall, followed by the Elector’s councilors. The cardinal and the Italians, remaining alone, looked at one another in confusion at such a result.”

Thus after ten days under the hand of Rome’s representative, the Cardinal De Vio -- tortuous days of insistence, without just reasoning, on the part of him who sat in judgment, Luther hurried away from Augsburg before daybreak, riding fast and hard towards Wittemberg. God had preserved him from harm, but to stay longer than necessary might be tempting God. When De Vio heard of his departure he was both disappointed and angry. He had hoped for the honor of healing the wound the heretical monk had given the Church and to strengthen the Pope’s weakening

influence in Germany. Rome had gained nothing in the conference, rather, she had lost, for the uprightness, simplicity, and firmness of Luther shone in the light of it, and, on the other hand, the haughty and unreasonable ways of Rome had been most evident. Victory, gained by a humble friar over Rome's proud representative! Can we wonder that men were filled with astonishment? All the way to Wittenberg Luther's journey became a triumph. De Vio by letter begged Elector Frederick to send the mischievous monk to Rome, or to banish him from his territories, but Frederick had no thought of delivering up an innocent man to Rome. He wrote this reply to De Vio: "Since Doctor Martin has appeared before you in Augsburg, you ought to be satisfied. We did not expect that, without convincing him of error, you would claim to oblige him to retract. Not one of the learned men in our states has intimated to us an opinion that Martin's doctrine is impious, anti-Christian, or heretical." He then refused the request made by De Vio.

The university of Wittenberg increased in reputation. Young men came from all parts of Germany to hear the instructor whose teachings had brought a new era in religion and learning. It is told that many of these as they arrived for the first time in sight of the steeples of Wittenberg, would pause, and bless God that He had caused His light to shine forth from Wittenberg to penetrate distant lands, even as it had shone forth from Mt. Zion.

Luther lived in expectation of being driven from Germany, and one day a letter came from Frederick, asking him to leave Wittenberg. He was preparing to depart not knowing where to go unless to France, when a second letter was brought to him. In this the Elector bade him hasten his departure. Sadly then Luther remarked to his friends gathered about him, "When my father and mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up." The fate of the Reformation seemed to hang by a single thread which this banishment might easily break. The friends were in tears, when another letter arrived:

"As the Pope's new envoy," the letter ran, "hopes that everything may be settled by a conference, remain for the present." The mighty power of the Lord was again in evidence: "At the Word of the Lord," says the Prophet, "His servants go down to The depths, and mount up again to heaven."

Luther now published his report of the conference at Augsburg, and, sending the document to a friend, remarked in an accompanying letter, "I shall send you what I have written, in order that you may judge if I am right in believing that the Antichrist of whom St. Paul speaks now reigns in the court of Rome."

Clearness of vision did not come to Luther at once, darkness and light were strangely intermingled at times as letters written by him to the Pope attest: "Most Holy Father: May your holiness condescend to incline your paternal ear, which is that of Christ Himself, toward your poor sheep, and listen with kindness to his bleating . . . Most Holy Father, I declare it in the presence of God, and of all the world, I never have sought, nor will I ever seek, to weaken by force or artifice, the power of the Roman Church or of your Holiness. I confess that there is nothing in heaven or earth that should be preferred above that Church, save only Jesus Christ the Lord of all." Light came, not suddenly, but by degrees, and we see in these words the truth that the Reformation was not a rebellion against a system; and opposition to the Pope was but a secondary thing -- the inevitable outcome of that great principle and positive doctrine which underlay and brought about the Reformation -the transcendent teaching that Jesus Christ is King of kings, Lord of lords, and far above The Church of Rome.

The Word of God the Invincible Test

It was the custom at this time to meet in public discussion, where hearing was given those questions of views that interested or agitated the minds of the people. Such an occurrence was

that of the Leipsic discussion in which Luther met an opponent before a large audience. An impartial witness of the encounter gives us this interesting picture of the Reformer:

“Martin Luther is of middle size, and so thin, by reason of his continual studies, that one can almost count his bones . . . His knowledge and understanding of the Holy Scriptures are incomparable: the whole Word of God is at his fingers’ ends.”

Eck, his opponent, relied upon the word of the early Fathers, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, and others. Luther showed himself as thoroughly acquainted with such authorities, but insisted that the word of the Scriptures was above them. How familiar do the words of Eck in answer to this sound to us of this day: “I am astonished,” said he with sarcasm, “at the humility and diffidence with which the reverend doctor undertakes to stand alone against so many illustrious Fathers, thus affirming that he knows more of these things than the Sovereign reign Pontiff the Councils, divines, and universities! . . . It would no doubt be very wonderful if God had hidden the truth from so many saints and martyrs till the advent of the reverend father.”

After several days the discussion was ended by Luther with these words, “The reverend doctor avoids the Holy Scriptures, as the devil flees from the cross. For my part, saving the respect due to the Fathers, I prefer the authority of the Word of God; and it is **that** which I would press upon our judges.”

The dispute of words did not vanish in mere smoke, but a new fire was enkindled in many minds. Especially was this true of the students of the University of Leipsic. They had seen the reliance of Luther on the Word of God. They had also noted the stand upon the traditions of men alone that Doctor Eck had taken, and many of these young men left Leipsic for Wittemberg, drawn there by truth, doubling the number of its students.

Melancthon had been present at the discussion, but had taken little part in it. But a new purpose in life was born for him at the conference, and he turned from literature which had claimed him, and from that hour “bowed the heights of his learning before the Word of God.” From this time Melancthon and Luther went on together hand in hand -- a loving John, an energetic Paul. “I,” said Luther, “was born for struggling on the field of battle with parties and devils. Thus it is that my writings breathe war and tempest. . . I am like the sturdy wood-cutter, who must clear and level the road. But our master of arts, Philip, goes forward quietly and gently, cultivating and planting, sowing and watering joyfully, according as God has dealt to him so liberally of His gifts.”

Melancthon in his first theologial writing pointed out the mistake of explaining the Holy Scriptures by the writings of the godly, instead of explaining the writings of the godly by the Scriptures: “How often,” says he, “has not Jerome been mistaken! -- how often Augustine! -- how often Ambrose! How often do we not find them differing in judgment -- how often do we not hear them retracting their errors! There is but one Scripture divinely inspired and without mixture of error.” And again, “There is a philosophy enjoined us with respect to the Scriptures given by God; it is to bring to them all the thoughts and maxims of men, as to the touchstone by which these are to be tried.” Thus the Word of God was enthroned in its proper place and the writings of the Fathers in turn placed in theirs.

(To be continued)

Providence and the Great Reformation

Tenth of the Series

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - June 15, 1931)

THE THEOLOGICAL disputes of the days during the period of the Reformation, to which men of the world of today would not give a few brief moments, were listened to for days with great attention by laymen, knights, and princes. However, from the standpoint of those who were really desirous of knowing the truth on the issues being discussed, there was little gained. "At Leipsic, [where the discussion was held]," said Luther, "there was great loss of time, but no seeking after truth. We have been examining the doctrines of our adversaries these two years past, so that we have counted all their bones." Alas! how history has been repeated! How many today have fallen into the same error! -- "examining the doctrines of our enemies" rather than the doctrines of the Bible, forgetting that it is not the "voice" of the "stranger" that we are to know so thoroughly, but that it is our knowledge and intimate acquaintance with the "Good Shepherd," His "voice," His doctrines, that will insure our quick discernment of the voice of the stranger, from whom we will "flee." Such is the admonition of our Lord Himself. Let us never fail to give heed to Him and His words, for "they are spirit and they are life."

"Luther separated from the Papacy, and then felt towards it a decided aversion and holy indignation . . . 'Oh! what thick darkness!' exclaimed he . . . 'How difficult a thing it is to throw off errors confirmed by the example of all the world, and which, through long habit, have become a second nature to us . . . I no longer permit myself to be indignant against those who are still attached to the Pope, since I, who had for so many years studied the Holy Scriptures so attentively, still clung with so much obstinacy to popery.'"

Here again we may profitably consider the example of the Reformer. It is only as our service to others comes from loving and sympathetic hearts that it can be the most effective. Such was the example of our Great Pattern, who looked upon those about Him with "compassion," and was touched with a feeling of their infirmities. This feature of helpful service cannot be stressed overmuch, for it is of vital importance.

Luther Expounds Justification by Faith

Far from retreating, Luther advanced daily. In His Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians he aimed a violent blow against the errors then prevailing, for in this he "expounded with great power the doctrine of justification by Faith." "Since our sins were so great that nothing could take them away except a ransom so immeasurable," wrote Luther, "shall we still claim to obtain righteousness by the strength of our own will, by the power of the law, or by the teaching of men?" As is often the case, so with the Reformer, "His adversaries compelled him to advance more quickly than he would have done without them."

A bull of excommunication was prepared for Luther. "As soon as this bull shall be published," said the pope, "the bishops are to search diligently for the writings of Martin Luther in which these errors are contained, and to burn them publicly and solemnly in the presence of the clergy and of the laity . . . 'And if he does not recant within the space of sixty days, we, by these presents, sentence himself and his adherents as open and obstinate heretics.'" An order was also given to seize Luther and his partisans and send them to Rome.

For centuries Rome had followed her sentence of condemnation with death. It is easy then to imagine what would have awaited those servants of God in the dungeons of the Imperial City.

But the sword of excommunication, upheld in the Papal hand about to strike, but served to increase the Reformer's courage. Attacking the errors of the church sacraments, he boldly wounds Rome as he places faith in the divinely given position which is hers, as he sets forth faith's excellence that men may behold: "God has preserved to us," said he, "this sacrament ('baptism) alone pure from human traditions. God has said: 'He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved.' . . . If God is for me, who can be against me? Oh, how rich is the baptized Christian! nothing can ruin him but his own refusal to **believe**."

Edict of the Diet of Worms

"For this reason," continues Luther after he has summed up the doctrine of baptism, "I declare that neither pope, nor bishop, nor any other man living, has authority to impose the least thing upon a Christian without his own consent. Whatever is done otherwise, is done by an arbitrary assumption. We are free from all men."

Shortly after the arrival of the Pope's bull in Germany, Luther published his book on the "Babylonish Captivity of the Church."

Although already under the Pope's condemnation, he is summoned by the Emperor, Charles, the Fifth, to appear before him at Worms for an inquiry touching the doctrines and writings he put forth. Here before as august an assembly as earth could convene, stood the man who had been placed under interdict by the Pope, whose lips had been ordered closed forever, who had been cut off from human fellowship by the Papal decree. Before the throne of Emperor Charles, with the imposing assemblage around him, Luther again declares that if any will prove to him by the writings of the Prophets and the Apostles that he is in error, he will not only retract but will himself gladly consign all his writings to the flames. Then, looking about on the assembly which held life or death for him in its hands, he added: "I stand here, and can say no more: God help me! Amen." Thus spoke a single monk, in the presence of an emperor and the chiefs of the nation; a humble man, but strong in the knowledge of truth, and faith in God; a vessel of common clay, but broken and filled and made meet for the Master's use. "When ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."

The Edict of the Diet of Worms is written and duly signed. Luther is branded as the worst of heretics, "a madman, or possessed by the Devil." He is declared a being who is not a man, "but Satan himself under the semblance of a man in a monk's hood," "who has collected in one offensive mass all the worst heresies of former ages, adding his own to the number." His person is to be seized as soon as the terms for his safe-conduct have expired, and a stop put to his madness. His works are to be burned. A reward was to be given the one who seized him, and a ban was to be placed on those who aided him.

On the journey back from Worms, Luther was apprehended by five mysterious, masked horsemen and carried to a lonely castle surrounded by the dark solitude of the forest. It was God's will that the one who had been receiving such bitter persecution from Rome should disappear for a time from the scene of action. To the grieving friends of the Reformer all seemed lost in the absence of the leader, but God remained. The cloud so dark to them had hidden from their sight a silver lining -- the defender of the faith, although his fate was unknown to them, was imprisoned for his own safety, and the truth would like leaven, in the quiet watches, penetrate the body of the people, its radiance diffusing far and wide.

The Reformation in Switzerland

At this period a steady movement was in evidence in the quiet valleys of Switzerland. The same spirit that was breathing forth in Germany was here also calling forth the same, faith. The same One who gave the heavenly truth to Luther, gave also to Zwingli. As states the historian:

“It was not Germany that communicated the light of truth to Switzerland, Switzerland to France, and France to England: all these countries received it from God; just as one part of the world does not communicate the light of day to the other, but the same brilliant orb imparts it direct to all the earth. Infinitely exalted above men, Christ, ‘the day-spring from on high,’ was at the epoch of the Reformation, as He had been at the establishment of Christianity, the Divine fire whence emanated the life of the world. One sole and same doctrine was suddenly established in the sixteenth century, at the hearths and altars of the most distant and dissimilar nations; it was everywhere the same spirit, everywhere producing the same faith.

“The Reformation of Germany and that of Switzerland demonstrate this truth. Zwingli had no communication with Luther. There was no doubt a connecting link between these two men; but we must not look for it upon earth: it was above. He who from heaven gave the truth to Luther, gave it to Zwingli also. Their bond of union was God. ‘I began to preach the Gospel,’ says Zwingli, ‘in the year of grace 1516, that is to say, at a time when Luther’s name had never been heard in this country. It is not from Luther that I learnt the doctrine of Christ, but from the Word of God. If Luther preaches Christ, he does what I am doing; and that is all.’”

Thus from the records we learn that God was pleased to use various agencies to proclaim His Truth at this time—each taught from the Word. In Switzerland there was not one reformer, but many, although one head seemed raised above the rest. We find Wittembach, Capito, Haller, Myconius, Calvin, and others besides Zwingli. This Swiss Reformer was the son of a shepherd. Often as a child he would sit at the knee of his pious grandmother, anxiously receiving into his heart her Bible stories, etc. In later years he applied himself to scholastic theology, but he came to see its emptiness; and was called to fill a position of pastor in a church. After ordination by the bishop, he took up his duties as a priest. He began to study Greek, his ambition being to know that language that he might study the Gospel in the original. “Zwingli turned his eyes to heaven,” says his best friend, “for he would have no other interpreter than the Holy Spirit.” “‘Philosophy and theology,’ said he, ‘were constantly raising difficulties in my mind. At length I was brought to say, we must leave these things, and endeavor to enter into God’s thoughts in His own Word. I began earnestly to entreat the Lord to grant me His light; and although I read the Scriptures only, they became clearer to me than if I had read all the commentators.’ He compared Scripture with itself; explaining obscure passages by those that are clear When Zwingli thus turned towards Holy Scripture, Switzerland took its first step toward the Reformation.”

Zwingli did not in his earlier preaching expose, as did Luther, the weaknesses of the Church, but as truth dawned for him in his study of the Word, he imparted it to his flock. “He endeavored to instill the truth into their hearts, and then relied on it for the result that it was destined to produce. ‘If, the people understand what is true,’ thought he, ‘they will soon discern what is false.’ Here again the fact is impressed upon us by another Reformer that if we have the Truth in head and heart, there will be no doubt as to our discerning the error. Let us apply our hearts unto wisdom. The great Adversary would if possible keep our minds engaged with the teachings of others, the doings of others -- anything but the words and works of our Lord. Our preparation of heart for the presence of our glorious Bridegroom is in feeding upon Christ and upon His Word.

But the time came when Zwingli found it necessary to denounce error, even as in the springtime of his labor the quiet sowing of the seeds of truth seemed all sufficient for the advancing light. He was involved at times in the political intrigues and prejudices about him, which if continued

would gradually have absorbed and choked the higher aspirations of his soul, but a watchful Providence willed otherwise, and Zwingli was called to a convent whose administrator delighted to gather about him learned men. "God never leaves in the tumult of the world," says one, "those whom He is training for the people. He leads them aside -- he sets them in solitude, where they may feel themselves in his presence, and gather inexhaustible instruction. The Son of God Himself, the type in that particular of His dealings with His servants, passed forty days in the desert." And so God took the Swiss Reformer from the clashing factions of the world about him and led him to the solitude of a hermitage, to the quiet seclusion found within the walls of an abbey. Over the gate of the abbey was this inscription, "Here may be obtained complete remission of sins." An image of the Virgin in the monastery was alleged to have miracle working powers, and pilgrims in great numbers from all quarters of Christendom came here for the promised grace.

Zwingli felt the corruption of it all and forgetting his own best interests he fearlessly attacked the superstition of the visiting crowd about him. "Think not," cried he from his pulpit, "that God is in this temple more than in any part of creation. . . . What power can there be in unprofitable works, weary pilgrimages, offerings, prayers to the Virgin and the saints, to secure you the favor of God? What signify the multiplying of words in prayer? What efficacy in the cowl, or shaven crown, or priestly garments falling, and adorned with gold! God looks upon the heart -- and our heart is far off from God."

From this most venerated sanctuary in Switzerland he continued to point to the true source of forgiveness--to that Lamb of God that taketh away all sin : "Christ," he cried to his listeners, "**Christ**, who offered Himself on the cross once for all, is the sacrifice and victim which satisfies for all eternity, for the sins of all believers." "Christ alone saves us," he declared, "and He saves us everywhere."

(To be continued)

Providence and the Reformation

Eleventh of the Series

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - July 1, 1931)

AS IN ANCIENT days the kings of Israel transcribed God's law with their own hands, so Zwingli with his, copied out the Epistles of St. Paul. At that time there existed none but voluminous editions of the New Testament, and Zwingli wished to be able to carry it with him always. He learned these Epistles by heart, and somewhat later the other books of the New Testament and part of the Old. His soul thus grew daily more attached to the supreme authority of the Word of God. He was not content simply to acknowledge this authority: he resolved sincerely to subject his life to it. He entered gradually into a more Christian path."

How characteristic of a true servant of the Lord! "Thy words were found and I did eat them." Zwingli desired not merely an intellectual appreciation of the Lord and His Word, but that heart appreciation that is productive of a life in conformity thereto.

Reformers Silenced neither by Rome's judgments nor Favors

The God who had chosen Wittenberg as the center of light for Germany, selected Zurich for the flashing of truth's radiance across the mountains and valleys of Switzerland, and placed his servant Zwingli there. The Swiss reformer preached with less force than Luther, but with none the less success. He expected everything from the power of truth. As a result of these different methods, Rome was differently exercised toward the two Reformers. She "aimed at frightening Luther by her judgments, and gaining Zwingli by her favors. Against the one she hurled her excommunications; to the other she cast her gold and splendors. These were two different ways of attaining the same end, and of silencing the bold tongues that dared to proclaim the Word of God in Germany and Switzerland. The latter was the more skilful policy; but neither was successful. The emancipated souls of the preachers of the truth were equally beyond the reach of vengeance or of favor." Zwingli's response to her overtures was -- "Do not imagine that for love of money I retract a single syllable of the truth." Well may we thank the Lord today for such noble examples of loyalty to the truth and to the light of His Word!

Zurich, being the center in which the most influential men were often gathered, was the place best adapted for scattering the seeds of truth throughout all the cantons of Switzerland. "The friends of learning and of the Bible joyfully hailed Zwingli's nomination" as chaplain of the cathedral at Zurich. "Unusual excitement prevailed in the assembly; for every one felt, unconsciously perhaps, how serious was the beginning of this ministry." As his innovating spirit was feared, the "authorities" agreed that the important duties must be explained to him. Whereupon he was instructed to "collect the revenues of the chapter without overlooking the least"; to "exhort the faithful, both from the pulpit and in the confessional, to pay all tithes and dues, and to show by their offerings their affection to the Church; be diligent in increasing the income arising from the sick, and from masses; as for the administration of the sacraments, the preaching and the care of the flock, these are also the duties of the chaplain. But for these you may employ a substitute, and particularly in preaching."

Zwingli's Consecrated Ministry

"What a regulation for Zwingli! money, money, nothing but money! Did Christ establish His ministry for this? . . . Without any remark on the duties imposed upon him, Zwingli announced

what he intended doing: 'The life of Christ,' said he, 'has been too long hidden from the people, I shall preach upon the whole of the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapter after chapter, according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, without human commentaries, drawing solely from the fountains of Scripture, sounding its depths, comparing one passage with another, and seeking for understanding by constant and earnest prayer. It is to God's glory, to the praise of His only Son, to the real salvation of souls, and to their edification in the true faith, that I shall consecrate my ministry.' Language so novel made a deep impression." Some in authority testified their joy; but the majority evinced sorrow. This manner of preaching was an innovation, and they feared "this explanation of the Scripture" would educate the people. But Zwingli was firm in his convictions and "no human power could close his lips." When he went into the cathedral pulpit on the first occasion a great crowd awaited him. "It is to Christ," said he, "that I desire to lead you; to Christ, the true source of salvation. His Divine Word is the only food that I wish to set before your hearts and souls." Taking his text from St. Matthew's Gospel the following day, he opened up the Scriptures in such a manner that his enraptured audience exclaimed, "We never heard the like of this before!"

For a time there was one cry of admiration in Zurich. Those who were impressed with the Gospel said: "This man is a preacher of the truth. He will be our Moses to lead us forth from this Egyptian darkness," and they "imagined they saw a man of the Apostolic age reappearing before them . . . His character and his deportment towards all men contributed, as much as his discourses, to win their hearts. No misfortune alarmed him; his conversation was at all times full of consolation, and his heart firm . . . He was indefatigable in study. From daybreak until ten o'clock he used to read, write, and translate."

Baptized in Waters of Affliction

Zwingli saw his work prosper. He was "strong in frame, in character, and in talents," but he needed to experience adversity and infirmity to reveal to him that success in the ministry of the Lord comes not from these. "There is a moment in the history of the heroes of this world," says the historian, "of such as Charles XII, or Napoleon, which decides their career and their renown; it is that in which their strength is suddenly revealed to them. An analogous moment exists in the life of God's heroes, but it is in a contrary direction; it is that in which they first recognize their helplessness and nothingness; from that hour they receive the strength of God from on high. A work like that of which Zwingli was to be the instrument, is never accomplished by the natural strength of man; it would wither immediately, like a tree transplanted in all its maturity and vigor. A plant must be feeble or it will not take root, and a grain must die in the earth before it can become fruitful. God conducted Zwingli, and with him the work that depended on him, to the gates of the sepulcher." He needed to realize that his strength was made perfect in weakness. He was stricken with the plague; the "great death," as it was called. The city was filled with distress as they saw this beloved reformer, "the hope of Switzerland and of the Church, about to fall a prey to the tomb. His senses and his strength forsook him." But at the very gates of death, he was delivered from the cruel pestilence.

This experience exercised a powerful influence on Zwingli. He arose from the darkness of the sepulcher with a new heart. "His life was more holy; his preaching more free, more Christian, and more powerful. This was the epoch of Zwingli's complete emancipation." This plague that swept over the mountains and valleys of Switzerland accomplished a purifying work for the people as well as for the Reformer. "The Reformation, as well as Zwingli, was baptized in the waters of affliction and of grace, and came forth purer. and more vigorous."

Uniformity of Doctrine in Reformers

Thus the work progressed in Switzerland, and upwards of two thousand persons in Zurich alone, accepted the evangelical doctrine. "Zwingle," we are told "held the same faith as Luther, but a faith depending on deeper reasoning We find in Luther's writings an internal and private conviction of the value of the cross of Jesus Christ to himself individually; and this conviction, so full of energy and life, animates all that he says. The same sentiment, undoubtedly, is found in Zwingle, but in a less degree. He was rather attracted by the harmony of the Christian doctrine; he admired it for its exquisite beauty, for the light it sheds upon the soul of man, and for the everlasting life it brings into the world. The one is moved by the heart, the other by the understanding; and this is why those who have not felt by their own experience the faith that animated these two great disciples of the same Lord have fallen into the gross error of representing one as a mystic and the other as a rationalist. Possibly, the one is more pathetic in the exposition of his faith, the other more philosophical; but both believe in the same truths. It may be true that they do not regard secondary questions in the same light; but that faith which is one-that faith which renews and justifies its possessor-that faith which no confession, no articles can express-exists in them alike." Speaking of the work and preaching of Luther, Zwingle said: "Never has one single word been written by me to Luther, nor by Luther to me. And why? -- that it might be shown how much the Spirit of God is in unison with itself, since both of us, without any collusion, teach the doctrine of Christ with such uniformity."

It is of interest to note with what clearness the Swiss Reformer pointed out the fall of man and the Atonement, as given by the historian: "'Before the fall,' said he, 'man had been created with a free will, so that, had he been willing, he might have kept the law; his nature was pure; the disease of sin had not yet reached him; his life was in his own hands. But having desired to be as God, he died. . . . and not he alone, but all his posterity.' The inhabitants of Zurich, who listened eagerly to this powerful orator, were overwhelmed with sorrow as he unfolded before their eyes that state of sin in which mankind are involved; but soon they heard the words of consolation, and the remedy was pointed out to them, which alone can restore man to life 'Wherever sin is,' exclaimed the Reformer, 'death of necessity follows. Christ was without sin, and guile was not found in His mouth; and yet He died! This death He suffered in our stead! He was willing to die that He might restore us to life; and as He had no sins of His own, the all-merciful Father laid ours upon Him.' . . . The souls that thirsted after salvation in the city of Zurich found repose at the sound of these glad tidings."

Church Restored by Blood

Thus did Zwingle preach the truth with courage, and the large cathedral was not sufficient to hold the multitude who came to hear. All praised God for the new life that was beginning to reanimate the lifeless body of the Church. But adversaries were met as well as admirers. Criticisms were heard from various sources, in the midst of which discouragement often came over Zwingle. Everything seemed to him in a state of confusion and general convulsion. "He thought it impossible for any new truth to appear without its antagonistic error springing up immediately. 'The Church,' said he, 'was purchased by blood, and by blood must be restored.'"

Secret meetings were held daily in Zurich where means were devised of getting rid of Zwingle, but God watched over him and each plot came to naught. About this time he was "wounded in his tenderest spot." The rumor of his doctrines and of his struggles had reached his natural brothers, who feared if he continued in his course that he would be burned at the stake as had Huss, and they could not endure the idea of being called brothers of a heretic. They wrote him describing their feelings, to which Zwingle replied, breathing that strange beauty of courage and sacrifice: "As long as God shall enable me," said he, "I will perform the task that He has assigned me, without fearing the world and its proud tyrants My strength is weakness, itself, and I know the power of my enemies; but I likewise know that I can do all things through Christ that

strengtheneth me. . . . 'What shame,' say you, 'will fall upon all our family, if you are burnt or in any other way put to death.' O, my beloved brethren, the Gospel derives from the blood of Christ this wondrous property, that the fiercest persecutions, far from arresting its progress, do but hasten its triumph! They alone are faithful soldiers of Christ who are not afraid to bear in their own bodies the wounds of their Master. All my efforts have no other end than to make known to men the treasures of blessedness that Christ has purchased for us; that all men may turn to the Father, through the death of His Son."

The enemies of the Gospel seemed to rise like one man -- 'enemies in Zurich, enemies without; a man's own relatives becoming his opponents.'" Truly it seemed that the work hardly begun was about to be destroyed. "Zwingle, thoughtful and agitated, laid all his anguish before the throne of God

'I call upon Thee with confidence to complete what Thou hast begun. If I have built up any thing wrongly, do Thou throw it down with Thy mighty hand. If I have laid any other foundation than Thee, let Thy powerful arm destroy it.'" Thus did this faithful man of God, as he saw the storms descending, pour forth before God the troubles and desires of his soul.

(To be continued)

Providence and the Great Reformation

Twelfth of the Series

(THE HERALD OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM - July 15, 1931)

THE GLAD tidings of "salvation by grace," which had been preached by St. Paul and his brethren in the primitive Church, had been proclaimed for four years in Germany at the time of Luther's captivity. But all the time the "new Gospel sounded in the midst of the ancient rites." The preachers used bold language, and the people listened admiringly, yet they continued with "their mass, their beads, their confessors."

A new era was beginning in the Reformation. Truth had been restored in doctrine, and now the doctrine was about to restore truth in all the forms of the Church. Luther's concealment for ten months within the walls of the Wartburg separates these two periods. At the time of his captivity, the Reformation had seemed to center in him. His character appeared spotless. Had God removed him then from the world, "his end would have been as an apotheosis But Luther was preserved to the Church, in order to teach, by his very faults, that the faith of Christians should be based on the Word of God alone. He was transported suddenly far from the stage on which the great revolution of the sixteenth century was taking place; the truth, that for four years he had so powerfully proclaimed, continued in his absence to act upon Christendom: and the work, of which he was but the feeble instrument, henceforward bore the seal not of man, but of God Himself."

Tempered in Waters of Adversity

But Luther was not dead. He had merely yielded to the advice of his friends, and to confinement for a time in the Wartburg. Here he could wander freely through the fortress, but could not go beyond its walls. All his wishes were attended to, and he had never been better treated. "In the midst of the dark forests of Thuringia the Reformer reposed from the violent struggles that had agitated his soul. There he studied Christian truth, not for the purpose of contending, but as a means of regeneration and life. The beginning of the Reformation was of necessity polemical, new times required new labors. After cutting down the thorns and thickets, it was requisite to sow the Word of God peaceably in the heart. If Luther had been incessantly called upon to fight fresh battles, he would not have accomplished a durable work in the Church. Thus by his captivity he escaped a danger which might possibly have ruined the Reformation -- that of always attacking and destroying without ever defending or building up.

"This humble retreat had a still more precious result. Uplifted by his countrymen, as on a shield, he was on the verge of the abyss; the least giddiness might have plunged him into it headlong. Some of the first promoters of the Reformation both in Germany and Switzerland, ran upon the shoal of spiritual pride and fanaticism. Luther was a man very subject to the infirmities of our nature, and he was unable to escape altogether from these dangers. The hand of God, however, delivered him for a time, by suddenly removing him from the sphere of intoxicating ovations, and throwing him into an unknown retreat. There his soul was wrapt in pious meditation at God's footstool; it was again tempered in the waters of adversity; its sufferings and humiliation compelled him to walk, for a time at least, with the humble; and the principles of a Christian life were thenceforward evolved in his soul with greater energy and freedom." Here he suffered from sickness, and sometimes was in heaviness as he thought of the "wretchedness of the Church." It is recorded that "he passed whole nights without sleep. Anxieties of mind were superadded to the pains of the body. No great work is ever accomplished without suffering and martyrdom." Notwithstanding his sufferings, he composed a multitude of writings while in the Wartburg,

which we are told “succeeded each other rapidly, and the beloved voice of the Reformer was everywhere hailed with enthusiasm.”

While the Reformer, thus dead to the world, was seeking relaxation, the work was going on as if of itself. The Reformation was not long confined to doctrine merely, but had entered deeply into men’s actions. As Luther heard from his place of seclusion of the various reforms, he was sometimes surprised and confounded, for he walked “in a mixture of error and truth.” But he was gradually advancing, and one after another the doctrines of the Church of which he was still a member, had been wrestled with in the castle of the Wartburg and overthrown through prayer and the study of the Word.

“While Luther was thus preparing the way for one of the greatest revolutions that were destined to be effected in the Church, and the Reformation was beginning to enter powerfully into the lives of Christians, the Romish partisans, blind as those generally are who have long been in possession of power, imagined that, because Luther was in the Wartburg, the Reform was dead and forever extinct; and fancied they should be able quietly to resume their ancient practices, that had been for a moment disturbed by the monk of Wittemberg.” And so the traffic of indulgences was again practiced. As we find today, even so then, mere were those who, “all things being equal, decide for the truth; but who, as soon as their interest is put in the balance, are ready to take part with error.” Nothing could have aroused Luther’s indignation more, and he proceeded to make plans for an attack against this dire evil. He resolved after being defeated in other plans, to write direct to one of the cardinals. He was thus bringing to the bar the whole body of Romish bishops in the person of this cardinal. He wrote in part as follows:

“Your electoral highness has set up again in Halle the idol that swallows the money and the souls of poor Christians. You think, perhaps, that I am disabled, and that the emperor will easily stifle the cries of the poor monk . . . But know that I shall discharge the duties that Christian charity has imposed upon me, without fearing the gates of hell, and much less the pope, his bishops, and cardinals.”

Luther, the excommunicated monk, addressed so courageously a primate of the German Church, and yet he received in reply a letter showing little less than “slavish fear.” “While Luther alone, a prisoner and condemned, derived invincible courage from his faith, the archbishop, elector and cardinal, environed with all the power and favors of the world, trembled on his throne. This contrast appears continually, and is the key to the strange enigma offered by the history of the Reformation. The Christian is not called upon to count his forces, and to number his means of victory. The only thing he should be anxious about is to know whether the cause he upholds is really that of God, and whether he looks only to his Master’s glory. Unquestionably he has an inquiry to make; but this is wholly spiritual -- the Christian looks at the heart, and not the arm; he weighs the justice of his cause, and not its outward strength. And when this question is once settled, his path is clear. He must move forward boldly, were it even against the world and all its armed hosts, in the unshaken conviction that God Himself will fight for him.”

Luther Translates the Scriptures

Thus the Reformer struggled against error as if he were in the midst of the battle, and at the same time labored in his retirement at the Wartburg as if he were not concerned in what was going on in the world. Up to this time the Bible in the language of the people had been prohibited in the German Church, and Luther felt called of God to translate the Scriptures into a language that the “common people” could read for themselves. The historian remarks that “That same God who had conducted St. John to Patmos, there to write His Revelation, had confined Luther in the Wartburg, there to translate His Word. This great task, which it would have been difficult for him to have undertaken in the midst of the cares and occupations of Wittemberg, was to establish the

new building on the primitive Rock, and, after the lapse of so many ages, lead Christians back to the pure Fountainhead of redemption and salvation.

“The doctrine of the Church, the scholastic theology, knew nothing of the consolations that proceed from faith; but the Scriptures proclaim them with great force, and there it was that he had found them. Faith in the Word of God had made him free. By it he felt emancipated from the dogmatic authority of the Church, from its hierarchy and traditions, from the opinions of the schoolmen, the power of prejudice, and from every human ordinance. The strong and numerous bonds which for centuries had enchained and stifled Christendom, were snapped asunder, broken in pieces, and scattered round him; and he nobly raised his head freed from all authority except that of the Word. This independence of man, this submission to God, which he had learned in the Holy Scriptures, he desired to impart to the Church. But before he could communicate them, it was necessary to set before it the revelations of God.

“Luther had already translated several fragments of the Holy Scripture; the seven penitential Psalms had been his first task. John the Baptist, Christ Himself, and the Reformation had begun alike by calling men to repentance. It is the principle of every regeneration in the individual man, and in the whole human race. These essays had been eagerly received; men longed to have more; and this voice of the people was considered by Luther as the voice of God Himself. He resolved to reply to the call. He was a prisoner within those lofty walls; what of that! he will devote his leisure to translating the Word of God into the language of his countrymen. Ere long this Word will be seen descending from the Wartburg with him; circulating among the people of Germany, and putting them in possession of those spiritual treasures hitherto shut up within the hearts of a few pious men. ‘Would that this one Book,’ exclaimed Luther, ‘were in every language, in every hand, before the eyes, and in the ears and hearts of all men!’ . . . ‘Scripture without any comment,’ said he again, ‘is the sun whence all teachers receive their light.’

“Such are the principles of Christianity and of the Reformation. According to these venerable words, we should not consult the Fathers to throw light upon Scripture, but Scripture to explain the Fathers. The Reformers and the Apostles set up the Word of God as the only light, as they exalt the sacrifice of Christ as the only righteousness. By mingling any authority of man with this absolute authority of God, or any human righteousness with this perfect righteousness of Christ, we vitiate both the foundations of Christianity. These are the two fundamental heresies of Rome, and which, although doubtless in a smaller degree, some teachers were desirous of introducing into the bosom of the Reformation.

“Luther opened the Greek originals of the Evangelists and Apostles, and undertook the difficult task of making these Divine teachers speak his mother tongue. Important crisis in the history of the Reformation! From that time the Reformation was no longer in the hands of the Reformer. The Bible came forward; Luther withdrew. God appeared, and man disappeared. The Reformer placed The Book in the hands of his contemporaries. Each one may now hear the voice of God for himself; as for Luther, henceforth he mingles with the crowd and takes his station in the ranks of those who come to draw from the common Fountain of light and life.”