

## Chapter 7—Luther’s Separation From Rome

Foremost among those who were called to lead the church from the darkness of popery into the light of a purer faith, stood Martin Luther. Zealous, ardent, and devoted, knowing no fear but the fear of God, and acknowledging no foundation for religious faith but the Holy Scriptures, Luther was the man for his time; through him God accomplished a great work for the reformation of the church and the enlightenment of the world. {GC 120.1}

Like the first heralds of the gospel, Luther sprang from the ranks of poverty. His early years were spent in the humble home of a German peasant. By daily toil as a miner his father earned the means for his education. He intended him for a lawyer; but God purposed to make him a builder in the great temple that was rising so slowly through the centuries. Hardship, privation, and severe discipline were the school in which Infinite Wisdom prepared Luther for the important mission of his life. {GC 120.2}

Luther’s father was a man of strong and active mind and great force of character, honest, resolute, and straightforward. He was true to his convictions of duty, let the consequences be what they might. His sterling good sense led him to regard the monastic system with distrust. He was highly displeased when Luther, without his consent, entered a monastery; and it was two years before the father was reconciled to his son, and even then his opinions remained the same. {GC 120.3}

Luther’s parents bestowed great care upon the education and training of their children. They endeavored to instruct them in the knowledge of God and the practice of Christian virtues. The father’s prayer often ascended in the hearing of his son that the child might remember the name of the Lord and one day aid in the advancement of His truth. Every advantage for moral or intellectual culture which their life of toil permitted them to enjoy was eagerly improved by these parents. Their efforts were earnest and persevering to prepare their children for a life of piety and usefulness. With their firmness and strength of character they sometimes exercised too great severity; but the Reformer himself, though conscious that in some respects they had erred, found in their discipline more to approve than to condemn. {GC 121.1}

At school, where he was sent at an early age, Luther was treated with harshness and even violence. So great was the poverty of his parents that upon going from home to school in another town he was for a time obliged to obtain his food by singing from

door to door, and he often suffered from hunger. The gloomy, superstitious ideas of religion then prevailing filled him with fear. He would lie down at night with a sorrowful heart, looking forward with trembling to the dark future and in constant terror at the thought of God as a stern, unrelenting judge, a cruel tyrant, rather than a kind heavenly Father. {GC 121.2}

Yet under so many and so great discouragements Luther pressed resolutely forward toward the high standard of moral and intellectual excellence which attracted his soul. He thirsted for knowledge, and the earnest and practical character of his mind led him to desire the solid and useful rather than the showy and superficial. {GC 121.3}

When, at the age of eighteen, he entered the University of Erfurt, his situation was more favorable and his prospects were brighter than in his earlier years. His parents having by thrift and industry acquired a competence, they were able to render him all needed assistance. And the influence of judicious friends had somewhat lessened the gloomy effects of his former training. He applied himself to the study of the best authors, diligently treasuring their most weighty thoughts and making the wisdom of the wise his own. Even under the harsh discipline of his former instructors he had early given promise of distinction, and with favorable influences his mind rapidly developed. A retentive memory, a lively imagination, strong reasoning powers, and untiring application soon placed him in the foremost rank among his associates. Intellectual discipline ripened his understanding and aroused an activity of mind and a keenness of perception that were preparing him for the conflicts of his life. {GC 121.4}

The fear of the Lord dwelt in the heart of Luther, enabling him to maintain his steadfastness of purpose and leading him to deep humility before God. He had an abiding sense of his dependence upon divine aid, and he did not fail to begin each day with prayer, while his heart was continually breathing a petition for guidance and support. “To pray well,” he often said, “is the better half of study.”—D’Aubigne, b. 2, ch. 2. {GC 122.1}

While one day examining the books in the library of the university, Luther discovered a Latin Bible. Such a book he had never before seen. He was ignorant even of its existence. He had heard portions of the Gospels and Epistles, which were read to the people at public worship, and he supposed that these were the entire Bible. Now, for the first time, he looked upon the whole of God’s word. With mingled awe and wonder he turned the sacred pages; with quickened pulse and throbbing heart he read for himself the words of life, pausing now and then to exclaim: “O that God would give me such a book for myself!”—*Ibid.*, b. 2, ch. 2. Angels of heaven were by his side, and rays of light from the throne of God revealed the treasures of truth to his understanding. He had ever feared to offend God, but now the deep conviction of his condition as a sinner took hold upon him as never before. {GC 122.2}

An earnest desire to be free from sin and to find peace with God led him at last to enter a cloister and devote himself to a monastic life. Here he was required to

perform the lowest drudgery and to beg from house to house. He was at an age when respect and appreciation are most eagerly craved, and these menial offices were deeply mortifying to his natural feelings; but he patiently endured this humiliation, believing that it was necessary because of his sins. {GC 123.1}

Every moment that could be spared from his daily duties he employed in study, robbing himself of sleep and grudging even the time spent at his scanty meals. Above everything else he delighted in the study of God's word. He had found a Bible chained to the convent wall, and to this he often repaired. As his convictions of sin deepened, he sought by his own works to obtain pardon and peace. He led a most rigorous life, endeavoring by fasting, vigils, and scourgings to subdue the evils of his nature, from which the monastic life had brought no release. He shrank from no sacrifice by which he might attain to that purity of heart which would enable him to stand approved before God. "I was indeed a pious monk," he afterward said, "and followed the rules of my order more strictly than I can express. If ever monk could obtain heaven by his monkish works, I should certainly have been entitled to it.... If it had continued much longer, I should have carried my mortifications even to death."—*Ibid.*, b. 2, ch. 3. As the result of this painful discipline he lost strength and suffered from fainting spasms, from the effects of which he never fully recovered. But with all his efforts his burdened soul found no relief. He was at last driven to the verge of despair. {GC 123.2}

When it appeared to Luther that all was lost, God raised up a friend and helper for him. The pious Staupitz opened the word of God to Luther's mind and bade him look away from himself, cease the contemplation of infinite punishment for the violation of God's law, and look to Jesus, his sin-pardoning Saviour. "Instead of torturing yourself on account of your sins, throw yourself into the Redeemer's arms. Trust in Him, in the righteousness of His life, in the atonement of His death.... Listen to the Son of God. He became man to give you the assurance of divine favor." "Love Him who first loved you."—*Ibid.*, b. 2, ch. 4. Thus spoke this messenger of mercy. His words made a deep impression upon Luther's mind. After many a struggle with long-cherished errors, he was enabled to grasp the truth, and peace came to his troubled soul. {GC 123.3}

Luther was ordained a priest and was called from the cloister to a professorship in the University of Wittenberg. Here he applied himself to the study of the Scriptures in the original tongues. He began to lecture upon the Bible; and the book of Psalm, the Gospels, and the Epistles were opened to the understanding of crowds of delighted listeners. Staupitz, his friend and superior, urged him to ascend the pulpit and preach the word of God. Luther hesitated, feeling himself unworthy to speak to the people in Christ's stead. It was only after a long struggle that he yielded to the solicitations of his friends. Already he was mighty in the Scriptures, and the grace of God rested upon him. His eloquence captivated his hearers, the clearness and power with which he presented the truth convinced their understanding, and his fervor touched their hearts. {GC 124.1}

Luther was still a true son of the papal church and had no thought that he would ever be anything else. In the providence of God he was led to visit Rome. He pursued his journey on foot, lodging at the monasteries on the way. At a convent in Italy he was filled with wonder at the wealth, magnificence, and luxury that he witnessed. Endowed with a princely revenue, the monks dwelt in splendid apartments, attired themselves in the richest and most costly robes, and feasted at a sumptuous table. With painful misgivings Luther contrasted this scene with the self-denial and hardship of his own life. His mind was becoming perplexed. {GC 124.2}

At last he beheld in the distance the seven-hilled city. With deep emotion he prostrated himself upon the earth, exclaiming: “Holy Rome, I salute thee!”—*Ibid.*, b. 2, ch. 6. He entered the city, visited the churches, listened to the marvelous tales repeated by priests and monks, and performed all the ceremonies required. Everywhere he looked upon scenes that filled him with astonishment and horror. He saw that iniquity existed among all classes of the clergy. He heard indecent jokes from prelates, and was filled with horror at their awful profanity, even during mass. As he mingled with the monks and citizens he met dissipation, debauchery. Turn where he would, in the place of sanctity he found profanation. “No one can imagine,” he wrote, “what sins and infamous actions are committed in Rome; 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.’”—*Ibid.*, b. 2, ch. 6. {GC 124.3}

By a recent decretal an indulgence had been promised by the pope to all who should ascend upon their knees “Pilate’s staircase,” said to have been descended by our Saviour on leaving the Roman judgment hall and to have been miraculously conveyed from Jerusalem to Rome. Luther was one day devoutly climbing these steps, when suddenly a voice like thunder seemed to say to him: “The just shall live by faith.” Romans 1:17. He sprang to his feet and hastened from the place in shame and horror. That text never lost its power upon his soul. From that time he saw more clearly than ever before the fallacy of trusting to human works for salvation, and the necessity of constant faith in the merits of Christ. His eyes had been opened, and were never again to be closed, to the delusions of the papacy. When he turned his face from Rome he had turned away also in heart, and from that time the separation grew wider, until he severed all connection with the papal church. {GC 125.1}

After his return from Rome, Luther received at the University of Wittenberg the degree of doctor of divinity. Now he was at liberty to devote himself, as never before, to the Scriptures that he loved. He had taken a solemn vow to study carefully and to preach with fidelity the word of God, not the sayings and doctrines of the popes, all the days of his life. He was no longer the mere monk or professor, but the authorized herald of the Bible. He had been called as a shepherd to feed the flock of God, that were hungering and thirsting for the truth. He firmly declared that Christians should receive no other doctrines than those which rest on the authority of the Sacred Scriptures. These words struck at the very foundation of papal supremacy. They contained the vital principle of the Reformation. {GC 125.2}

Luther saw the danger of exalting human theories above the word of God. He fearlessly attacked the speculative infidelity of the schoolmen and opposed the philosophy and theology which had so long held a controlling influence upon the people. He denounced such studies as not only worthless but pernicious, and sought to turn the minds of his hearers from the sophistries of philosophers and theologians to the eternal truths set forth by prophets and apostles. {GC 126.1}

Precious was the message which he bore to the eager crowds that hung upon his words. Never before had such teachings fallen upon their ears. The glad tidings of a Saviour's love, the assurance of pardon and peace through His atoning blood, rejoiced their hearts and inspired within them an immortal hope. At Wittenberg a light was kindled whose rays should extend to the uttermost parts of the earth, and which was to increase in brightness to the close of time. {GC 126.2}

But light and darkness cannot harmonize. Between truth and error there is an irrepressible conflict. To uphold and defend the one is to attack and overthrow the other. Our Saviour Himself declared: "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Matthew 10:34. Said Luther, a few years after the opening of the Reformation: "God does not guide me, He pushes me forward. He carries me away. I am not master of myself. I desire to live in repose; but I am thrown into the midst of tumults and revolutions."—D'Aubigne, b. 5, ch. 2. He was now about to be urged into the contest. {GC 126.3}

The Roman Church had made merchandise of the grace of God. The tables of the money-changers (Matthew 21:12) were set up beside her altars, and the air resounded with the shouts of buyers and sellers. Under the plea of raising funds for the erection of St. Peter's Church at Rome, indulgences for sin were publicly offered for sale by the authority of the pope. By the price of crime a temple was to be built up for God's worship—the cornerstone laid with the wages of iniquity! But the very means adopted for Rome's aggrandizement provoked the deadliest blow to her power and greatness. It was this that aroused the most determined and successful of the enemies of popery, and led to the battle which shook the papal throne and jostled the triple crown upon the pontiff's head. {GC 127.1}

The official appointed to conduct the sale of indulgences in Germany—Tetzel by name—had been convicted of the basest offenses against society and against the law of God; but having escaped the punishment due for his crimes, he was employed to further the mercenary and unscrupulous projects of the pope. With great effrontery he repeated the most glaring falsehoods and related marvelous tales to deceive an ignorant, credulous, and superstitious people. Had they possessed the word of God they would not have been thus deceived. It was to keep them under the control of the papacy, in order to swell the power and wealth of her ambitious leaders, that the Bible had been withheld from them. (See John C. L. Gieseler, *A Compendium of Ecclesiastical History*, per. 4, sec. 1, par. 5.) {GC 127.2}

As Tetzel entered a town, a messenger went before him, announcing: "The grace of God and of the holy father is at your gates."—D'Aubigne, b. 3, ch. 1. And the people welcomed the blasphemous pretender as if he were God Himself come down

from heaven to them. The infamous traffic was set up in the church, and Tetzel, ascending the pulpit, extolled the indulgences as the most precious gift of God. He declared that by virtue of his certificates of pardon all the sins which the purchaser should afterward desire to commit would be forgiven him, and that “not even repentance is necessary.”—*Ibid.*, b. 3, ch. 1. More than this, he assured his hearers that the indulgences had power to save not only the living but the dead; that the very moment the money should clink against the bottom of his chest, the soul in whose behalf it had been paid would escape from purgatory and make its way to heaven. (See K. R. Hagenbach, *History of the Reformation*, vol. 1, p. 96.) {GC 127.3}

When Simon Magus offered to purchase of the apostles the power to work miracles, Peter answered him: “Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Acts 8:20. But Tetzel’s offer was grasped by eager thousands. Gold and silver flowed into his treasury. A salvation that could be bought with money was more easily obtained than that which requires repentance, faith, and diligent effort to resist and overcome sin. (See Appendix note for page 59.) {GC 128.1}

The doctrine of indulgences had been opposed by men of learning and piety in the Roman Church, and there were many who had no faith in pretensions so contrary to both reason and revelation. No prelate dared lift his voice against this iniquitous traffic; but the minds of men were becoming disturbed and uneasy, and many eagerly inquired if God would not work through some instrumentality for the purification of His church. {GC 128.2}

Luther, though still a papist of the straitest sort, was filled with horror at the blasphemous assumptions of the indulgence mongers. Many of his own congregation had purchased certificates of pardon, and they soon began to come to their pastor, confessing their various sins, and expecting absolution, not because they were penitent and wished to reform, but on the ground of the indulgence. Luther refused them absolution, and warned them that unless they should repent and reform their lives, they must perish in their sins. In great perplexity they repaired to Tetzel with the complaint that their confessor had refused his certificates; and some boldly demanded that their money be returned to them. The friar was filled with rage. He uttered the most terrible curses, caused fires to be lighted in the public squares, and declared that he “had received an order from the pope to burn all heretics who presumed to oppose his most holy indulgences.”—D’Aubigne, b. 3, ch. 4. {GC 128.3}

Luther now entered boldly upon his work as a champion of the truth. His voice was heard from the pulpit in earnest, solemn warning. He set before the people the offensive character of sin, and taught them that it is impossible for man, by his own works, to lessen its guilt or evade its punishment. Nothing but repentance toward God and faith in Christ can save the sinner. The grace of Christ cannot be purchased; it is a free gift. He counseled the people not to buy indulgences, but to look in faith to a crucified Redeemer. He related his own painful experience in vainly seeking by humiliation and penance to secure salvation, and assured his hearers that it was by

looking away from himself and believing in Christ that he found peace and joy. {GC 129.1}

As Tetzl continued his traffic and his impious pretensions, Luther determined upon a more effectual protest against these crying abuses. An occasion soon offered. The castle church of Wittenberg possessed many relics, which on certain holy days were exhibited to the people, and full remission of sins was granted to all who then visited the church and made confession. Accordingly on these days the people in great numbers resorted thither. One of the most important of these occasions, the festival of All Saints, was approaching. On the preceding day, Luther, joining the crowds that were already making their way to the church, posted on its door a paper containing ninety-five propositions against the doctrine of indulgences. He declared his willingness to defend these theses next day at the university, against all who should see fit to attack them. {GC 129.2}

His propositions attracted universal attention. They were read and reread, and repeated in every direction. Great excitement was created in the university and in the whole city. By these theses it was shown that the power to grant the pardon of sin, and to remit its penalty, had never been committed to the pope or to any other man. The whole scheme was a farce,—an artifice to extort money by playing upon the superstitions of the people,—a device of Satan to destroy the souls of all who should trust to its lying pretensions. It was also clearly shown that the gospel of Christ is the most valuable treasure of the church, and that the grace of God, therein revealed, is freely bestowed upon all who seek it by repentance and faith. {GC 130.1}

Luther's theses challenged discussion; but no one dared accept the challenge. The questions which he proposed had in a few days spread through all Germany, and in a few weeks they had sounded throughout Christendom. Many devoted Romanists, who had seen and lamented the terrible iniquity prevailing in the church, but had not known how to arrest its progress, read the propositions with great joy, recognizing in them the voice of God. They felt that the Lord had graciously set His hand to arrest the rapidly swelling tide of corruption that was issuing from the see of Rome. Princes and magistrates secretly rejoiced that a check was to be put upon the arrogant power which denied the right of appeal from its decisions. {GC 130.2}

But the sin-loving and superstitious multitudes were terrified as the sophistries that had soothed their fears were swept away. Crafty ecclesiastics, interrupted in their work of sanctioning crime, and seeing their gains endangered, were enraged, and rallied to uphold their pretensions. The Reformer had bitter accusers to meet. Some charged him with acting hastily and from impulse. Others accused him of presumption, declaring that he was not directed of God, but was acting from pride and forwardness. "Who does not know," he responded, "that a man rarely puts forth any new idea without having some appearance of pride, and without being accused of exciting quarrels? ... Why were Christ and all the martyrs put to death? Because they seemed to be proud contemners of the wisdom of the time, and because they advanced novelties without having first humbly taken counsel of the oracles of the ancient opinions." {GC 130.3}

Again he declared: “Whatever I do will be done, not by the prudence of men, but by the counsel of God. If the work be of God, who shall stop it? if it be not, who can forward it? Not my will, nor theirs, nor ours; but Thy will, O holy Father, which art in heaven.”—*Ibid.*, b. 3, ch. 6. {GC 131.1}

Though Luther had been moved by the Spirit of God to begin his work, he was not to carry it forward without severe conflicts. The reproaches of his enemies, their misrepresentation of his purposes, and their unjust and malicious reflections upon his character and motives, came in upon him like an overwhelming flood; and they were not without effect. He had felt confident that the leaders of the people, both in the church and in the schools, would gladly unite with him in efforts for reform. Words of encouragement from those in high position had inspired him with joy and hope. Already in anticipation he had seen a brighter day dawning for the church. But encouragement had changed to reproach and condemnation. Many dignitaries, of both church and state, were convicted of the truthfulness of his theses; but they soon saw that the acceptance of these truths would involve great changes. To enlighten and reform the people would be virtually to undermine the authority of Rome, to stop thousands of streams now flowing into her treasury, and thus greatly to curtail the extravagance and luxury of the papal leaders. Furthermore, to teach the people to think and act as responsible beings, looking to Christ alone for salvation, would overthrow the pontiff’s throne and eventually destroy their own authority. For this reason they refused the knowledge tendered them of God and arrayed themselves against Christ and the truth by their opposition to the man whom He had sent to enlighten them. {GC 131.2}

Luther trembled as he looked upon himself—one man opposed to the mightiest powers of earth. He sometimes doubted whether he had indeed been led of God to set himself against the authority of the church. “Who was I,” he writes, “to oppose the majesty of the pope, before whom ... the kings of the earth and the whole world trembled? ... No one can know what my heart suffered during these first two years, and into what despondency, I may say into what despair, I was sunk.”—*Ibid.*, b. 3, ch. 6. But he was not left to become utterly disheartened. When human support failed, he looked to God alone and learned that he could lean in perfect safety upon that all-powerful arm. {GC 132.1}

To a friend of the Reformation Luther wrote: “We cannot attain to the understanding of Scripture either by study or by the intellect. Your first duty is to begin by prayer. Entreat the Lord to grant you, of His great mercy, the true understanding of His word. There is no other interpreter of the word of God than the Author of this word, as He Himself has said, ‘They shall be all taught of God.’ Hope for nothing from your own labors, from your own understanding: trust solely in God, and in the influence of His Spirit. Believe this on the word of a man who has had experience.”—*Ibid.*, b. 3, ch. 7. Here is a lesson of vital importance to those who feel that God has called them to present to others the solemn truths for this time. These truths will stir the enmity of Satan and of men who love the fables that he has



devised. In the conflict with the powers of evil there is need of something more than strength of intellect and human wisdom. {GC 132.2}

When enemies appealed to custom and tradition, or to the assertions and authority of the pope, Luther met them with the Bible and the Bible only. Here were arguments which they could not answer; therefore the slaves of formalism and superstition clamored for his blood, as the Jews had clamored for the blood of Christ. "He is a heretic," cried the Roman zealots. "It is high treason against the church to allow so horrible a heretic to live one hour longer. Let the scaffold be instantly erected for him!"—*Ibid.*, b. 3, ch. 9. But Luther did not fall a prey to their fury. God had a work for him to do, and angels of heaven were sent to protect him. Many, however, who had received from Luther the precious light were made the objects of Satan's wrath and for the truth's sake fearlessly suffered torture and death. {GC 132.3}

Luther's teachings attracted the attention of thoughtful minds throughout all Germany. From his sermons and writings issued beams of light which awakened and illuminated thousands. A living faith was taking the place of the dead formalism in which the church had so long been held. The people were daily losing confidence in the superstitions of Romanism. The barriers of prejudice were giving way. The word of God, by which Luther tested every doctrine and every claim, was like a two-edged sword, cutting its way to the hearts of the people. Everywhere there was awakening a desire for spiritual progress. Everywhere was such a hungering and thirsting after righteousness as had not been known for ages. The eyes of the people, so long directed to human rites and earthly mediators, were now turning in penitence and faith to Christ and Him crucified. {GC 133.1}

This widespread interest aroused still further the fears of the papal authorities. Luther received a summons to appear at Rome to answer to the charge of heresy. The command filled his friends with terror. They knew full well the danger that threatened him in that corrupt city, already drunk with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. They protested against his going to Rome and requested that he receive his examination in Germany. {GC 133.2}

This arrangement was finally effected, and the pope's legate was appointed to hear the case. In the instructions communicated by the pontiff to this official, it was stated that Luther had already been declared a heretic. The legate was therefore charged "to prosecute and constrain without any delay." If he should remain steadfast, and the legate should fail to gain possession of his person, he was empowered "to proscribe him in every part of Germany; to banish, curse, and excommunicate all those who are attached to him."—*Ibid.*, b. 4, ch. 2. And, further, the pope directed his legate, in order entirely to root out the pestilent heresy, to excommunicate all, of whatever dignity in church or state, except the emperor, who should neglect to seize Luther and his adherents, and deliver them up to the vengeance of Rome. {GC 133.3}

Here is displayed the true spirit of popery. Not a trace of Christian principle, or even of common justice, is to be seen in the whole document. Luther was at a great distance from Rome; he had had no opportunity to explain or defend his position;

yet before his case had been investigated, he was summarily pronounced a heretic, and in the same day, exhorted, accused, judged, and condemned; and all this by the self-styled holy father, the only supreme, infallible authority in church or state! {GC 134.1}

At this time, when Luther so much needed the sympathy and counsel of a true friend, God's providence sent Melancthon to Wittenberg. Young in years, modest and diffident in his manners, Melancthon's sound judgment, extensive knowledge, and winning eloquence, combined with the purity and uprightness of his character, won universal admiration and esteem. The brilliancy of his talents was not more marked than his gentleness of disposition. He soon became an earnest disciple of the gospel, and Luther's most trusted friend and valued supporter; his gentleness, caution, and exactness serving as a complement to Luther's courage and energy. Their union in the work added strength to the Reformation and was a source of great encouragement to Luther. {GC 134.2}

Augsburg had been fixed upon as the place of trial, and the Reformer set out on foot to perform the journey thither. Serious fears were entertained in his behalf. Threats had been made openly that he would be seized and murdered on the way, and his friends begged him not to venture. They even entreated him to leave Wittenberg for a time and find safety with those who would gladly protect him. But he would not leave the position where God had placed him. He must continue faithfully to maintain the truth, notwithstanding the storms that were beating upon him. His language was: "I am like Jeremiah, a man of strife and contention; but the more their threats increase, the more my joy is multiplied.... They have already destroyed my honor and my reputation. One single thing remains; it is my wretched body: let them take it; they will thus shorten my life by a few hours. But as for my soul, they cannot take that. He who desires to proclaim the word of Christ to the world, must expect death at every moment."—*Ibid.*, b. 4, ch. 4. {GC 134.3}

The tidings of Luther's arrival at Augsburg gave great satisfaction to the papal legate. The troublesome heretic who was exciting the attention of the whole world seemed now in the power of Rome, and the legate determined that he should not escape. The Reformer had failed to provide himself with a safe-conduct. His friends urged him not to appear before the legate without one, and they themselves undertook to procure it from the emperor. The legate intended to force Luther, if possible, to retract, or, failing in this, to cause him to be conveyed to Rome, to share the fate of Huss and Jerome. Therefore through his agents he endeavored to induce Luther to appear without a safe-conduct, trusting himself to his mercy. This the Reformer firmly declined to do. Not until he had received the document pledging him the emperor's protection, did he appear in the presence of the papal ambassador. {GC 135.1}

As a matter of policy, the Romanists had decided to attempt to win Luther by an appearance of gentleness. The legate, in his interviews with him, professed great friendliness; but he demanded that Luther submit implicitly to the authority of the church, and yield every point without argument or question. He had not rightly

estimated the character of the man with whom he had to deal. Luther, in reply, expressed his regard for the church, his desire for the truth, his readiness to answer all objections to what he had taught, and to submit his doctrines to the decision of certain leading universities. But at the same time he protested against the cardinal's course in requiring him to retract without having proved him in error. {GC 135.2}

The only response was: "Retract, retract!" The Reformer showed that his position was sustained by the Scriptures and firmly declared that he could not renounce the truth. The legate, unable to reply to Luther's arguments, overwhelmed him with a storm of reproaches, gibes, and flattery, interspersed with quotations from tradition and the sayings of the Fathers, granting the Reformer no opportunity to speak. Seeing that the conference, thus continued, would be utterly futile, Luther finally obtained a reluctant permission to present his answer in writing. {GC 136.1}

"In so doing," said he, writing to a friend, "the oppressed find double gain; first, what is written may be submitted to the judgment of others; and second, one has a better chance of working on the fears, if not on the conscience, of an arrogant and babbling despot, who would otherwise overpower by his imperious language."—Martyn, *The Life and Times of Luther*, pages 271, 272. {GC 136.2}

At the next interview, Luther presented a clear, concise, and forcible exposition of his views, fully supported by many quotations from Scripture. This paper, after reading aloud, he handed to the cardinal, who, however, cast it contemptuously aside, declaring it to be a mass of idle words and irrelevant quotations. Luther, fully aroused, now met the haughty prelate on his own ground—the traditions and teachings of the church—and utterly overthrew his assumptions. {GC 136.3}

When the prelate saw that Luther's reasoning was unanswerable, he lost all self-control, and in a rage cried out: "Retract! or I will send you to Rome, there to appear before the judges commissioned to take cognizance of your cause. I will excommunicate you and all your partisans, and all who shall at any time countenance you, and will cast them out of the church." And he finally declared, in a haughty and angry tone: "Retract, or return no more."—D'Aubigne, London ed., b. 4, ch. 8. {GC 136.4}

The Reformer promptly withdrew with his friends, thus declaring plainly that no retraction was to be expected from him. This was not what the cardinal had purposed. He had flattered himself that by violence he could awe Luther to submission. Now, left alone with his supporters, he looked from one to another in utter chagrin at the unexpected failure of his schemes. {GC 137.1}

Luther's efforts on this occasion were not without good results. The large assembly present had opportunity to compare the two men, and to judge for themselves of the spirit manifested by them, as well as of the strength and truthfulness of their positions. How marked the contrast! The Reformer, simple, humble, firm, stood up in the strength of God, having truth on his side; the pope's representative, self-important, overbearing, haughty, and unreasonable, was without a single argument from the Scriptures, yet vehemently crying: "Retract, or be sent to Rome for punishment." {GC 137.2}

Notwithstanding Luther had secured a safe-conduct, the Romanists were plotting to seize and imprison him. His friends urged that as it was useless for him to prolong his stay, he should return to Wittenberg without delay, and that the utmost caution should be observed in order to conceal his intentions. He accordingly left Augsburg before day-break, on horseback, accompanied only by a guide furnished him by the magistrate. With many forebodings he secretly made his way through the dark and silent streets of the city. Enemies, vigilant and cruel, were plotting his destruction. Would he escape the snares prepared for him? Those were moments of anxiety and earnest prayer. He reached a small gate in the wall of the city. It was opened for him, and with his guide he passed through without hindrance. Once safely outside, the fugitives hastened their flight, and before the legate learned of Luther's departure, he was beyond the reach of his persecutors. Satan and his emissaries were defeated. The man whom they had thought in their power was gone, escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowler. {GC 137.3}

At the news of Luther's escape the legate was overwhelmed with surprise and anger. He had expected to receive great honor for his wisdom and firmness in dealing with this disturber of the church; but his hope was disappointed. He gave expression to his wrath in a letter to Frederick, the elector of Saxony, bitterly denouncing Luther and demanding that Frederick send the Reformer to Rome or banish him from Saxony. {GC 138.1}

In defense, Luther urged that the legate or the pope show him his errors from the Scriptures, and pledged himself in the most solemn manner to renounce his doctrines if they could be shown to contradict the word of God. And he expressed his gratitude to God that he had been counted worthy to suffer in so holy a cause. {GC 138.2}

The elector had, as yet, little knowledge of the reformed doctrines, but he was deeply impressed by the candor, force, and clearness of Luther's words; and until the Reformer should be proved to be in error, Frederick resolved to stand as his protector. In reply to the legate's demand he wrote: "Since Dr. Martin has appeared before you at Augsburg, you should be satisfied. We did not expect that you would endeavor to make him retract without having convinced him of his errors. None of the learned men in our principality have informed me that Martin's doctrine is impious, anti-christian, or heretical." The prince refused, moreover, to send Luther to Rome, or to expel him from his states.—D'Aubigne, b. 4, ch. 10. {GC 138.3}

The elector saw that there was a general breaking down of the moral restraints of society. A great work of reform was needed. The complicated and expensive arrangements to restrain and punish crime would be unnecessary if men but acknowledged and obeyed the requirements of God and the dictates of an enlightened conscience. He saw that Luther was laboring to secure this object, and he secretly rejoiced that a better influence was making itself felt in the church. {GC 138.4}

He saw also that as a professor in the university Luther was eminently successful. Only a year had passed since the Reformer posted his theses on the castle church,

yet there was already a great falling off in the number of pilgrims that visited the church at the festival of All Saints. Rome had been deprived of worshipers and offerings, but their place was filled by another class, who now came to Wittenberg, not pilgrims to adore her relics, but students to fill her halls of learning. The writings of Luther had kindled everywhere a new interest in the Holy Scriptures, and not only from all parts of Germany, but from other lands, students flocked to the university. Young men, coming in sight of Wittenberg for the first time, “raised their hands to heaven, and praised God for having caused the light of truth to shine forth from this city, as from Zion in times of old, and whence it spread even to the most distant countries.”—*Ibid.*, b. 4, ch. 10. {GC 139.1}

Luther was as yet but partially converted from the errors of Romanism. But as he compared the Holy Oracles with the papal decrees and constitutions, he was filled with wonder. “I am reading,” he wrote, “the decrees of the pontiffs, and ... I do not know whether the pope is antichrist himself, or his apostle, so greatly is Christ misrepresented and crucified in them.”—*Ibid.*, b. 5, ch. 1. Yet at this time Luther was still a supporter of the Roman Church, and had no thought that he would ever separate from her communion. {GC 139.2}

The Reformer’s writings and his doctrine were extending to every nation in Christendom. The work spread to Switzerland and Holland. Copies of his writings found their way to France and Spain. In England his teachings were received as the word of life. To Belgium and Italy also the truth had extended. Thousands were awakening from their deathlike stupor to the joy and hope of a life of faith. {GC 139.3}

Rome became more and more exasperated by the attacks of Luther, and it was declared by some of his fanatical opponents, even by doctors in Catholic universities, that he who should kill the rebellious monk would be without sin. One day a stranger, with a pistol hidden under his cloak, approached the Reformer and inquired why he went thus alone. “I am in God’s hands,” answered Luther. “He is my strength and my shield. What can man do unto me?”—*Ibid.*, b. 6, ch. 2. Upon hearing these words, the stranger turned pale and fled away as from the presence of the angels of heaven. {GC 140.1}

Rome was bent upon the destruction of Luther; but God was his defense. His doctrines were heard everywhere—“in cottages and convents, ... in the castles of the nobles, in the universities, and in the palaces of kings;” and noble men were rising on every hand to sustain his efforts.—*Ibid.*, b. 6, ch. 2. {GC 140.2}

It was about this time that Luther, reading the works of Huss, found that the great truth of justification by faith, which he himself was seeking to uphold and teach, had been held by the Bohemian Reformer. “We have all,” said Luther, “Paul, Augustine, and myself, been Hussites without knowing it!” “God will surely visit it upon the world,” he continued, “that the truth was preached to it a century ago, and burned!”—Wylie, b. 6, ch. 1 {GC 140.3}

In an appeal to the emperor and nobility of Germany in behalf of the reformation of Christianity, Luther wrote concerning the pope: “It is a horrible thing to behold the

man who styles himself Christ's vicegerent, displaying a magnificence that no emperor can equal. Is this being like the poor Jesus, or the humble Peter? He is, say they, the lord of the world! But Christ, whose vicar he boasts of being, has said, 'My kingdom is not of this world.' Can the dominions of a vicar extend beyond those of his superior?"—D'Aubigne, b. 6, ch. 3. {GC 140.4}

He wrote thus of the universities: "I am much afraid that the universities will prove to be the great gates of hell, unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, and engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not unceasingly occupied with the word of God must become corrupt."—*Ibid.*, b. 6, ch. 3. {GC 140.5}

This appeal was rapidly circulated throughout Germany and exerted a powerful influence upon the people. The whole nation was stirred, and multitudes were roused to rally around the standard of reform. Luther's opponents, burning with a desire for revenge, urged the pope to take decisive measures against him. It was decreed that his doctrines should be immediately condemned. Sixty days were granted the Reformer and his adherents, after which, if they did not recant, they were all to be excommunicated. {GC 141.1}

That was a terrible crisis for the Reformation. For centuries Rome's sentence of excommunication had struck terror to powerful monarchs; it had filled mighty empires with woe and desolation. Those upon whom its condemnation fell were universally regarded with dread and horror; they were cut off from intercourse with their fellows and treated as outlaws, to be hunted to extermination. Luther was not blind to the tempest about to burst upon him; but he stood firm, trusting in Christ to be his support and shield. With a martyr's faith and courage he wrote: "What is about to happen I know not, nor do I care to know.... Let the blow light where it may, I am without fear. Not so much as a leaf falls, without the will of our Father. How much rather will He care for us! It is a light thing to die for the Word, since the Word which was made flesh hath Himself died. If we die with Him, we shall live with Him; and passing through that which He has passed through before us, we shall be where He is and dwell with Him forever."—*Ibid.*, 3d London ed., Walther, 1840, b. 6, ch. 9. {GC 141.2}

When the papal bull reached Luther, he said: "I despise and attack it, as impious, false.... It is *Christ* Himself who is condemned therein.... I rejoice in having to bear such ills for the best of causes. Already I feel greater liberty in my heart; for at last I know that the pope is antichrist, and that his throne is that of Satan himself."—D'Aubigne, b. 6, ch. 9. {GC 141.3}

Yet the mandate of Rome was not without effect. Prison, torture, and sword were weapons potent to enforce obedience. The weak and superstitious trembled before the decree of the pope; and while there was general sympathy for Luther, many felt that life was too dear to be risked in the cause of reform. Everything seemed to indicate that the Reformer's work was about to close. {GC 142.1}

But Luther was fearless still. Rome had hurled her anathemas against him, and the world looked on, nothing doubting that he would perish or be forced to yield. But with terrible power he flung back upon herself the sentence of condemnation and publicly declared his determination to abandon her forever. In the presence of a crowd of students, doctors, and citizens of all ranks Luther burned the pope's bull, with the canon laws, the decretals, and certain writings sustaining the papal power. "My enemies have been able, by burning my books," he said, "to injure the cause of truth in the minds of the common people, and destroy their souls; for this reason I consumed their books in return. A serious struggle has just begun. Hitherto I have been only playing with the pope. I began this work in God's name; it will be ended without me, and by His might."—*Ibid.*, b. 6, ch. 10. {GC 142.2}

To the reproaches of his enemies who taunted him with the weakness of his cause, Luther answered: "Who knows if God has not chosen and called me, and if they ought not to fear that, by despising me, they despise God Himself? Moses was alone at the departure from Egypt; Elijah was alone in the reign of King Ahab; Isaiah alone in Jerusalem; Ezekiel alone in Babylon.... God never selected as a prophet either the high priest or any other great personage; but ordinarily He chose low and despised men, once even the shepherd Amos. In every age, the saints have had to reprove the great, kings, princes, priests, and wise men, at the peril of their lives.... I do not say that I am a prophet; but I say that they ought to fear precisely because I am alone and that they are many. I am sure of this, that the word of God is with me, and that it is not with them."—*Ibid.*, b. 6, ch. 10. {GC 142.3}

Yet it was not without a terrible struggle with himself that Luther decided upon a final separation from the church. It was about this time that he wrote: "I feel more and more every day how difficult it is to lay aside the scruples which one has imbibed in childhood. Oh, how much pain it has caused me, though I had the Scriptures on my side, to justify it to myself that I should dare to make a stand alone against the pope, and hold him forth as antichrist! What have the tribulations of my heart not been! How many times have I not asked myself with bitterness that question which was so frequent on the lips of the papists: 'Art thou alone wise? Can everyone else be mistaken? How will it be, if, after all, it is thyself who art wrong, and who art involving in thy error so many souls, who will then be eternally damned?' 'Twas so I fought with myself and with Satan, till Christ, by His own infallible word, fortified my heart against these doubts."—Martyn, pages 372, 373. {GC 143.1}

The pope had threatened Luther with excommunication if he did not recant, and the threat was now fulfilled. A new bull appeared, declaring the Reformer's final separation from the Roman Church, denouncing him as accursed of Heaven, and including in the same condemnation all who should receive his doctrines. The great contest had been fully entered upon. {GC 143.2}

Opposition is the lot of all whom God employs to present truths specially applicable to their time. There was a present truth in the days of Luther,—a truth at that time of special importance; there is a present truth for the church today. He who does all

things according to the counsel of His will has been pleased to place men under various circumstances and to enjoin upon them duties peculiar to the times in which they live and the conditions under which they are placed. If they would prize the light given them, broader views of truth would be opened before them. But truth is no more desired by the majority today than it was by the papists who opposed Luther. There is the same disposition to accept the theories and traditions of men instead of the word of God as in former ages. Those who present the truth for this time should not expect to be received with greater favor than were earlier reformers. The great controversy between truth and error, between Christ and Satan, is to increase in intensity to the close of this world's history. {GC 143.3}

Said Jesus to His disciples: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:19, 20. And on the other hand our Lord declared plainly: "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets." Luke 6:26. The spirit of the world is no more in harmony with the spirit of Christ today than in earlier times, and those who preach the word of God in its purity will be received with no greater favor now than then. The forms of opposition to the truth may change, the enmity may be less open because it is more subtle; but the same antagonism still exists and will be manifested to the end of time. {GC 144.1}

#### Chapter 8—Luther Before the Diet

A new emperor, Charles V, had ascended the throne of Germany, and the emissaries of Rome hastened to present their congratulations and induce the monarch to employ his power against the Reformation. On the other hand, the elector of Saxony, to whom Charles was in great degree indebted for his crown, entreated him to take no step against Luther until he should have granted him a hearing. The emperor was thus placed in a position of great perplexity and embarrassment. The papists would be satisfied with nothing short of an imperial edict sentencing Luther to death. The elector had declared firmly that "neither his imperial majesty nor any other person had shown that Luther's writings had been refuted;" therefore he requested "that Dr. Luther should be furnished with a safe-conduct, so that he might appear before a tribunal of learned, pious, and impartial judges."—D'Aubigne, b. 6, ch. 11. {GC 145.1}

The attention of all parties was now directed to the assembly of the German states which convened at Worms soon after the accession of Charles to the empire. There were important political questions and interests to be considered by this national council; for the first time the princes of Germany were to meet their youthful monarch in deliberative assembly. From all parts of the fatherland had come the dignitaries of church and state. Secular lords, highborn, powerful, and jealous of their hereditary rights; princely ecclesiastics, flushed with their conscious superiority in rank and power; courtly knights and their armed retainers; and ambassadors from



foreign and distant lands,—all gathered at Worms. Yet in that vast assembly the subject that excited the deepest interest was the cause of the Saxon Reformer. {GC 145.2}

Charles had previously directed the elector to bring Luther with him to the Diet, assuring him of protection, and promising a free discussion, with competent persons, of the questions in dispute. Luther was anxious to appear before the emperor. His health was at this time much impaired; yet he wrote to the elector: “If I cannot go to Worms in good health, I will be carried there, sick as I am. For if the emperor calls me, I cannot doubt that it is the call of God Himself. If they desire to use violence against me, and that is very probable (for it is not for their instruction that they order me to appear), I place the matter in the Lord’s hands. He still lives and reigns who preserved the three young men in the burning fiery furnace. If He will not save me, my life is of little consequence. Let us only prevent the gospel from being exposed to the scorn of the wicked, and let us shed our blood for it, for fear they should triumph. It is not for me to decide whether my life or my death will contribute most to the salvation of all.... You may expect everything from me... except flight and recantation. Fly I cannot, and still less retract.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 1. {GC 146.1}

As the news was circulated at Worms that Luther was to appear before the Diet, a general excitement was created. Aleander, the papal legate to whom the case had been specially entrusted, was alarmed and enraged. He saw that the result would be disastrous to the papal cause. To institute inquiry into a case in which the pope had already pronounced sentence of condemnation would be to cast contempt upon the authority of the sovereign pontiff. Furthermore, he was apprehensive that the eloquent and powerful arguments of this man might turn away many of the princes from the cause of the pope. He therefore, in the most urgent manner, remonstrated with Charles against Luther’s appearance at Worms. About this time the bull declaring Luther’s excommunication was published; and this, coupled with the representations of the legate, induced the emperor to yield. He wrote to the elector that if Luther would not retract, he must remain at Wittenberg. {GC 146.2}

Not content with this victory, Aleander labored with all the power and cunning at his command to secure Luther’s condemnation. With a persistence worthy of a better cause, he urged the matter upon the attention of princes, prelates, and other members of the assembly, accusing the Reformer of “sedition, rebellion, impiety, and blasphemy.” But the vehemence and passion manifested by the legate revealed too plainly the spirit by which he was actuated. “He is moved by hatred and vengeance,” was the general remark, “much more than by zeal and piety.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 1. The majority of the Diet were more than ever inclined to regard Luther’s cause with favor. {GC 147.1}

With redoubled zeal Aleander urged upon the emperor the duty of executing the papal edicts. But under the laws of Germany this could not be done without the concurrence of the princes; and, overcome at last by the legate’s importunity, Charles bade him present his case to the Diet. “It was a proud day for the nuncio. The assembly was a great one: the cause was even greater. Aleander was to plead for

Rome, ... the mother and mistress of all churches.” He was to vindicate the principedom of Peter before the assembled principalities of Christendom. “He had the gift of eloquence, and he rose to the greatness of the occasion. Providence ordered it that Rome should appear and plead by the ablest of her orators in the presence of the most august of tribunals, before she was condemned.”—Wylie, b. 6, ch. 4. With some misgivings those who favored the Reformer looked forward to the effect of Aleander’s speech. The elector of Saxony was not present, but by his direction some of his councilors attended to take notes of the nuncio’s address. {GC 147.2}

With all the power of learning and eloquence, Aleander set himself to overthrow the truth. Charge after charge he hurled against Luther as an enemy of the church and the state, the living and the dead, clergy and laity, councils and private Christians. “In Luther’s errors there is enough,” he declared, to warrant the burning of “a hundred thousand heretics.” {GC 148.1}

In conclusion he endeavored to cast contempt upon the adherents of the reformed faith: “What are all these Lutherans? A crew of insolent pedagogues, corrupt priests, dissolute monks, ignorant lawyers, and degraded nobles, with the common people whom they have misled and perverted. How far superior to them is the Catholic party in number, ability, and power! A unanimous decree from this illustrious assembly will enlighten the simple, warn the imprudent, decide the waverers, and give strength to the weak.”—D’Aubigne, b. 7, ch. 3. {GC 148.2}

With such weapons the advocates of truth in every age have been attacked. The same arguments are still urged against all who dare to present, in opposition to established errors, the plain and direct teachings of God’s word. “Who are these preachers of new doctrines?” exclaim those who desire a popular religion. “They are unlearned, few in numbers, and of the poorer class. Yet they claim to have the truth, and to be the chosen people of God. They are ignorant and deceived. How greatly superior in numbers and influence is our church! How many great and learned men are among us! How much more power is on our side!” These are the arguments that have a telling influence upon the world; but they are no more conclusive now than in the days of the Reformer. {GC 148.3}

The Reformation did not, as many suppose, end with Luther. It is to be continued to the close of this world’s history. Luther had a great work to do in reflecting to others the light which God had permitted to shine upon him; yet he did not receive all the light which was to be given to the world. From that time to this, new light has been continually shining upon the Scriptures, and new truths have been constantly unfolding. {GC 148.4}

The legate’s address made a deep impression upon the Diet. There was no Luther present, with the clear and convincing truths of God’s word, to vanquish the papal champion. No attempt was made to defend the Reformer. There was manifest a general disposition not only to condemn him and the doctrines which he taught, but if possible to uproot the heresy. Rome had enjoyed the most favorable opportunity to defend her cause. All that she could say in her own vindication had been said. But the apparent victory was the signal of defeat. Henceforth the contrast between truth

and error would be more clearly seen, as they should take the field in open warfare. Never from that day would Rome stand as secure as she had stood. {GC 149.1}

While most of the members of the Diet would not have hesitated to yield up Luther to the vengeance of Rome, many of them saw and deplored the existing depravity in the church, and desired a suppression of the abuses suffered by the German people in consequence of the corruption and greed of the hierarchy. The legate had presented the papal rule in the most favorable light. Now the Lord moved upon a member of the Diet to give a true delineation of the effects of papal tyranny. With noble firmness, Duke George of Saxony stood up in that princely assembly and specified with terrible exactness the deceptions and abominations of popery, and their dire results. In closing he said: {GC 149.2}

“These are some of the abuses that cry out against Rome. All shame has been put aside, and their only object is ... money, money, money, ... so that the preachers who should teach the truth, utter nothing but falsehoods, and are not only tolerated, but rewarded, because the greater their lies, the greater their gain. It is from this foul spring that such tainted waters flow. Debauchery stretches out the hand to avarice.... Alas, it is the scandal caused by the clergy that hurls so many poor souls into eternal condemnation. A general reform must be effected.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 4. {GC 149.3}

A more able and forcible denunciation of the papal abuses could not have been presented by Luther himself; and the fact that the speaker was a determined enemy of the Reformer’s gave greater influence to his words. {GC 150.1}

Had the eyes of the assembly been opened, they would have beheld angels of God in the midst of them, shedding beams of light athwart the darkness of error and opening minds and hearts to the reception of truth. It was the power of the God of truth and wisdom that controlled even the adversaries of the reformation, and thus prepared the way for the great work about to be accomplished. Martin Luther was not present; but the voice of One greater than Luther had been heard in that assembly. {GC 150.2}

A committee was at once appointed by the Diet to prepare an enumeration of the papal oppressions that weighed so heavily on the German people. This list, containing a hundred and one specifications, was presented to the emperor, with a request that he would take immediate measures for the correction of these abuses. “What a loss of Christian souls,” said the petitioners, “what depredations, what extortions, on account of the scandals by which the spiritual head of Christendom is surrounded! It is our duty to prevent the ruin and dishonor of our people. For this reason we most humbly but most urgently entreat you to order a general reformation, and to undertake its accomplishment.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 4. {GC 150.3}

The council now demanded the Reformer’s appearance before them. Notwithstanding the entreaties, protests, and threats of Alexander, the emperor at last consented, and Luther was summoned to appear before the Diet. With the summons was issued a safe-conduct, ensuring his return to a place of security. These were borne to Wittenberg by a herald, who was commissioned to conduct him to Worms. {GC 150.4}

The friends of Luther were terrified and distressed. Knowing the prejudice and enmity against him, they feared that even his safe-conduct would not be respected, and they entreated him not to imperil his life. He replied: “The papists do not desire my coming to Worms, but my condemnation and my death. It matters not. Pray not for me, but for the word of God.... Christ will give me His Spirit to overcome these ministers of error. I despise them during my life; I shall triumph over them by my death. They are busy at Worms about compelling me to retract; and this shall be my retraction: I said formerly that the pope was Christ’s vicar; now I assert that he is our Lord’s adversary, and the devil’s apostle.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 6. {GC 150.5}

Luther was not to make his perilous journey alone. Besides the imperial messenger, three of his firmest friends determined to accompany him. Melanchthon earnestly desired to join them. His heart was knit to Luther’s, and he yearned to follow him, if need be, to prison or to death. But his entreaties were denied. Should Luther perish, the hopes of the Reformation must center upon his youthful colaborer. Said the Reformer as he parted from Melanchthon: “If I do not return, and my enemies put me to death, continue to teach, and stand fast in the truth. Labor in my stead.... If you survive, my death will be of little consequence.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 7. Students and citizens who had gathered to witness Luther’s departure were deeply moved. A multitude whose hearts had been touched by the gospel, bade him farewell with weeping. Thus the Reformer and his companions set out from Wittenberg. {GC 151.1}

On the journey they saw that the minds of the people were oppressed by gloomy forebodings. At some towns no honors were proffered them. As they stopped for the night, a friendly priest expressed his fears by holding up before Luther the portrait of an Italian reformer who had suffered martyrdom. The next day they learned that Luther’s writings had been condemned at Worms. Imperial messengers were proclaiming the emperor’s decree and calling upon the people to bring the proscribed works to the magistrates. The herald, fearing for Luther’s safety at the council, and thinking that already his resolution might be shaken, asked if he still wished to go forward. He answered: “Although interdicted in every city, I shall go on.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 7. {GC 151.2}

At Erfurt, Luther was received with honor. Surrounded by admiring crowds, he passed through the streets that he had often traversed with his beggar’s wallet. He visited his convent cell, and thought upon the struggles through which the light now flooding Germany had been shed upon his soul. He was urged to preach. This he had been forbidden to do, but the herald granted him permission, and the friar who had once been made the drudge of the convent, now entered the pulpit. {GC 152.1}

To a crowded assembly he spoke from the words of Christ, “Peace be unto you.” “Philosophers, doctors, and writers,” he said, “have endeavored to teach men the way to obtain everlasting life, and they have not succeeded. I will now tell it to you: ... God has raised one Man from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ, that He might destroy death, extirpate sin, and shut the gates of hell. This is the work of salvation.... Christ has vanquished! this is the joyful news; and we are saved by His

work, and not by our own.... Our Lord Jesus Christ said, 'Peace be unto you; behold My hands;' that is to say, Behold, O man! it is I, I alone, who have taken away thy sin, and ransomed thee; and now thou hast peace, saith the Lord." {GC 152.2}

He continued, showing that true faith will be manifested by a holy life. "Since God has saved us, let us so order our works that they may be acceptable to Him. Art thou rich? let thy goods administer to the necessities of the poor. Art thou poor? let thy services be acceptable to the rich. If thy labor is useful to thyself alone, the service that thou pretendest to render unto God is a lie."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 7. {GC 152.3}

The people listened as if spellbound. The bread of life was broken to those starving souls. Christ was lifted up before them as above popes, legates, emperors, and kings. Luther made no reference to his own perilous position. He did not seek to make himself the object of thought or sympathy. In the contemplation of Christ he had lost sight of self. He hid behind the Man of Calvary, seeking only to present Jesus as the sinner's Redeemer. {GC 152.4}

As the Reformer proceeded on his journey, he was everywhere regarded with great interest. An eager multitude thronged about him, and friendly voices warned him of the purpose of the Romanists. "They will burn you," said some, "and reduce your body to ashes, as they did with John Huss." Luther answered, "Though they should kindle a fire all the way from Worms to Wittenberg, the flames of which reached to heaven, I would walk through it in the name of the Lord; I would appear before them; I would enter the jaws of this behemoth, and break his teeth, confessing the Lord Jesus Christ."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 7. {GC 153.1}

The news of his approach to Worms created great commotion. His friends trembled for his safety; his enemies feared for the success of their cause. Strenuous efforts were made to dissuade him from entering the city. At the instigation of the papists he was urged to repair to the castle of a friendly knight, where, it was declared, all difficulties could be amicably adjusted. Friends endeavored to excite his fears by describing the dangers that threatened him. All their efforts failed. Luther, still unshaken, declared: "Even should there be as many devils in Worms as tiles on the housetops, still I would enter it."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 7. {GC 153.2}

Upon his arrival at Worms, a vast crowd flocked to the gates to welcome him. So great a concourse had not assembled to greet the emperor himself. The excitement was intense, and from the midst of the throng a shrill and plaintive voice chanted a funeral dirge as a warning to Luther of the fate that awaited him. "God will be my defense," said he, as he alighted from his carriage. {GC 153.3}

The papists had not believed that Luther would really venture to appear at Worms, and his arrival filled them with consternation. The emperor immediately summoned his councilors to consider what course should be pursued. One of the bishops, a rigid papist, declared: "We have long consulted on this matter. Let your imperial majesty get rid of this man at once. Did not Sigismund cause John Huss to be burnt? We are not bound either to give or to observe the safe-conduct of a heretic." "No," said the emperor, "we must keep our promise."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. It was therefore decided that the Reformer should be heard. {GC 153.4}

All the city were eager to see this remarkable man, and a throng of visitors soon filled his lodgings. Luther had scarcely recovered from his recent illness; he was wearied from the journey, which had occupied two full weeks; he must prepare to meet the momentous events of the morrow, and he needed quiet and repose. But so great was the desire to see him that he had enjoyed only a few hours' rest when noblemen, knights, priests, and citizens gathered eagerly about him. Among these were many of the nobles who had so boldly demanded of the emperor a reform of ecclesiastical abuses and who, says Luther, "had all been freed by my gospel."—Martyn, page 393. Enemies, as well as friends, came to look upon the dauntless monk; but he received them with unshaken calmness, replying to all with dignity and wisdom. His bearing was firm and courageous. His pale, thin face, marked with the traces of toil and illness, wore a kindly and even joyous expression. The solemnity and deep earnestness of his words gave him a power that even his enemies could not wholly withstand. Both friends and foes were filled with wonder. Some were convinced that a divine influence attended him; others declared, as had the Pharisees concerning Christ: "He hath a devil." {GC 154.1}

On the following day Luther was summoned to attend the Diet. An imperial officer was appointed to conduct him to the hall of audience; yet it was with difficulty that he reached the place. Every avenue was crowded with spectators eager to look upon the monk who had dared resist the authority of the pope. {GC 154.2}

As he was about to enter the presence of his judges, an old general, the hero of many battles, said to him kindly: "Poor monk, poor monk, thou art now going to make a nobler stand than I or any other captains have ever made in the bloodiest of our battles. But if thy cause is just, and thou art sure of it, go forward in God's name, and fear nothing. God will not forsake thee."—D'Aubigne, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 154.3}

At length Luther stood before the council. The emperor occupied the throne. He was surrounded by the most illustrious personages in the empire. Never had any man appeared in the presence of a more imposing assembly than that before which Martin Luther was to answer for his faith. "This appearance was of itself a signal victory over the papacy. The pope had condemned the man, and he was now standing before a tribunal which, by this very act, set itself above the pope. The pope had laid him under an interdict, and cut him off from all human society; and yet he was summoned in respectful language, and received before the most august assembly in the world. The pope had condemned him to perpetual silence, and he was now about to speak before thousands of attentive hearers drawn together from the farthest parts of Christendom. An immense revolution had thus been effected by Luther's instrumentality. Rome was already descending from her throne, and it was the voice of a monk that caused this humiliation."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 155.1}

In the presence of that powerful and titled assembly the lowly born Reformer seemed awed and embarrassed. Several of the princes, observing his emotion, approached him, and one of them whispered: "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Another said: "When ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, it shall be given you, by the Spirit of your Father,

what ye shall say.” Thus the words of Christ were brought by the world’s great men to strengthen His servant in the hour of trial. {GC 155.2}

Luther was conducted to a position directly in front of the emperor’s throne. A deep silence fell upon the crowded assembly. Then an imperial officer arose and, pointing to a collection of Luther’s writings, demanded that the Reformer answer two questions—whether he acknowledged them as his, and whether he proposed to retract the opinions which he had therein advanced. The titles of the books having been read, Luther replied that as to the first question, he acknowledged the books to be his. “As to the second,” he said, “seeing that it is a question which concerns faith and the salvation of souls, and in which the word of God, the greatest and most precious treasure either in heaven or earth, is involved, I should act imprudently were I to reply without reflection. I might affirm less than the circumstance demands, or more than truth requires, and so sin against this saying of Christ: ‘Whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.’ [Matthew 10:33.] For this reason I entreat your imperial majesty, with all humility, to allow me time, that I may answer without offending against the word of God.”—D’Aubigne, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 155.3}

In making this request, Luther moved wisely. His course convinced the assembly that he did not act from passion or impulse. Such calmness and self-command, unexpected in one who had shown himself bold and uncompromising, added to his power, and enabled him afterward to answer with a prudence, decision, wisdom, and dignity that surprised and disappointed his adversaries, and rebuked their insolence and pride. {GC 156.1}

The next day he was to appear to render his final answer. For a time his heart sank within him as he contemplated the forces that were combined against the truth. His faith faltered; fearfulness and trembling came upon him, and horror overwhelmed him. Dangers multiplied before him; his enemies seemed about to triumph, and the powers of darkness to prevail. Clouds gathered about him and seemed to separate him from God. He longed for the assurance that the Lord of hosts would be with him. In anguish of spirit he threw himself with his face upon the earth and poured out those broken, heart-rending cries, which none but God can fully understand. {GC 156.2}

“O almighty and everlasting God,” he pleaded, “how terrible is this world! Behold, it openeth its mouth to swallow me up, and I have so little trust in Thee.... If it is only in the strength of this world that I must put my trust, all is over.... My last hour is come, my condemnation has been pronounced.... O God, do Thou help me against all the wisdom of the world. Do this, ... Thou alone; ... for this is not my work, but Thine. I have nothing to do here, nothing to contend for with these great ones of the world.... But the cause is Thine, ... and it is a righteous and eternal cause. O Lord, help me! Faithful and unchangeable God, in no man do I place my trust.... All that is of man is uncertain; all that cometh of man fails.... Thou hast chosen me for this work.... Stand at my side, for the sake of Thy well-beloved Jesus Christ, who is my defense, my shield, and my strong tower.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 156.3}

An all-wise Providence had permitted Luther to realize his peril, that he might not trust to his own strength and rush presumptuously into danger. Yet it was not the fear of personal suffering, a dread of torture or death, which seemed immediately impending, that overwhelmed him with its terror. He had come to the crisis, and he felt his insufficiency to meet it. Through his weakness the cause of truth might suffer loss. Not for his own safety, but for the triumph of the gospel did he wrestle with God. Like Israel's, in that night struggle beside the lonely stream, was the anguish and conflict of his soul. Like Israel, he prevailed with God. In his utter helplessness his faith fastened upon Christ, the mighty Deliverer. He was strengthened with the assurance that he would not appear alone before the council. Peace returned to his soul, and he rejoiced that he was permitted to uplift the word of God before the rulers of the nations. {GC 157.1}

With his mind stayed upon God, Luther prepared for the struggle before him. He thought upon the plan of his answer, examined passages in his own writings, and drew from the Holy Scriptures suitable proofs to sustain his positions. Then, laying his left hand on the Sacred Volume, which was open before him, he lifted his right hand to heaven and vowed "to remain faithful to the gospel, and freely to confess his faith, even should he seal his testimony with his blood."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 157.2}

When he was again ushered into the presence of the Diet, his countenance bore no trace of fear or embarrassment. Calm and peaceful, yet grandly brave and noble, he stood as God's witness among the great ones of the earth. The imperial officer now demanded his decision as to whether he desired to retract his doctrines. Luther made his answer in a subdued and humble tone, without violence or passion. His demeanor was diffident and respectful; yet he manifested a confidence and joy that surprised the assembly. {GC 158.1}

"Most serene emperor, illustrious princes, gracious lords," said Luther, "I appear before you this day, in conformity with the order given me yesterday, and by God's mercies I conjure your majesty and your august highnesses to listen graciously to the defense of a cause which I am assured is just and true. If, through ignorance, I should transgress the usages and proprieties of courts, I entreat you to pardon me; for I was not brought up in the palaces of kings, but in the seclusion of a convent."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 158.2}

Then, proceeding to the question, he stated that his published works were not all of the same character. In some he had treated of faith and good works, and even his enemies declared them not only harmless but profitable. To retract these would be to condemn truths which all parties confessed. The second class consisted of writings exposing the corruptions and abuses of the papacy. To revoke these works would strengthen the tyranny of Rome and open a wider door to many and great impieties. In the third class of his books he had attacked individuals who had defended existing evils. Concerning these he freely confessed that he had been more violent than was becoming. He did not claim to be free from fault; but even these books he could not



revoke, for such a course would embolden the enemies of truth, and they would then take occasion to crush God's people with still greater cruelty. {GC 158.3}

"Yet I am but a mere man, and not God," he continued; "I shall therefore defend myself as Christ did: 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil.' ... By the mercy of God, I conjure you, most serene emperor, and you, most illustrious princes, and all men of every degree, to prove from the writings of the prophets and apostles that I have erred. As soon as I am convinced of this, I will retract every error, and be the first to lay hold of my books and throw them into the fire. {GC 159.1}

"What I have just said plainly shows, I hope, that I have carefully weighed and considered the dangers to which I expose myself; but far from being dismayed, I rejoice to see that the gospel is now, as in former times, a cause of trouble and dissension. This is the character, this is the destiny, of the word of God. 'I came not to send peace on earth, but a sword,' said Jesus Christ. God is wonderful and terrible in His counsels; beware lest, by presuming to quench dissensions, you should persecute the holy word of God, and draw down upon yourselves a frightful deluge of insurmountable dangers, of present disasters, and eternal desolation.... I might quote many examples from the oracles of God. I might speak of the Pharaohs, the kings of Babylon, and those of Israel, whose labors never more effectually contributed to their own destruction than when they sought by counsels, to all appearance most wise, to strengthen their dominion. 'God removeth mountains, and they know it not.'" —*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 159.2}

Luther had spoken in German; he was now requested to repeat the same words in Latin. Though exhausted by the previous effort, he complied, and again delivered his speech, with the same clearness and energy as at the first. God's providence directed in this matter. The minds of many of the princes were so blinded by error and superstition that at the first delivery they did not see the force of Luther's reasoning; but the repetition enabled them to perceive clearly the points presented. {GC 159.3}

Those who stubbornly closed their eyes to the light, and determined not to be convinced of the truth, were enraged at the power of Luther's words. As he ceased speaking, the spokesman of the Diet said angrily: "You have not answered the question put to you.... You are required to give a clear and precise answer.... Will you, or will you not, retract?" {GC 160.1}

The Reformer answered: "Since your most serene majesty and your high mightinesses require from me a clear, simple, and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this: I cannot submit my faith either to the pope or to the councils, because it is clear as the day that they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless therefore I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by the clearest reasoning, unless I am persuaded by means of the passages I have quoted, and unless they thus render my conscience bound by the word of God, *I cannot and I will not retract*, for it is unsafe for a Christian to speak against his conscience.

Here I stand, I can do no other; may God help me. Amen.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 160.2}

Thus stood this righteous man upon the sure foundation of the word of God. The light of heaven illuminated his countenance. His greatness and purity of character, his peace and joy of heart, were manifest to all as he testified against the power of error and witnessed to the superiority of that faith that overcomes the world. {GC 160.3}

The whole assembly were for a time speechless with amazement. At his first answer Luther had spoken in a low tone, with a respectful, almost submissive bearing. The Romanists had interpreted this as evidence that his courage was beginning to fail. They regarded the request for delay as merely the prelude to his recantation. Charles himself, noting, half contemptuously, the monk’s worn frame, his plain attire, and the simplicity of his address, had declared: “This monk will never make a heretic of me.” The courage and firmness which he now displayed, as well as the power and clearness of his reasoning, filled all parties with surprise. The emperor, moved to admiration, exclaimed: “This monk speaks with an intrepid heart and unshaken courage.” Many of the German princes looked with pride and joy upon this representative of their nation. {GC 160.4}

The partisans of Rome had been worsted; their cause appeared in a most unfavorable light. They sought to maintain their power, not by appealing to the Scriptures, but by a resort to threats, Rome’s unfailing argument. Said the spokesman of the Diet: “If you do not retract, the emperor and the states of the empire will consult what course to adopt against an incorrigible heretic.” {GC 161.1}

Luther’s friend, who had with great joy listened to his noble defense, trembled at these words; but the doctor himself said calmly: “May God be my helper, for I can retract nothing.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 8. {GC 161.2}

He was directed to withdraw from the Diet while the princes consulted together. It was felt that a great crisis had come. Luther’s persistent refusal to submit might affect the history of the church for ages. It was decided to give him one more opportunity to retract. For the last time he was brought into the assembly. Again the question was put, whether he would renounce his doctrines. “I have no other reply to make,” he said, “than that which I have already made.” It was evident that he could not be induced, either by promises or threats, to yield to the mandate of Rome. {GC 161.3}

The papal leaders were chagrined that their power, which had caused kings and nobles to tremble, should be thus despised by a humble monk; they longed to make him feel their wrath by torturing his life away. But Luther, understanding his danger, had spoken to all with Christian dignity and calmness. His words had been free from pride, passion, and misrepresentation. He had lost sight of himself, and the great men surrounding him, and felt only that he was in the presence of One infinitely superior to popes, prelates, kings, and emperors. Christ had spoken through Luther’s testimony with a power and grandeur that for the time inspired both friends and foes with awe and wonder. The Spirit of God had been present in that council,

impressing the hearts of the chiefs of the empire. Several of the princes boldly acknowledged the justice of Luther's cause. Many were convinced of the truth; but with some the impressions received were not lasting. There was another class who did not at the time express their convictions, but who, having searched the Scriptures for themselves, at a future time became fearless supporters of the Reformation. {GC 161.4}

The elector Frederick had looked forward anxiously to Luther's appearance before the Diet, and with deep emotion he listened to his speech. With joy and pride he witnessed the doctor's courage, firmness, and self-possession, and determined to stand more firmly in his defense. He contrasted the parties in contest, and saw that the wisdom of popes, kings, and prelates had been brought to nought by the power of truth. The papacy had sustained a defeat which would be felt among all nations and in all ages. {GC 162.1}

As the legate perceived the effect produced by Luther's speech, he feared, as never before, for the security of the Romish power, and resolved to employ every means at his command to effect the Reformer's overthrow. With all the eloquence and diplomatic skill for which he was so eminently distinguished, he represented to the youthful emperor the folly and danger of sacrificing, in the cause of an insignificant monk, the friendship and support of the powerful see of Rome. {GC 162.2}

His words were not without effect. On the day following Luther's answer, Charles caused a message to be presented to the Diet, announcing his determination to carry out the policy of his predecessors to maintain and protect the Catholic religion. Since Luther had refused to renounce his errors, the most vigorous measures should be employed against him and the heresies he taught. "A single monk, misled by his own folly, has risen against the faith of Christendom. To stay such impiety, I will sacrifice my kingdoms, my treasures, my friends, my body, my blood, my soul, and my life. I am about to dismiss the Augustine Luther, forbidding him to cause the least disorder among the people; I shall then proceed against him and his adherents as contumacious heretics, by excommunication, by interdict, and by every means calculated to destroy them. I call on the members of the states to behave like faithful Christians."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 9. Nevertheless the emperor declared that Luther's safe-conduct must be respected, and that before proceedings against him could be instituted, he must be allowed to reach his home in safety. {GC 162.3}

Two conflicting opinions were now urged by the members of the Diet. The emissaries and representatives of the pope again demanded that the Reformer's safe-conduct should be disregarded. "The Rhine," they said, "should receive his ashes, as it had received those of John Huss a century ago."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 9. But princes of Germany, though themselves papists and avowed enemies to Luther, protested against such a breach of public faith, as a stain upon the honor of the nation. They pointed to the calamities which had followed the death of Huss, and declared that they dared not call down upon Germany, and upon the head of their youthful emperor, a repetition of those terrible evils. {GC 163.1}

Charles himself, in answer to the base proposal, said: “Though honor and faith should be banished from all the world, they ought to find a refuge in the hearts of princes.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 9. He was still further urged by the most bitter of Luther’s papal enemies to deal with the Reformer as Sigismund had dealt with Huss—abandon him to the mercies of the church; but recalling the scene when Huss in public assembly had pointed to his chains and reminded the monarch of his plighted faith, Charles V declared: “I should not like to blush like Sigismund.”—Lenfant, vol. 1, p. 422. {GC 163.2}

Yet Charles had deliberately rejected the truths presented by Luther. “I am firmly resolved to imitate the example of my ancestors,” wrote the monarch.—D’Aubigne, b. 7, ch. 9. He had decided that he would not step out of the path of custom, even to walk in the ways of truth and righteousness. Because his fathers did, he would uphold the papacy, with all its cruelty and corruption. Thus he took his position, refusing to accept any light in advance of what his fathers had received, or to perform any duty that they had not performed. {GC 163.3}

There are many at the present day thus clinging to the customs and traditions of their fathers. When the Lord sends them additional light, they refuse to accept it, because, not having been granted to their fathers, it was not received by them. We are not placed where our fathers were; consequently our duties and responsibilities are not the same as theirs. We shall not be approved of God in looking to the example of our fathers to determine our duty instead of searching the word of truth for ourselves. Our responsibility is greater than was that of our ancestors. We are accountable for the light which they received, and which was handed down as an inheritance for us, and we are accountable also for the additional light which is now shining upon us from the word of God. {GC 164.1}

Said Christ of the unbelieving Jews: “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.” John 15:22. The same divine power had spoken through Luther to the emperor and princes of Germany. And as the light shone forth from God’s word, His Spirit pleaded for the last time with many in that assembly. As Pilate, centuries before, permitted pride and popularity to close his heart against the world’s Redeemer; as the trembling Felix bade the messenger of truth, “Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee;” as the proud Agrippa confessed, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 24:25; 26:28), yet turned away from the Heaven-sent message—so had Charles V, yielding to the dictates of worldly pride and policy, decided to reject the light of truth. {GC 164.2}

Rumors of the designs against Luther were widely circulated, causing great excitement throughout the city. The Reformer had made many friends, who, knowing the treacherous cruelty of Rome toward all who dared expose her corruptions, resolved that he should not be sacrificed. Hundreds of nobles pledged themselves to protect him. Not a few openly denounced the royal message of evincing a weak submission to the controlling power of Rome. On the gates of houses and in public places, placards were posted, some condemning and others

sustaining Luther. On one of these were written merely the significant words of the wise man: "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." Ecclesiastes 10:16. The popular enthusiasm in Luther's favor throughout all Germany convinced both the emperor and the Diet that any injustice shown him would endanger the peace of the empire and even the stability of the throne. {GC 164.3}

Frederick of Saxony maintained a studied reserve, carefully concealing his real feelings toward the Reformer, while at the same time he guarded him with tireless vigilance, watching all his movements and all those of his enemies. But there were many who made no attempt to conceal their sympathy with Luther. He was visited by princes, counts, barons, and other persons of distinction, both lay and ecclesiastical. "The doctor's little room," wrote Spalatin, "could not contain all the visitors who presented themselves."—Martyn 1:404. The people gazed upon him as if he were more than human. Even those who had no faith in his doctrines could not but admire that lofty integrity which led him to brave death rather than violate his conscience. {GC 165.1}

Earnest efforts were made to obtain Luther's consent to a compromise with Rome. Nobles and princes represented to him that if he persisted in setting up his own judgment against that of the church and the councils he would soon be banished from the empire and would have no defense. To this appeal Luther answered: "The gospel of Christ cannot be preached without offense.... Why then should the fear or apprehension of danger separate me from the Lord, and from that divine word which alone is truth? No; I would rather give up my body, my blood, and my life."—D'Aubigne, b. 7, ch. 10. {GC 165.2}

Again he was urged to submit to the judgment of the emperor, and then he would have nothing to fear. "I consent," said he in reply, "with all my heart, that the emperor, the princes, and even the meanest Christian, should examine and judge my works; but on one condition, that they take the word of God for their standard. Men have nothing to do but to obey it. Do not offer violence to my conscience, which is bound and chained up with the Holy Scriptures."—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 10. {GC 166.1}

To another appeal he said: "I consent to renounce my safe-conduct. I place my person and my life in the emperor's hands, but the word of God—never!"—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 10. He stated his willingness to submit to the decision of a general council, but only on condition that the council be required to decide according to the Scriptures. "In what concerns the word of God and the faith," he added, "every Christian is as good a judge as the pope, though supported by a million councils, can be for him."—Martyn 1:410. Both friends and foes were at last convinced that further effort for reconciliation would be useless. {GC 166.2}

Had the Reformer yielded a single point, Satan and his hosts would have gained the victory. But his unwavering firmness was the means of emancipating the church, and beginning a new and better era. The influence of this one man, who dared to think and act for himself in religious matters, was to affect the church and the world, not only in his own time, but in all future generations. His firmness and fidelity would strengthen all, to the close of time, who should pass through a similar

experience. The power and majesty of God stood forth above the counsel of men, above the mighty power of Satan. {GC 166.3}

Luther was soon commanded by the authority of the emperor to return home, and he knew that this notice would be speedily followed by his condemnation. Threatening clouds overhung his path; but as he departed from Worms, his heart was filled with joy and praise. “The devil himself,” said he, “guarded the pope’s citadel; but Christ has made a wide breach in it, and Satan was constrained to confess that the Lord is mightier than he.”—D’Aubigne, b. 7, ch. 11. {GC 166.4}

After his departure, still desirous that his firmness should not be mistaken for rebellion, Luther wrote to the emperor. “God, who is the searcher of hearts, is my witness,” he said, “that I am ready most earnestly to obey your majesty, in honor or in dishonor, in life or in death, and with no exception save the word of God, by which man lives. In all the affairs of this present life, my fidelity shall be unshaken, for here to lose or to gain is of no consequence to salvation. But when eternal interests are concerned, God wills not that man should submit unto man. For such submission in spiritual matters is a real worship, and ought to be rendered solely to the Creator.”—*Ibid.*, b. 7, ch. 11. {GC 167.1}

On the journey from Worms, Luther’s reception was even more flattering than during his progress thither. Princely ecclesiastics welcomed the excommunicated monk, and civil rulers honored the man whom the emperor had denounced. He was urged to preach, and, notwithstanding the imperial prohibition, he again entered the pulpit. “I never pledged myself to chain up the word of God,” he said, “nor will I.”—Martyn 1:420. {GC 167.2}

He had not been long absent from Worms, when the papists prevailed upon the emperor to issue an edict against him. In this decree Luther was denounced as “Satan himself under the form of a man and dressed in a monk’s frock.”—D’Aubigne, b. 7, ch. 11. It was commanded that as soon as his safe-conduct should expire, measures be taken to stop his work. All persons were forbidden to harbor him, to give him food or drink, or by word or act, in public or private, to aid or abet him. He was to be seized wherever he might be, and delivered to the authorities. His adherents also were to be imprisoned and their property confiscated. His writings were to be destroyed, and, finally, all who should dare to act contrary to this decree were included in its condemnation. The elector of Saxony and the princes most friendly to Luther had left Worms soon after his departure, and the emperor’s decree received the sanction of the Diet. Now the Romanists were jubilant. They considered the fate of the Reformation sealed. {GC 167.3}

God had provided a way of escape for His servant in this hour of peril. A vigilant eye had followed Luther’s movements, and a true and noble heart had resolved upon his rescue. It was plain that Rome would be satisfied with nothing short of his death; only by concealment could he be preserved from the jaws of the lion. God gave wisdom to Frederick of Saxony to devise a plan for the Reformer’s preservation. With the co-operation of true friends the elector’s purpose was carried out, and Luther was effectually hidden from friends and foes. Upon his homeward journey he

was seized, separated from his attendants, and hurriedly conveyed through the forest to the castle of Wartburg, an isolated mountain fortress. Both his seizure and his concealment were so involved in mystery that even Frederick himself for a long time knew not whither he had been conducted. This ignorance was not without design; so long as the elector knew nothing of Luther's whereabouts, he could reveal nothing. He satisfied himself that the Reformer was safe, and with this knowledge he was content. {GC 168.1}

Spring, summer, and autumn passed, and winter came, and Luther still remained a prisoner. Aleander and his partisans exulted as the light of the gospel seemed about to be extinguished. But instead of this, the Reformer was filling his lamp from the storehouse of truth; and its light was to shine forth with brighter radiance. {GC 168.2}

In the friendly security of the Wartburg, Luther for a time rejoiced in his release from the heat and turmoil of battle. But he could not long find satisfaction in quiet and repose. Accustomed to a life of activity and stern conflict, he could ill endure to remain inactive. In those solitary days the condition of the church rose up before him, and he cried in despair. "Alas! there is no one in this latter day of His anger, to stand like a wall before the Lord, and save Israel!"—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 2. Again, his thoughts returned to himself, and he feared being charged with cowardice in withdrawing from the contest. Then he reproached himself for his indolence and self-indulgence. Yet at the same time he was daily accomplishing more than it seemed possible for one man to do. His pen was never idle. While his enemies flattered themselves that he was silenced, they were astonished and confused by tangible proof that he was still active. A host of tracts, issuing from his pen, circulated throughout Germany. He also performed a most important service for his countrymen by translating the New Testament into the German tongue. From his rocky Patmos he continued for nearly a whole year to proclaim the gospel and rebuke the sins and errors of the times. {GC 168.3}

But it was not merely to preserve Luther from the wrath of his enemies, nor even to afford him a season of quiet for these important labors, that God had withdrawn His servant from the stage of public life. There were results more precious than these to be secured. In the solitude and obscurity of his mountain retreat, Luther was removed from earthly supports and shut out from human praise. He was thus saved from the pride and self-confidence that are so often caused by success. By suffering and humiliation he was prepared again to walk safely upon the dizzy heights to which he had been so suddenly exalted. {GC 169.1}

As men rejoice in the freedom which the truth brings them, they are inclined to extol those whom God has employed to break the chains of error and superstition. Satan seeks to divert men's thoughts and affections from God, and to fix them upon human agencies; he leads them to honor the mere instrument and to ignore the Hand that directs all the events of providence. Too often religious leaders who are thus praised and revered lose sight of their dependence upon God and are led to trust in themselves. As a result they seek to control the minds and consciences of the

people, who are disposed to look to them for guidance instead of looking to the word of God. The work of reform is often retarded because of this spirit indulged by its supporters. From this danger, God would guard the cause of the Reformation. He desired that work to receive, not the impress of man, but that of God. The eyes of men had been turned to Luther as the expounder of the truth; he was removed that all eyes might be directed to the eternal Author of truth. {GC 169.2}

#### Chapter 9—The Swiss Reformer

In the choice of instrumentalities for the reforming of the church, the same divine plan is seen as in that for the planting of the church. The heavenly Teacher passed by the great men of the earth, the titled and wealthy, who were accustomed to receive praise and homage as leaders of the people. They were so proud and self-confident in their boasted superiority that they could not be molded to sympathize with their fellow men and to become colaborers with the humble Man of Nazareth. To the unlearned, toiling fishermen of Galilee was the call addressed: “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Matthew 4:19. These disciples were humble and teachable. The less they had been influenced by the false teaching of their time, the more successfully could Christ instruct and train them for His service. So in the days of the Great Reformation. The leading Reformers were men from humble life—men who were most free of any of their time from pride of rank and from the influence of bigotry and priestcraft. It is God’s plan to employ humble instruments to accomplish great results. Then the glory will not be given to men, but to Him who works through them to will and to do of His own good pleasure. {GC 171.1}

A few weeks after the birth of Luther in a miner’s cabin in Saxony, Ulric Zwingli was born in a herdsman’s cottage among the Alps. Zwingli’s surroundings in childhood, and his early training, were such as to prepare him for his future mission. Reared amid scenes of natural grandeur, beauty, and awful sublimity, his mind was early impressed with a sense of the greatness, the power, and the majesty of God. The history of the brave deeds achieved upon his native mountains kindled his youthful aspirations. And at the side of his pious grandmother he listened to the few precious Bible stories which she had gleaned from amid the legends and traditions of the church. With eager interest he heard of the grand deeds of patriarchs and prophets, of the shepherds who watched their flocks on the hills of Palestine where angels talked with them, of the Babe of Bethlehem and the Man of Calvary. {GC 171.2}

Like John Luther, Zwingli’s father desired an education for his son, and the boy was early sent from his native valley. His mind rapidly developed, and it soon became a question where to find teachers competent to instruct him. At the age of thirteen he went to Bern, which then possessed the most distinguished school in Switzerland. Here, however, a danger arose which threatened to blight the promise of his life. Determined efforts were put forth by the friars to allure him into a monastery. The Dominican and Franciscan monks were in rivalry for popular favor. This they endeavored to secure by the showy adornments of their churches, the pomp of their



ceremonials, and the attractions of famous relics and miracle-working images. {GC 172.1}

The Dominicans of Bern saw that if they could win this talented young scholar, they would secure both gain and honor. His extreme youth, his natural ability as a speaker and writer, and his genius for music and poetry, would be more effective than all their pomp and display, in attracting the people to their services and increasing the revenues of their order. By deceit and flattery they endeavored to induce Zwingli to enter their convent. Luther, while a student at school, had buried himself in a convent cell, and he would have been lost to the world had not God's providence released him. Zwingli was not permitted to encounter the same peril. Providentially his father received information of the designs of the friars. He had no intention of allowing his son to follow the idle and worthless life of the monks. He saw that his future usefulness was at stake, and directed him to return home without delay. {GC 172.2}

The command was obeyed; but the youth could not be long content in his native valley, and he soon resumed his studies, repairing, after a time, to Basel. It was here that Zwingli first heard the gospel of God's free grace. Wittebach, a teacher of the ancient languages, had, while studying Greek and Hebrew, been led to the Holy Scriptures, and thus rays of divine light were shed into the minds of the students under his instruction. He declared that there was a truth more ancient, and of infinitely greater worth, than the theories taught by schoolmen and philosophers. This ancient truth was that the death of Christ is the sinner's only ransom. To Zwingli these words were as the first ray of light that precedes the dawn. {GC 173.1}

Zwingli was soon called from Basel to enter upon his lifework. His first field of labor was in an Alpine parish, not far distant from his native valley. Having received ordination as a priest, he "devoted himself with his whole soul to the search after divine truth; for he was well aware," says a fellow Reformer, "how much he must know to whom the flock of Christ is entrusted."—Wylie, b. 8, ch. 5. The more he searched the Scriptures, the clearer appeared the contrast between their truths and the heresies of Rome. He submitted himself to the Bible as the word of God, the only sufficient, infallible rule. He saw that it must be its own interpreter. He dared not attempt to explain Scripture to sustain a preconceived theory or doctrine, but held it his duty to learn what is its direct and obvious teaching. He sought to avail himself of every help to obtain a full and correct understanding of its meaning, and he invoked the aid of the Holy Spirit, which would, he declared, reveal it to all who sought it in sincerity and with prayer. {GC 173.2}

"The Scriptures," said Zwingli, "come from God, not from man, and even that God who enlightens will give thee to understand that the speech comes from God. The word of God ... cannot fail; it is bright, it teaches itself, it discloses itself, it illumines the soul with all salvation and grace, comforts it in God, humbles it, so that it loses and even forfeits itself, and embraces God." The truth of these words Zwingli himself had proved. Speaking of his experience at this time, he afterward wrote:

“When ... I began to give myself wholly up to the Holy Scriptures, philosophy and theology (scholastic) would always keep suggesting quarrels to me. At last I came to this, that I thought, ‘Thou must let all that lie, and learn the meaning of God purely out of His own simple word.’ Then I began to ask God for His light, and the Scriptures began to be much easier to me.”—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 6. {GC 174.1}

The doctrine preached by Zwingli was not received from Luther. It was the doctrine of Christ. “If Luther preaches Christ,” said the Swiss Reformer, “he does what I am doing. Those whom he has brought to Christ are more numerous than those whom I have led. But this matters not. I will bear no other name than that of Christ, whose soldier I am, and who alone is my Chief. 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.”—D’Aubigne, b. 8, ch. 9. {GC 174.2}

In 1516 Zwingli was invited to become a preacher in the convent at Einsiedeln. Here he was to have a closer view of the corruptions of Rome and was to exert an influence as a Reformer that would be felt far beyond his native Alps. Among the chief attractions of Einsiedeln was an image of the Virgin which was said to have the power of working miracles. Above the gateway of the convent was the inscription, “Here a plenary remission of sins may be obtained.”—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 5. Pilgrims at all seasons resorted to the shrine of the Virgin; but at the great yearly festival of its consecration multitudes came from all parts of Switzerland, and even from France and Germany. Zwingli, greatly afflicted at the sight, seized the opportunity to proclaim liberty through the gospel to these bondslaves of superstition. {GC 174.3}

“Do not imagine,” he said, “that God is in this temple more than in any other part of creation. Whatever be the country in which you dwell, God is around you, and hears you.... Can unprofitable works, long pilgrimages, offerings, images, the invocation of the Virgin or of the saints, secure for you the grace of God? ... What avails the multitude of words with which we embody our prayers? What efficacy has a glossy cowl, a smooth-shorn head, a long and flowing robe, or gold-embroidered slippers? ... God looks at the heart, and our hearts are far from Him.” “Christ,” he said, “who was once offered upon the cross, is the sacrifice and victim, that had made satisfaction for the sins of believers to all eternity.”—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 5. {GC 175.1}

To many listeners these teachings were unwelcome. It was a bitter disappointment to them to be told that their toilsome journey had been made in vain. The pardon freely offered to them through Christ they could not comprehend. They were satisfied with the old way to heaven which Rome had marked out for them. They shrank from the perplexity of searching for anything better. It was easier to trust their salvation to the priests and the pope than to seek for purity of heart. {GC 175.2}

But another class received with gladness the tidings of redemption through Christ. The observances enjoined by Rome had failed to bring peace of soul, and in faith they accepted the Saviour’s blood as their propitiation. These returned to their

homes to reveal to others the precious light which they had received. The truth was thus carried from hamlet to hamlet, from town to town, and the number of pilgrims to the Virgin's shrine greatly lessened. There was a falling off in the offerings, and consequently in the salary of Zwingli, which was drawn from them. But this caused him only joy as he saw that the power of fanaticism and superstition was being broken. {GC 175.3}

The authorities of the church were not blind to the work which Zwingli was accomplishing; but for the present they forbore to interfere. Hoping yet to secure him to their cause, they endeavored to win him by flatteries; and meanwhile the truth was gaining a hold upon the hearts of the people. {GC 176.1}

Zwingli's labors at Einsiedeln had prepared him for a wider field, and this he was soon to enter. After three years here he was called to the office of preacher in the cathedral at Zurich. This was then the most important town of the Swiss confederacy, and the influence exerted here would be widely felt. The ecclesiastics by whose invitation he came to Zurich were, however, desirous of preventing any innovations, and they accordingly proceeded to instruct him as to his duties. {GC 176.2}

"You will make every exertion," they said, "to collect the revenues of the chapter, without overlooking the least. You will 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. You will be diligent in increasing the income arising from the sick, from masses, and in general from every ecclesiastical ordinance." "As for the administration of the sacraments, the preaching, and the care of the flock," added his instructors, "these are also the duties of the chaplain. But for these you may employ a substitute, and particularly in preaching. You should administer the sacraments to none but persons of note, and only when called upon; you are forbidden to do so without distinction of persons."—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 6. {GC 176.3}

Zwingli listened in silence to this charge, and in reply, after expressing his gratitude for the honor of a call to this important station, he proceeded to explain the course which he proposed to adopt. "The life of Christ," he said, "has been too long hidden from the people. I shall preach upon the whole of the Gospel of St. Matthew, ... 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."—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 6. Though some of the ecclesiastics disapproved his plan, and endeavored to dissuade him from it, Zwingli remained steadfast. He declared that he was about to introduce no new method, but the old method employed by the church in earlier and purer times. {GC 176.4}

Already an interest had been awakened in the truths he taught; and the people flocked in great numbers to listen to his preaching. Many who had long since ceased to attend service were among his hearers. He began his ministry by opening the Gospels and reading and explaining to his hearers the inspired narrative of the life,

teachings, and death of Christ. Here, as at Einsiedeln, he presented the word of God as the only infallible authority and the death of Christ as the only complete sacrifice. “It is to Christ,” he said, “that I desire to lead you—to Christ, the true source of salvation.”—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 6. Around the preacher crowded the people of all classes, from statesmen and scholars to the artisan and the peasant. With deep interest they listened to his words. He not only proclaimed the offer of a free salvation, but fearlessly rebuked the evils and corruptions of the times. Many returned from the cathedral praising God. “This man,” they said, “is a preacher of the truth. He will be our Moses, to lead us forth from this Egyptian darkness.”—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 6. {GC 177.1}

But though at first his labors were received with great enthusiasm, after a time opposition arose. The monks set themselves to hinder his work and condemn his teachings. Many assailed him with gibes and sneers; others resorted to insolence and threats. But Zwingli bore all with patience, saying: “If we desire to gain over the wicked to Jesus Christ, we must shut our eyes against many things.”—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 6. {GC 177.2}

About this time a new agency came in to advance the work of reform. One Lucian was sent to Zurich with some of Luther’s writings, by a friend of the reformed faith at Basel, who suggested that the sale of these books might be a powerful means of scattering the light. “Ascertain,” he wrote to Zwingli, “whether this man possesses sufficient prudence and skill; if so, let him carry from city to city, from town to town, from village to village, and even from house to house, among the Swiss, the works of Luther, and especially his exposition of the Lord’s Prayer written for the laity. The more they are known, the more purchasers they will find.”—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 6. Thus the light found entrance. {GC 178.1}

At the time when God is preparing to break the shackles of ignorance and superstition, then it is that Satan works with greatest power to enshroud men in darkness and to bind their fetters still more firmly. As men were rising up in different lands to present to the people forgiveness and justification through the blood of Christ, Rome proceeded with renewed energy to open her market throughout Christendom, offering pardon for money. {GC 178.2}

Every sin had its price, and men were granted free license for crime if the treasury of the church was kept well filled. Thus the two movements advanced,—one offering forgiveness of sin for money, the other forgiveness through Christ,—Rome licensing sin and making it her source of revenue; the Reformers condemning sin and pointing to Christ as the propitiation and deliverer. {GC 178.3}

In Germany the sale of indulgences had been committed to the Dominican friars and was conducted by the infamous Tetzl. In Switzerland the traffic was put into the hands of the Franciscans, under the control of Samson, an Italian monk. Samson had already done good service to the church, having secured immense sums from Germany and Switzerland to fill the papal treasury. Now he traversed Switzerland, attracting great crowds, despoiling the poor peasants of their scanty earnings, and exacting rich gifts from the wealthy classes. But the influence of the reform already

made itself felt in curtailing, though it could not stop, the traffic. Zwingli was still at Einsiedeln when Samson, soon after entering Switzerland, arrived with his wares at a neighboring town. Being apprised of his mission, the Reformer immediately set out to oppose him. The two did not meet, but such was Zwingli's success in exposing the friar's pretensions that he was obliged to leave for other quarters. {GC 178.4}

At Zurich, Zwingli preached zealously against the pardonmongers; and when Samson approached the place, he was met by a messenger from the council with an intimation that he was expected to pass on. He finally secured an entrance by stratagem, but was sent away without the sale of a single pardon, and he soon after left Switzerland. {GC 179.1}

A strong impetus was given to the reform by the appearance of the plague, or Great Death, which swept over Switzerland in the year 1519. As men were thus brought face to face with the destroyer, many were led to feel how vain and worthless were the pardons which they had so lately purchased; and they longed for a surer foundation for their faith. Zwingli at Zurich was smitten down; he was brought so low that all hope of his recovery was relinquished, and the report was widely circulated that he was dead. In that trying hour his hope and courage were unshaken. He looked in faith to the cross of Calvary, trusting in the all-sufficient propitiation for sin. When he came back from the gates of death, it was to preach the gospel with greater fervor than ever before; and his words exerted an unwonted power. The people welcomed with joy their beloved pastor, returned to them from the brink of the grave. They themselves had come from attending upon the sick and the dying, and they felt, as never before, the value of the gospel. {GC 179.2}

Zwingli had arrived at a clearer understanding of its truths, and had more fully experienced in himself its renewing power. The fall of man and the plan of redemption were the subjects upon which he dwelt. "In Adam," he said, "we are all dead, sunk in corruption and condemnation."—Wylie, b. 8, ch. 9. "Christ ... has purchased for us a never-ending redemption.... His passion is ... an eternal sacrifice, and everlastingly effectual to heal; it satisfies the divine justice forever in behalf of all those who rely upon it with firm and unshaken faith." Yet he clearly taught that men are not, because of the grace of Christ, free to continue in sin. "Wherever there is faith in God, there God is; and wherever God abideth, there a zeal exists urging and impelling men to good works."—D'Aubigne, b. 8, ch. 9. {GC 180.1}

Such was the interest in Zwingli's preaching that the cathedral was filled to overflowing with the crowds that came to listen to him. Little by little, as they could bear it, he opened the truth to his hearers. He was careful not to introduce, at first, points which would startle them and create prejudice. His work was to win their hearts to the teachings of Christ, to soften them by His love, and keep before them His example; and as they should receive the principles of the gospel, their superstitious beliefs and practices would inevitably be overthrown. {GC 180.2}

Step by step the Reformation advanced in Zurich. In alarm its enemies aroused to active opposition. One year before, the monk of Wittenberg had uttered his No to the

pope and the emperor at Worms, and now everything seemed to indicate a similar withstanding of the papal claims at Zurich. Repeated attacks were made upon Zwingli. In the papal cantons, from time to time, disciples of the gospel were brought to the stake, but this was not enough; the teacher of heresy must be silenced. Accordingly the bishop of Constance dispatched three deputies to the Council of Zurich, accusing Zwingli of teaching the people to transgress the laws of the church, thus endangering the peace and good order of society. If the authority of the church were to be set aside, he urged, universal anarchy would result. Zwingli replied that he had been for four years teaching the gospel in Zurich, "which was more quiet and peaceful than any other town in the confederacy." "Is not, then," he said, "Christianity the best safeguard of the general security?"—Wylie, b. 8, ch. 11. {GC 180.3}

The deputies had admonished the councilors to continue in the church, out of which, they declared, there was no salvation. Zwingli responded: "Let not this accusation move you. The foundation of the church is the same Rock, the same Christ, that gave Peter his name because he confessed Him faithfully. In every nation whosoever believes with all his heart in the Lord Jesus is accepted of God. Here, truly, is the church, out of which no one can be saved."—D'Aubigne, London ed., b. 8, ch. 11. As a result of the conference, one of the bishop's deputies accepted the reformed faith. {GC 181.1}

The council declined to take action against Zwingli, and Rome prepared for a fresh attack. The Reformer, when apprised of the plots of his enemies, exclaimed: "Let them come on; I fear them as the beetling cliff fears the waves that thunder at its feet."—Wylie, b. 8, ch. 11. The efforts of the ecclesiastics only furthered the cause which they sought to overthrow. The truth continued to spread. In Germany its adherents, cast down by Luther's disappearance, took heart again, as they saw the progress of the gospel in Switzerland. {GC 181.2}

As the Reformation became established in Zurich, its fruits were more fully seen in the suppression of vice and the promotion of order and harmony. "Peace has her habitation in our town," wrote Zwingli; "no quarrel, no hypocrisy, no envy, no strife. Whence can such union come but from the Lord, and our doctrine, which fills us with the fruits of peace and piety?"—*Ibid.*, b. 8, ch. 15. {GC 181.3}

The victories gained by the Reformation stirred the Romanists to still more determined efforts for its overthrow. Seeing how little had been accomplished by persecution in suppressing Luther's work in Germany, they decided to meet the reform with its own weapons. They would hold a disputation with Zwingli, and having the arrangement of matters, they would make sure of victory by choosing, themselves, not only the place of the combat, but the judges that should decide between the disputants. And if they could once get Zwingli into their power, they would take care that he did not escape them. The leader silenced, the movement could speedily be crushed. This purpose, however, was carefully concealed. {GC 181.4}

The disputation was appointed to be held at Baden; but Zwingli was not present. The Council of Zurich, suspecting the designs of the papists, and warned by the burning piles kindled in the papal cantons for confessors of the gospel, forbade their pastor to expose himself to this peril. At Zurich he was ready to meet all the partisans that Rome might send; but to go to Baden, where the blood of martyrs for the truth had just been shed, was to go to certain death. Oecolampadius and Haller were chosen to represent the Reformers, while the famous Dr. Eck, supported by a host of learned doctors and prelates, was the champion of Rome. {GC 182.1}

Though Zwingli was not present at the conference, his influence was felt. The secretaries were all chosen by the papists, and others were forbidden to take notes, on pain of death. Notwithstanding this, Zwingli received daily a faithful account of what was said at Baden. A student in attendance at the disputation made a record each evening of the arguments that day presented. These papers two other students undertook to deliver, with the daily letters of Oecolampadius, to Zwingli at Zurich. The Reformer answered, giving counsel and suggestions. His letters were written by night, and the students returned with them to Baden in the morning. To elude the vigilance of the guard stationed at the city gates, these messengers brought baskets of poultry on their heads, and they were permitted to pass without hindrance. {GC 182.2}

Thus Zwingli maintained the battle with his wily antagonists. He “has labored more,” said Myconius, “by his meditations, his sleepless nights, and the advice which he transmitted to Baden, than he would have done by discussing in person in the midst of his enemies.”—D’Aubigne, b. 11, ch. 13. {GC 183.1}

The Romanists, flushed with anticipated triumph, had come to Baden attired in their richest robes and glittering with jewels. They fared luxuriously, their tables spread with the most costly delicacies and the choicest wines. The burden of their ecclesiastical duties was lightened by gaiety and reveling. In marked contrast appeared the Reformers, who were looked upon by the people as little better than a company of beggars, and whose frugal fare kept them but short time at table. Oecolampadius’s landlord, taking occasion to watch him in his room, found him always engaged in study or at prayer, and greatly wondering, reported that the heretic was at least “very pious.” {GC 183.2}

At the conference, “Eck haughtily ascended a pulpit splendidly decorated, while the humble Oecolampadius, meanly clothed, was forced to take his seat in front of his opponent on a rudely carved stool.”—*Ibid.*, b. 11, ch. 13. Eck’s stentorian voice and unbounded assurance never failed him. His zeal was stimulated by the hope of gold as well as fame; for the defender of the faith was to be rewarded by a handsome fee. When better arguments failed, he had resort to insults, and even to oaths. {GC 183.3}

Oecolampadius, modest and self-distrustful, had shrunk from the combat, and he entered upon it with the solemn avowal: “I acknowledge no other standard of judgment than the word of God.”—*Ibid.*, b. 11, ch. 13. Though gentle and courteous in demeanor, he proved himself able and unflinching. While the Romanists,

according to their wont, appealed for authority to the customs of the church, the Reformer adhered steadfastly to the Holy Scriptures. “Custom,” he said, “has no force in our Switzerland, unless it be according to the constitution; now, in matters of faith, the Bible is our constitution.”—*Ibid.*, b. 11, ch. 13. {GC 183.4}

The contrast between the two disputants was not without effect. The calm, clear reasoning of the Reformer, so gently and modestly presented, appealed to minds that turned in disgust from Eck’s boastful and boisterous assumptions. {GC 184.1}

The discussion continued eighteen days. At its close the papists with great confidence claimed the victory. Most of the deputies sided with Rome, and the Diet pronounced the Reformers vanquished and declared that they, together with Zwingli, their leader, were cut off from the church. But the fruits of the conference revealed on which side the advantage lay. The contest resulted in a strong impetus to the Protestant cause, and it was not long afterward that the important cities of Bern and Basel declared for the Reformation. {GC 184.2}

#### Chapter 10—Progress of Reform in Germany

Luther’s mysterious disappearance excited consternation throughout all Germany. Inquiries concerning him were heard everywhere. The wildest rumors were circulated, and many believed that he had been murdered. There was great lamentation, not only by his avowed friends, but by thousands who had not openly taken their stand with the Reformation. Many bound themselves by a solemn oath to avenge his death. {GC 185.1}

The Romish leaders saw with terror to what a pitch had risen the feeling against them. Though at first exultant at the supposed death of Luther, they soon desired to hide from the wrath of the people. His enemies had not been so troubled by his most daring acts while among them as they were at his removal. Those who in their rage had sought to destroy the bold Reformer were filled with fear now that he had become a helpless captive. “The only remaining way of saving ourselves,” said one, “is to light torches, and hunt for Luther through the whole world, to restore him to the nation that is calling for him.”—D’Aubigne, b. 9, ch. 1. The edict of the emperor seemed to fall powerless. The papal legates were filled with indignation as they saw that it commanded far less attention than did the fate of Luther. {GC 185.2}

The tidings that he was safe, though a prisoner, calmed the fears of the people, while it still further aroused their enthusiasm in his favor. His writings were read with greater eagerness than ever before. Increasing numbers joined the cause of the heroic man who had, at such fearful odds, defended the word of God. The Reformation was constantly gaining in strength. The seed which Luther had sown sprang up everywhere. His absence accomplished a work which his presence would have failed to do. Other laborers felt a new responsibility, now that their great leader was removed. With new faith and earnestness they pressed forward to do all in their power, that the work so nobly begun might not be hindered. {GC 185.3}

But Satan was not idle. He now attempted what he has attempted in every other reformatory movement—to deceive and destroy the people by palming off upon them a counterfeit in place of the true work. As there were false Christs in the first



century of the Christian church, so there arose false prophets in the sixteenth century. {GC 186.1}

A few men, deeply affected by the excitement in the religious world, imagined themselves to have received special revelations from Heaven, and claimed to have been divinely commissioned to carry forward to its completion the Reformation which, they declared, had been but feebly begun by Luther. In truth, they were undoing the very work which he had accomplished. They rejected the great principle which was the very foundation of the Reformation—that the word of God is the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice; and for that unerring guide they substituted the changeable, uncertain standard of their own feelings and impressions. By this act of setting aside the great detector of error and falsehood the way was opened for Satan to control minds as best pleased himself. {GC 186.2}

One of these prophets claimed to have been instructed by the angel Gabriel. A student who united with him forsook his studies, declaring that he had been endowed by God Himself with wisdom to expound His word. Others who were naturally inclined to fanaticism united with them. The proceedings of these enthusiasts created no little excitement. The preaching of Luther had aroused the people everywhere to feel the necessity of reform, and now some really honest persons were misled by the pretensions of the new prophets. {GC 186.3}

The leaders of the movement proceeded to Wittenberg and urged their claims upon Melancthon and his colaborers. Said they: “We are sent by God to instruct the people. We have held familiar conversations with the Lord; we know what will happen; in a word, we are apostles and prophets, and appeal to Dr. Luther.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7. {GC 187.1}

The Reformers were astonished and perplexed. This was such an element as they had never before encountered, and they knew not what course to pursue. Said Melancthon: “There are indeed extraordinary spirits in these men; but what spirits? ... On the one hand, let us beware of quenching the Spirit of God, and on the other, of being led astray by the spirit of Satan.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7. {GC 187.2}

The fruit of the new teaching soon became apparent. The people were led to neglect the Bible or to cast it wholly aside. The schools were thrown into confusion. Students, spurning all restraint, abandoned their studies and withdrew from the university. The men who thought themselves competent to revive and control the work of the Reformation succeeded only in bringing it to the verge of ruin. The Romanists now regained their confidence and exclaimed exultingly: “One last struggle, and all will be ours.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7. {GC 187.3}

Luther at the Wartburg, hearing of what had occurred, said with deep concern: “I always expected that Satan would send us this plague.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7. He perceived the true character of those pretended prophets and saw the danger that threatened the cause of truth. The opposition of the pope and the emperor had not caused him so great perplexity and distress as he now experienced. From the professed friends of the Reformation had risen its worst enemies. The very truths

which had brought him so great joy and consolation were being employed to stir up strife and create confusion in the church. {GC 187.4}

In the work of reform, Luther had been urged forward by the Spirit of God, and had been carried beyond himself. He had not purposed to take such positions as he did, or to make so radical changes. He had been but the instrument in the hand of Infinite Power. Yet he often trembled for the result of his work. He had once said: “If I knew that my doctrine injured one man, one single man, however lowly and obscure,—which it cannot, for it is the gospel itself,—I would rather die ten times than not retract it.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7. {GC 188.1}

And now Wittenberg itself, the very center of the Reformation, was fast falling under the power of fanaticism and lawlessness. This terrible condition had not resulted from the teachings of Luther; but throughout Germany his enemies were charging it upon him. In bitterness of soul he sometimes asked: “Can such, then, be the end of this great work of the Reformation?”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7. Again, as he wrestled with God in prayer, peace flowed into his heart. “The work is not mine, but Thine own,” he said; “Thou wilt not suffer it to be corrupted by superstition or fanaticism.” But the thought of remaining longer from the conflict in such a crisis, became insupportable. He determined to return to Wittenberg. {GC 188.2}

Without delay he set out on his perilous journey. He was under the ban of the empire. Enemies were at liberty to take his life; friends were forbidden to aid or shelter him. The imperial government was adopting the most stringent measures against his adherents. But he saw that the work of the gospel was imperiled, and in the name of the Lord he went out fearlessly to battle for the truth. {GC 188.3}

In a letter to the elector, after stating his purpose to leave the Wartburg, Luther said: “Be it known to your highness that I am going to Wittenberg under a protection far higher than that of princes and electors. I think not of soliciting your highness’s support, and far from desiring your protection, I would rather protect you myself. If I knew that your highness could or would protect me, I would not go to Wittenberg at all. There is no sword that can further this cause. God alone must do everything, without the help or concurrence of man. He who has the greatest faith is he who is most able to protect.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 8. {GC 188.4}

In a second letter, written on the way to Wittenberg, Luther added: “I am ready to incur the displeasure of your highness and the anger of the whole world. Are not the Wittenbergers my sheep? Has not God entrusted them to me? And ought I not, if necessary, to expose myself to death for their sakes? Besides, I fear to see a terrible outbreak in Germany, by which God will punish our nation.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 7. {GC 189.1}

With great caution and humility, yet with decision and firmness, he entered upon his work. “By the word,” said he, “must we overthrow and destroy what has been set up by violence. I will not make use of force against the superstitious and unbelieving.... No one must be constrained. Liberty is the very essence of faith.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 8. {GC 189.2}

It was soon noised through Wittenberg that Luther had returned and that he was to preach. The people flocked from all directions, and the church was filled to overflowing. Ascending the pulpit, he with great wisdom and gentleness instructed, exhorted, and reproved. Touching the course of some who had resorted to violent measures in abolishing the mass, he said: {GC 189.3}

“The mass is a bad thing; God is opposed to it; it ought to be abolished; and I would that throughout the whole world it were replaced by the supper of the gospel. But let no one be torn from it by force. We must leave the matter in God’s hands. His word must act, and not we. And why so? you will ask. Because I do not hold men’s hearts in my hand, as the potter holds the clay. We have a right to speak: we have *not* the right to act. Let us preach; the rest belongs unto God. Were I to employ force, what should I gain? Grimace, formality, apings, human ordinances, and hypocrisy.... But there would be no sincerity of heart, nor faith, nor charity. Where these three are wanting, all is wanting, and I would not give a pear stalk for such a result.... God does more by His word alone than you and I and all the world by our united strength. God lays hold upon the heart; and when the heart is taken, all is won.... {GC 189.4}

“I will preach, discuss, and write; but I will constrain none, for faith is a voluntary act. See what I have done. I stood up against the pope, indulgences, and papists, but without violence or tumult. I put forward God’s word; I preached and wrote—this was all I did. And yet while I was asleep, ... the word that I had preached overthrew popery, so that neither prince nor emperor has done it so much harm. And yet I did nothing; the word alone did all. If I had wished to appeal to force, the whole of Germany would perhaps have been deluged with blood. But what would have been the result? Ruin and desolation both to body and soul. I therefore kept quiet, and left the word to run through the world alone.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 8. {GC 190.1}

Day after day, for a whole week, Luther continued to preach to eager crowds. The word of God broke the spell of fanatical excitement. The power of the gospel brought back the misguided people into the way of truth. {GC 190.2}

Luther had no desire to encounter the fanatics whose course had been productive of so great evil. He knew them to be men of unsound judgment and undisciplined passions, who, while claiming to be specially illuminated from heaven, would not endure the slightest contradiction or even the kindest reproof or counsel. Arrogating to themselves supreme authority, they required everyone, without a question, to acknowledge their claims. But, as they demanded an interview with him, he consented to meet them; and so successfully did he expose their pretensions that the impostors at once departed from Wittenberg. {GC 190.3}

The fanaticism was checked for a time; but several years later it broke out with greater violence and more terrible results. Said Luther, concerning the leaders in this movement: “To them the Holy Scriptures were but a dead letter, and they all began to cry, ‘The Spirit! the Spirit!’ But most assuredly I will not follow where their spirit leads them. May God of His mercy preserve me from a church in which there are none but saints. I desire to dwell with the humble, the feeble, the sick, who know

and feel their sins, and who groan and cry continually to God from the bottom of their hearts to obtain His consolation and support.”—*Ibid.*, b. 10, ch. 10. {GC 190.4}

Thomas Munzer, the most active of the fanatics, was a man of considerable ability, which, rightly directed, would have enabled him to do good; but he had not learned the first principles of true religion. “He was possessed with a desire of reforming the world, and forgot, as all enthusiasts do, that the reformation should begin with himself.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 8. He was ambitious to obtain position and influence, and was unwilling to be second, even to Luther. He declared that the Reformers, in substituting the authority of Scripture for that of the pope, were only establishing a different form of popery. He himself, he claimed, had been divinely commissioned to introduce the true reform. “He who possesses this spirit,” said Munzer, “possesses the true faith, although he should never see the Scriptures in his life.”—*Ibid.*, b. 10, ch. 10. {GC 191.1}

The fanatical teachers gave themselves up to be governed by impressions, regarding every thought and impulse as the voice of God; consequently they went to great extremes. Some even burned their Bibles, exclaiming: “The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” Munzer’s teaching appealed to men’s desire for the marvelous, while it gratified their pride by virtually placing human ideas and opinions above the word of God. His doctrines were received by thousands. He soon denounced all order in public worship, and declared that to obey princes was to attempt to serve both God and Belial. {GC 191.2}

The minds of the people, already beginning to throw off the yoke of the papacy, were also becoming impatient under the restraints of civil authority. Munzer’s revolutionary teachings, claiming divine sanction, led them to break away from all control and give the rein to their prejudices and passions. The most terrible scenes of sedition and strife followed, and the fields of Germany were drenched with blood. {GC 191.3}

The agony of soul which Luther had so long before experienced at Erfurt now pressed upon him with redoubled power as he saw the results of fanaticism charged upon the Reformation. The papist princes declared—and many were ready to credit the statement—that the rebellion was the legitimate fruit of Luther’s doctrines. Although this charge was without the slightest foundation, it could not but cause the Reformer great distress. That the cause of truth should be thus disgraced by being ranked with the basest fanaticism, seemed more than he could endure. On the other hand, the leaders in the revolt hated Luther because he had not only opposed their doctrines and denied their claims to divine inspiration, but had pronounced them rebels against the civil authority. In retaliation they denounced him as a base pretender. He seemed to have brought upon himself the enmity of both princes and people. {GC 192.1}

The Romanists exulted, expecting to witness the speedy downfall of the Reformation; and they blamed Luther, even for the errors which he had been most earnestly endeavoring to correct. The fanatical party, by falsely claiming to have

been treated with great injustice, succeeded in gaining the sympathies of a large class of the people, and, as is often the case with those who take the wrong side, they came to be regarded as martyrs. Thus the ones who were exerting every energy in opposition to the Reformation were pitied and lauded as the victims of cruelty and oppression. This was the work of Satan, prompted by the same spirit of rebellion which was first manifested in heaven. {GC 192.2}

Satan is constantly seeking to deceive men and lead them to call sin righteousness, and righteousness sin. How successful has been his work! How often censure and reproach are cast upon God's faithful servants because they will stand fearlessly in defense of the truth! Men who are but agents of Satan are praised and flattered, and even looked upon as martyrs, while those who should be respected and sustained for their fidelity to God, are left to stand alone, under suspicion and distrust. {GC 192.3}

Counterfeit holiness, spurious sanctification, is still doing its work of deception. Under various forms it exhibits the same spirit as in the days of Luther, diverting minds from the Scriptures and leading men to follow their own feelings and impressions rather than to yield obedience to the law of God. This is one of Satan's most successful devices to cast reproach upon purity and truth. {GC 193.1}

Fearlessly did Luther defend the gospel from the attacks which came from every quarter. The word of God proved itself a weapon mighty in every conflict. With that word he warred against the usurped authority of the pope, and the rationalistic philosophy of the schoolmen, while he stood firm as a rock against the fanaticism that sought to ally itself with the Reformation. {GC 193.2}

Each of these opposing elements was in its own way setting aside the Holy Scriptures and exalting human wisdom as the source of religious truth and knowledge. Rationalism idolizes reason and makes this the criterion for religion. Romanism, claiming for her sovereign pontiff an inspiration descended in unbroken line from the apostles, and unchangeable through all time, gives ample opportunity for every species of extravagance and corruption to be concealed under the sanctity of the apostolic commission. The inspiration claimed by Munzer and his associates proceeded from no higher source than the vagaries of the imagination, and its influence was subversive of all authority, human or divine. True Christianity receives the word of God as the great treasure house of inspired truth and the test of all inspiration. {GC 193.3}

Upon his return from the Wartburg, Luther completed his translation of the New Testament, and the gospel was soon after given to the people of Germany in their own language. This translation was received with great joy by all who loved the truth; but it was scornfully rejected by those who chose human traditions and the commandments of men. {GC 193.4}

The priests were alarmed at the thought that the common people would now be able to discuss with them the precepts of God's word, and that their own ignorance would thus be exposed. The weapons of their carnal reasoning were powerless against the sword of the Spirit. Rome summoned all her authority to prevent the

circulation of the Scriptures; but decrees, anathemas, and tortures were alike in vain. The more she condemned and prohibited the Bible, the greater was the anxiety of the people to know what it really taught. All who could read were eager to study the word of God for themselves. They carried it about with them, and read and reread, and could not be satisfied until they had committed large portions to memory. Seeing the favor with which the New Testament was received, Luther immediately began the translation of the Old, and published it in parts as fast as completed. {GC 194.1}

Luther's writings were welcomed alike in city and in hamlet. "What Luther and his friends composed, others circulated. Monks, convinced of the unlawfulness of monastic obligations, desirous of exchanging a long life of slothfulness for one of active exertion, but too ignorant to proclaim the word of God, traveled through the provinces, visiting hamlets and cottages, where they sold the books of Luther and his friends. Germany soon swarmed with these bold colporteurs."—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 11. {GC 194.2}

These writings were studied with deep interest by rich and poor, the learned and the ignorant. At night the teachers of the village schools read them aloud to little groups gathered at the fireside. With every effort some souls would be convicted of the truth and, receiving the word with gladness, would in their turn tell the good news to others. {GC 194.3}

The words of Inspiration were verified: "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." Psalm 119:130. The study of the Scriptures was working a mighty change in the minds and hearts of the people. The papal rule had placed upon its subjects an iron yoke which held them in ignorance and degradation. A superstitious observance of forms had been scrupulously maintained; but in all their service the heart and intellect had had little part. The preaching of Luther, setting forth the plain truths of God's word, and then the word itself, placed in the hands of the common people, had aroused their dormant powers, not only purifying and ennobling the spiritual nature, but imparting new strength and vigor to the intellect. {GC 195.1}

Persons of all ranks were to be seen with the Bible in their hands, defending the doctrines of the Reformation. The papists who had left the study of the Scriptures to the priests and monks now called upon them to come forward and refute the new teachings. But, ignorant alike of the Scriptures and of the power of God, priests and friars were totally defeated by those whom they had denounced as unlearned and heretical. "Unhappily," said a Catholic writer, "Luther had persuaded his followers to put no faith in any other oracle than the Holy Scriptures."—D'Aubigne, b. 9, ch. 11. Crowds would gather to hear the truth advocated by men of little education, and even discussed by them with learned and eloquent theologians. The shameful ignorance of these great men was made apparent as their arguments were met by the simple teachings of God's word. Laborers, soldiers, women, and even children, were better acquainted with the Bible teachings than were the priests and learned doctors. {GC 195.2}

The contrast between the disciples of the gospel and the upholders of popish superstition was no less manifest in the ranks of scholars than among the common people. “Opposed to the old champions of the hierarchy, who had neglected the study of languages and the cultivation of literature, ... were generous-minded youth, devoted to study, investigating Scripture, and familiarizing themselves with the masterpieces of antiquity. Possessing an active mind, an elevated soul, and intrepid heart, these young men soon acquired such knowledge that for a long period none could compete with them.... Accordingly, when these youthful defenders of the Reformation met the Romish doctors in any assembly, they attacked them with such ease and confidence that these ignorant men hesitated, became embarrassed, and fell into a contempt merited in the eyes of all.”—*Ibid.*, b. 9, ch. 11. {GC 195.3}

As the Romish clergy saw their congregations diminishing, they invoked the aid of the magistrates, and by every means in their power endeavored to bring back their hearers. But the people had found in the new teachings that which supplied the wants of their souls, and they turned away from those who had so long fed them with the worthless husks of superstitious rites and human traditions. {GC 196.1}

When persecution was kindled against the teachers of the truth, they gave heed to the words of Christ: “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.” Matthew 10:23. The light penetrated everywhere. The fugitives would find somewhere a hospitable door opened to them, and there abiding, they would preach Christ, sometimes in the church, or, if denied that privilege, in private houses or in the open air. Wherever they could obtain a hearing was a consecrated temple. The truth, proclaimed with such energy and assurance, spread with irresistible power. {GC 196.2}

In vain both ecclesiastical and civil authorities were invoked to crush the heresy. In vain they resorted to imprisonment, torture, fire, and sword. Thousands of believers sealed their faith with their blood, and yet the work went on. Persecution served only to extend the truth, and the fanaticism which Satan endeavored to unite with it resulted in making more clear the contrast between the work of Satan and the work of God. {GC 196.3}

#### Chapter 11—Protest of the Princes

One of the noblest testimonies ever uttered for the Reformation was the Protest offered by the Christian princes of Germany at the Diet of Spires in 1529. The courage, faith, and firmness of those men of God gained for succeeding ages liberty of thought and of conscience. Their Protest gave to the reformed church the name of Protestant; its principles are “the very essence of Protestantism.”—D’Aubigne, b. 13, ch. 6. {GC 197.1}

A dark and threatening day had come for the Reformation. Notwithstanding the Edict of Worms, declaring Luther to be an outlaw and forbidding the teaching or belief of his doctrines, religious toleration had thus far prevailed in the empire. God’s providence had held in check the forces that opposed the truth. Charles V was bent on crushing the Reformation, but often as he raised his hand to strike he had been forced to turn aside the blow. Again and again the immediate destruction of all

who dared to oppose themselves to Rome appeared inevitable; but at the critical moment the armies of the Turk appeared on the eastern frontier, or the king of France, or even the pope himself, jealous of the increasing greatness of the emperor, made war upon him; and thus, amid the strife and tumult of nations, the Reformation had been left to strengthen and extend. {GC 197.2}

At last, however, the papal sovereigns had stifled their feuds, that they might make common cause against the Reformers. The Diet of Spires in 1526 had given each state full liberty in matters of religion until the meeting of a general council; but no sooner had the dangers passed which secured this concession, than the emperor summoned a second Diet to convene at Spires in 1529 for the purpose of crushing heresy. The princes were to be induced, by peaceable means if possible, to side against the Reformation; but if these failed, Charles was prepared to resort to the sword. {GC 197.3}

The papists were exultant. They appeared at Spires in great numbers, and openly manifested their hostility toward the Reformers and all who favored them. Said Melancthon: "We are the execration and the sweepings of the world; but Christ will look down on His poor people, and will preserve them."—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. The evangelical princes in attendance at the Diet were forbidden even to have the gospel preached in their dwellings. But the people of Spires thirsted for the word of God, and, notwithstanding the prohibition, thousands flocked to the services held in the chapel of the elector of Saxony. {GC 198.1}

This hastened the crisis. An imperial message announced to the Diet that as the resolution granting liberty of conscience had given rise to great disorders, the emperor required that it be annulled. This arbitrary act excited the indignation and alarm of the evangelical Christians. Said one: "Christ has again fallen into the hands of Caiaphas and Pilate." The Romanists became more violent. A bigoted papist declared: "The Turks are better than the Lutherans; for the Turks observe fast days, and the Lutherans violate them. If we must choose between the Holy Scriptures of God and the old errors of the church, we should reject the former." Said Melancthon: "Every day, in full assembly, Faber casts some new stone at us gospelers."—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. {GC 198.2}

Religious toleration had been legally established, and the evangelical states were resolved to oppose the infringement of their rights. Luther, being still under the ban imposed by the Edict of Worms, was not permitted to be present at Spires; but his place was supplied by his colaborers and the princes whom God had raised up to defend His cause in this emergency. The noble Frederick of Saxony, Luther's former protector, had been removed by death; but Duke John, his brother and successor, had joyfully welcomed the Reformation, and while a friend of peace, he displayed great energy and courage in all matters relating to the interests of the faith. {GC 198.3}

The priests demanded that the states which had accepted the Reformation submit implicitly to Romish jurisdiction. The Reformers, on the other hand, claimed the liberty which had previously been granted. They could not consent that Rome



should again bring under her control those states that had with so great joy received the word of God. {GC 199.1}

As a compromise it was finally proposed that where the Reformation had not become established, the Edict of Worms should be rigorously enforced; and that “in those where the people had deviated from it, and where they could not conform to it without danger of revolt, they should at least effect no new reform, they should touch upon no controverted point, they should not oppose the celebration of the mass, they should permit no Roman Catholic to embrace Lutheranism.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. This measure passed the Diet, to the great satisfaction of the popish priests and prelates. {GC 199.2}

If this edict were enforced, “the Reformation could neither be extended ... where as yet it was unknown, nor be established on solid foundations ... where it already existed.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. Liberty of speech would be prohibited. No conversions would be allowed. And to these restrictions and prohibitions the friends of the Reformation were required at once to submit. The hopes of the world seemed about to be extinguished. “The re-establishment of the Romish hierarchy ... would infallibly bring back the ancient abuses;” and an occasion would readily be found for “completing the destruction of a work already so violently shaken” by fanaticism and dissension.—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. {GC 199.3}

As the evangelical party met for consultation, one looked to another in blank dismay. From one to another passed the inquiry: “What is to be done?” Mighty issues for the world were at stake. “Shall the chiefs of the Reformation submit, and accept the edict? How easily might the Reformers at this crisis, which was truly a tremendous one, have argued themselves into a wrong course! How many plausible pretexts and fair reasons might they have found for submission! The Lutheran princes were guaranteed the free exercise of their religion. The same boon was extended to all those of their subjects who, prior to the passing of the measure, had embraced the reformed views. Ought not this to content them? How many perils would submission avoid! On what unknown hazards and conflicts would opposition launch them! Who knows what opportunities the future may bring? Let us embrace peace; let us seize the olive branch Rome holds out, and close the wounds of Germany. With arguments like these might the Reformers have justified their adoption of a course which would have assuredly issued in no long time in the overthrow of their cause. {GC 199.4}

“Happily they looked at the principle on which this arrangement was based, and they acted in faith. What was that principle? It was the right of Rome to coerce conscience and forbid free inquiry. But were not themselves and their Protestant subjects to enjoy religious freedom? Yes, as a favor specially stipulated for in the arrangement, but not as a right. As to all outside that arrangement, the great principle of authority was to rule; conscience was out of court; Rome was infallible judge, and must be obeyed. The acceptance of the proposed arrangement would have been a virtual admission that religious liberty ought to be confined to reformed Saxony; and as to all the rest of Christendom, free inquiry and the profession of the

reformed faith were crimes, and must be visited with the dungeon and the stake. Could they consent to localize religious liberty? to have it proclaimed that the Reformation had made its last convert? had subjugated its last acre? and that wherever Rome bore sway at this hour, there her dominion was to be perpetuated? Could the Reformers have pleaded that they were innocent of the blood of those hundreds and thousands who, in pursuance of this arrangement, would have to yield up their lives in popish lands? This would have been to betray, at that supreme hour, the cause of the gospel and the liberties of Christendom.”—Wylie, b. 9, ch. 15. Rather would they “sacrifice everything, even their states, their crowns, and their lives.”—D’Aubigne, b. 13, ch. 5. {GC 200.1}

“Let us reject this decree,” said the princes. “In matters of conscience the majority has no power.” The deputies declared: “It is to the decree of 1526 that we are indebted for the peace that the empire enjoys: its abolition would fill Germany with troubles and divisions. The Diet is incompetent to do more than preserve religious liberty until the council meets.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. To protect liberty of conscience is the duty of the state, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion. Every secular government that attempts to regulate or enforce religious observances by civil authority is sacrificing the very principle for which the evangelical Christian so nobly struggled. {GC 201.1}

The papists determined to put down what they termed “daring obstinacy.” They began by endeavoring to cause divisions among the supporters of the Reformation and to intimidate all who had not openly declared in its favor. The representatives of the free cities were at last summoned before the Diet and required to declare whether they would accede to the terms of the proposition. They pleaded for delay, but in vain. When brought to the test, nearly one half their number sided with the Reformers. Those who thus refused to sacrifice liberty of conscience and the right of individual judgment well knew that their position marked them for future criticism, condemnation, and persecution. Said one of the delegates: “We must either deny the word of God, or—be burnt.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. {GC 201.2}

King Ferdinand, the emperor’s representative at the Diet, saw that the decree would cause serious divisions unless the princes could be induced to accept and sustain it. He therefore tried the art of persuasion, well knowing that to employ force with such men would only render them the more determined. He “begged the princes to accept the decree, assuring them that the emperor would be exceedingly pleased with them.” But these faithful men acknowledged an authority above that of earthly rulers, and they answered calmly: “We will obey the emperor in everything that may contribute to maintain peace and the honor of God.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. {GC 201.3}

In the presence of the Diet the king at last announced to the elector and his friends that the edict “was about to be drawn up in the form of an imperial decree,” and that “their only remaining course was to submit to the majority.” Having thus spoken, he withdrew from the assembly, giving the Reformers no opportunity for deliberation or reply. “To no purpose they sent a deputation entreating the king to return.” To

their remonstrances he answered only: “It is a settled affair; submission is all that remains.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 5. {GC 202.1}

The imperial party were convinced that the Christian princes would adhere to the Holy Scriptures as superior to human doctrines and requirements; and they knew that wherever this principle was accepted, the papacy would eventually be overthrown. But, like thousands since their time, looking only “at the things which are seen,” they flattered themselves that the cause of the emperor and the pope was strong, and that of the Reformers weak. Had the Reformers depended upon human aid alone, they would have been as powerless as the papists supposed. But though weak in numbers, and at variance with Rome, they had their strength. They appealed “from the report of the Diet to the word of God, and from the emperor Charles to Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 6. {GC 202.2}

As Ferdinand had refused to regard their conscientious convictions, the princes decided not to heed his absence, but to bring their Protest before the national council without delay. A solemn declaration was therefore drawn up and presented to the Diet: {GC 202.3}

“We protest by these presents, before God, our only Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Saviour, and who will one day be our Judge, as well as before all men and all creatures, that we, for us and for our people, neither consent nor adhere in any manner whatsoever to the proposed decree, in anything that is contrary to God, to His holy word, to our right conscience, to the salvation of our souls.” {GC 202.4}

“What! we ratify this edict! We assert that when Almighty God calls a man to His knowledge, this man nevertheless cannot receive the knowledge of God!” “There is no sure doctrine but such as is conformable to the word of God.... The Lord forbids the teaching of any other doctrine.... The Holy Scriptures ought to be explained by other and clearer texts; ... this Holy Book is, in all things necessary for the Christian, easy of understanding, and calculated to scatter the darkness. We are resolved, with the grace of God, to maintain the pure and exclusive preaching of His only word, such as it is contained in the biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, without adding anything thereto that may be contrary to it. This word is the only truth; it is the sure rule of all doctrine and of all life, and can never fail or deceive us. He who builds on this foundation shall stand against all the powers of hell, while all the human vanities that are set up against it shall fall before the face of God.” {GC 203.1}

“For this reason we reject the yoke that is imposed on us.” “At the same time we are in expectation that his imperial majesty will behave toward us like a Christian prince who loves God above all things; and we declare ourselves ready to pay unto him, as well as unto you, gracious lords, all the affection and obedience that are our just and legitimate duty.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 6. {GC 203.2}

A deep impression was made upon the Diet. The majority were filled with amazement and alarm at the boldness of the protesters. The future appeared to them stormy and uncertain. Dissension, strife, and bloodshed seemed inevitable. But the

Reformers, assured of the justice of their cause, and relying upon the arm of Omnipotence, were “full of courage and firmness.” {GC 203.3}

“The principles contained in this celebrated Protest ... constitute the very essence of Protestantism. Now this Protest opposes two abuses of man in matters of faith: the first is the intrusion of the civil magistrate, and the second the arbitrary authority of the church. Instead of these abuses, Protestantism sets the power of conscience above the magistrate, and the authority of the word of God above the visible church. In the first place, it rejects the civil power in divine things, and says with the prophets and apostles, ‘*We must obey God rather than man.*’ In presence of the crown of Charles the Fifth, it uplifts the crown of Jesus Christ. But it goes farther: it lays down the principle that all human teaching should be subordinate to the oracles of God.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 6. The protesters had moreover affirmed their right to utter freely their convictions of truth. They would not only believe and obey, but teach what the word of God presents, and they denied the right of priest or magistrate to interfere. The Protest of Spires was a solemn witness against religious intolerance, and an assertion of the right of all men to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. {GC 203.4}

The declaration had been made. It was written in the memory of thousands and registered in the books of heaven, where no effort of man could erase it. All evangelical Germany adopted the Protest as the expression of its faith. Everywhere men beheld in this declaration the promise of a new and better era. Said one of the princes to the Protestants of Spires: “May the Almighty, who has given you grace to confess energetically, freely, and fearlessly, preserve you in that Christian firmness until the day of eternity.”—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 6. {GC 204.1}

Had the Reformation, after attaining a degree of success, consented to temporize to secure favor with the world, it would have been untrue to God and to itself, and would thus have ensured its own destruction. The experience of these noble Reformers contains a lesson for all succeeding ages. Satan’s manner of working against God and His word has not changed; he is still as much opposed to the Scriptures being made the guide of life as in the sixteenth century. In our time there is a wide departure from their doctrines and precepts, and there is need of a return to the great Protestant principle—the Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty. Satan is still working through every means which he can control to destroy religious liberty. The antichristian power which the protesters of Spires rejected is now with renewed vigor seeking to re-establish its lost supremacy. The same unswerving adherence to the word of God manifested at that crisis of the Reformation is the only hope of reform today. {GC 204.2}

There appeared tokens of danger to the Protestants; there were tokens, also, that the divine hand was stretched out to protect the faithful. It was about this time that “Melancthon hastily conducted through the streets of Spires toward the Rhine his friend Simon Grynaeus, pressing him to cross the river. The latter was astonished at such precipitation. ‘An old man of grave and solemn air, but who is unknown to

me,' said Melanchthon, 'appeared before me and said, In a minute officers of justice will be sent by Ferdinand to arrest Grynaeus.'" {GC 205.1}

During the day, Grynaeus had been scandalized at a sermon by Faber, a leading papal doctor; and at the close, remonstrated with him for defending "certain detestable errors." "Faber dissembled his anger, but immediately after repaired to the king, from whom he had obtained an order against the importunate professor of Heidelberg. Melanchthon doubted not that God had saved his friend by sending one of His holy angels to forewarn him. {GC 205.2}

"Motionless on the banks of the Rhine, he waited until the waters of that stream had rescued Grynaeus from his persecutors. 'At last,' cried Melanchthon, as he saw him on the opposite side, 'at last he is torn from the cruel jaws of those who thirst for innocent blood.' When he returned to his house, Melanchthon was informed that officers in search of Grynaeus had ransacked it from top to bottom."—*Ibid.*, b. 13, ch. 6. {GC 205.3}

The Reformation was to be brought into greater prominence before the mighty ones of the earth. The evangelical princes had been denied a hearing by King Ferdinand; but they were to be granted an opportunity to present their cause in the presence of the emperor and the assembled dignitaries of church and state. To quiet the dissensions which disturbed the empire, Charles V, in the year following the Protest of Spires, convoked a diet at Augsburg, over which he announced his intention to preside in person. Thither the Protestant leaders were summoned. {GC 205.4}

Great dangers threatened the Reformation; but its advocates still trusted their cause with God, and pledged themselves to be firm to the gospel. The elector of Saxony was urged by his councilors not to appear at the Diet. The emperor, they said, required the attendance of the princes in order to draw them into a snare. "Is it not risking everything to go and shut oneself up within the walls of a city with a powerful enemy?" But others nobly declared, "Let the princes only comport themselves with courage, and God's cause is saved." "God is faithful; He will not abandon us," said Luther.—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 2. The elector set out, with his retinue, for Augsburg. All were acquainted with the dangers that menaced him, and many went forward with gloomy countenance and troubled heart. But Luther, who accompanied them as far as Coburg, revived their sinking faith by singing the hymn, written on that journey, "A strong tower is our God." Many an anxious foreboding was banished, many a heavy heart lightened, at the sound of the inspiring strains. {GC 206.1}

The reformed princes had determined upon having a statement of their views in systematic form, with the evidence from the Scriptures, to present before the Diet; and the task of its preparation was committed to Luther, Melanchthon, and their associates. This Confession was accepted by the Protestants as an exposition of their faith, and they assembled to affix their names to the important document. It was a solemn and trying time. The Reformers were solicitous that their cause should not be confounded with political questions; they felt that the Reformation should exercise no other influence than that which proceeds from the word of God. As the

Christian princes advanced to sign the Confession, Melancthon interposed, saying: "It is for the theologians and ministers to propose these things; let us reserve for other matters the authority of the mighty ones of the earth." "God forbid," replied John of Saxony, "that you should exclude me. I am resolved to do what is right, without troubling myself about my crown. I desire to confess the Lord. My electoral hat and my ermine are not so precious to me as the cross of Jesus Christ." Having thus spoken, he wrote down his name. Said another of the princes as he took the pen: "If the honor of my Lord Jesus Christ requires it, I am ready ... to leave my goods and life behind." "I would rather renounce my subjects and my states, rather quit the country of my fathers staff in hand," he continued, "than receive any other doctrine than that which is contained in this Confession."—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 6. Such was the faith and daring of those men of God. {GC 206.2}

The appointed time came to appear before the emperor. Charles V, seated upon his throne, surrounded by the electors and the princes, gave audience to the Protestant Reformers. The confession of their faith was read. In that august assembly the truths of the gospel were clearly set forth, and the errors of the papal church were pointed out. Well has that day been pronounced "the greatest day of the Reformation, and one of the most glorious in the history of Christianity and of mankind."—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 7. {GC 207.1}

But a few years had passed since the monk of Wittenberg stood alone at Worms before the national council. Now in his stead were the noblest and most powerful princes of the empire. Luther had been forbidden to appear at Augsburg, but he had been present by his words and prayers. "I am overjoyed," he wrote, "that I have lived until this hour, in which Christ has been publicly exalted by such illustrious confessors, and in so glorious an assembly."—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 7. Thus was fulfilled what the Scripture says: "I will speak of Thy testimonies ... before kings." Psalm 119:46. {GC 207.2}

In the days of Paul the gospel for which he was imprisoned was thus brought before the princes and nobles of the imperial city. So on this occasion, that which the emperor had forbidden to be preached from the pulpit was proclaimed from the palace; what many had regarded as unfit even for servants to listen to was heard with wonder by the masters and lords of the empire. Kings and great men were the auditory, crowned princes were the preachers, and the sermon was the royal truth of God. "Since the apostolic age," says a writer, "there has never been a greater work or a more magnificent confession."—D'Aubigne, b. 14, ch. 7. {GC 208.1}

"All that the Lutherans have said is true; we cannot deny it," declared a papist bishop. "Can you refute by sound reasons the Confession made by the elector and his allies?" asked another of Dr. Eck. "With the writings of the apostles and prophets—no!" was the reply; "but with those of the Fathers and of the councils—yes!" "I understand," responded the questioner. "The Lutherans, according to you, are in Scripture, and we are outside."—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 8. {GC 208.2}

Some of the princes of Germany were won to the reformed faith. The emperor himself declared that the Protestant articles were but the truth. The Confession was

translated into many languages and circulated through all Europe, and it has been accepted by millions in succeeding generations as the expression of their faith. {GC 208.3}

God's faithful servants were not toiling alone. While principalities and powers and wicked spirits in high places were leagued against them, the Lord did not forsake His people. Could their eyes have been opened, they would have seen as marked evidence of divine presence and aid as was granted to a prophet of old. When Elisha's servant pointed his master to the hostile army surrounding them and cutting off all opportunity for escape, the prophet prayed: "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see." 2 Kings 6:17. And, lo, the mountain was filled with chariots and horses of fire, the army of heaven stationed to protect the man of God. Thus did angels guard the workers in the cause of the Reformation. {GC 208.4}

One of the principles most firmly maintained by Luther was that there should be no resort to secular power in support of the Reformation, and no appeal to arms for its defense. He rejoiced that the gospel was confessed by princes of the empire; but when they proposed to unite in a defensive league, he declared that "the doctrine of the gospel should be defended by *God* alone.... The less man meddled in the work, the more striking would be God's intervention in its behalf. All the politic precautions suggested were, in his view, attributable to unworthy fear and sinful mistrust."—D'Aubigne, London ed., b. 10, ch. 14. {GC 209.1}

When powerful foes were uniting to overthrow the reformed faith, and thousands of swords seemed about to be unsheathed against it, Luther wrote: "Satan is putting forth his fury; ungodly pontiffs are conspiring; and we are threatened with war. Exhort the people to contend valiantly before the throne of the Lord, by faith and prayer, so that our enemies, vanquished by the Spirit of God, may be constrained to peace. Our chief want, our chief labor, is prayer; let the people know that they are now exposed to the edge of the sword and to the rage of Satan, and let them pray."—D'Aubigne, b. 10, ch. 14. {GC 209.2}

Again, at a later date, referring to the league contemplated by the reformed princes, Luther declared that the only weapon employed in this warfare should be "the sword of the Spirit." He wrote to the elector of Saxony: "We cannot on our conscience approve the proposed alliance. We would rather die ten times than see our gospel cause one drop of blood to be shed. Our part is to be like lambs of the slaughter. The cross of Christ must be borne. Let your highness be without fear. We shall do more by our prayers than all our enemies by their boastings. Only let not your hands be stained with the blood of your brethren. If the emperor requires us to be given up to his tribunals, we are ready to appear. You cannot defend our faith: each one should believe at his own risk and peril."—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 1. {GC 209.3}

From the secret place of prayer came the power that shook the world in the Great Reformation. There, with holy calmness, the servants of the Lord set their feet upon the rock of His promises. During the struggle at Augsburg, Luther "did not pass a day without devoting three hours at least to prayer, and they were hours selected from those the most favorable to study." In the privacy of his chamber he was heard

to pour out his soul before God in words “full of adoration, fear, and hope, as when one speaks to a friend.” “I know that Thou art our Father and our God,” he said, “and that Thou wilt scatter the persecutors of Thy children; for Thou art Thyself endangered with us. All this matter is Thine, and it is only by Thy constraint that we have put our hands to it. Defend us, then, O Father!”—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 6. {GC 210.1}

To Melancthon, who was crushed under the burden of anxiety and fear, he wrote: “Grace and peace in Christ—in Christ, I say, and not in the world. Amen. I hate with exceeding hatred those extreme cares which consume you. If the cause is unjust, abandon it; if the cause is just, why should we belie the promises of Him who commands us to sleep without fear? ... Christ will not be wanting to the work of justice and truth. He lives, He reigns; what fear, then, can we have?”—*Ibid.*, b. 14, ch. 6. {GC 210.2}

God did listen to the cries of His servants. He gave to princes and ministers grace and courage to maintain the truth against the rulers of the darkness of this world. Saith the Lord: “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.” 1 Peter 2:6. The Protestant Reformers had built on Christ, and the gates of hell could not prevail against them. {GC 210.3}