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THE DOCTRINE OF ORIGINAL SIN AS HELD BY
THE CHURCH, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER THE
REFORMATION.

Although, as has been shown in a former article, the Pelagian doctrines respecting original sin were condemned by councils and popes, yet the heresy was not soon extinguished; but was in whole or in part adopted by many learned and ingenious men. To many, the opinions of Augustine appeared harsh, and hardly reconcilable with moral agency and human accountableness. They, therefore, endeavoured to strike out a middle course between the rigid doctrines of Augustine and the unscriptural opinions of Pelagius. This led to the adoption of an intermediate system, which obtained the denomination of semi-Pelagianism; and as these views seem to have been generally received about Marseilles, in the south of France, the abettors of this theory were very commonly called *Massilienses*. Augustine entered also into this controversy, and carried on a correspondence on the subject with Prosper and Hilary, two learned men of that region; the former of whom ardently opposed the semi-Pelagians, while the latter was inclined to favour them. By degrees, however, the public attention was called off from this subject. The darkness and confusion produced by the incursion of the northern bar-

REVIEW OF LUTHER'S LETTERS, BY DE
WETTE.

Dr Martin Luther's Briefe, Sendschreiben und Bedenken, vollständig aus den verschiedenen Ausgaben seiner Werke und Briefe, aus andern Büchern und noch unbenutzten Handschriften gesammelt, kritisch und historisch bearbeitet von Dr Wilhelm Martin Leberecht de Wette, Professor der Theologie zu Basel.

Erster Theil. Luthers Briefe bis zu seinem Aufenthalt auf Wartburg. Nebst Luthers Bildniss. Berlin, 1825. Pp. xxviii. 605, 8vo. 1825.

Zweiter Theil. Luthers Briefe von seinem Aufenthalt auf Wartburg bis zu seiner Verheurathung. Berlin, 1826. Pp. 680.

The extraordinary fame of the great reformer has given a value to every production of his pen, in the estimation of the protestant world. In addition to the voluminous works which he prepared for the public, and which were so diligently studied by our fathers, his familiar letters have been sought out and collected; notes of his ordinary discourse have been offered in print; the remnants of his rudest draughts, *adversaria*, and heads of arguments, and even notes, quittances and household memoranda, have been rescued from oblivion, and set forth in volumes.

No name in the history of the reformation holds so high a rank as that of Luther. When Calvin, or Zuingle, or Beza, or even Melancthon, are named with praise by their respective admirers, there is immediately manifested a reluctance, on the part of many, to accord to them the unmingled applause which all sects and schools of reformed Christians unite in bestowing on Luther. And yet, strange as the assertion may appear to some, and long and sedulously as the character of this wonderful man has been examined, we venture to maintain that few men have been more misunderstood. There are, indeed, certain prominent traits which strike at once the apprehension of the most unobservant, and in which all the various and discordant representations agree; as in the many portraits of his

countenance there are notable features common to all, by which it may be recognised.

None, it is supposed, would dissent from the statement that the leader of the reformation was a man of stern integrity, of sincere piety, of ardent zeal, of undaunted firmness, of profound learning, and of indefatigable and laborious perseverance. Yet these are attributes which were not withheld from many of his contemporaries, and they are compatible with many and great faults, which indeed it is too common to blend with these in the picture. The point of view from which the character of Martin Luther has been surveyed, has confined the observation of men too narrowly to his public acts. He has been regarded as a bold and decided innovator, braving the storms of ecclesiastical wrath, and shaking to its foundation a corrupt but mighty hierarchy. The spectacle presented by such a character, standing in such relation to the church, is interesting and sublime; but its very splendour may and does tend to withdraw the mind from those characteristics which mark him out as a man, a Christian, a friend, a scholar, and a minister of Jesus Christ. Every man is in reality what he is found to be in these more ordinary relations. It is here only that we can profitably look upon him as an example, for here we behold him arrayed in the common garb of humanity, compassed with frailties and temptations; and thus trace those principles in their simpler manifestations, which resulted in such amazing effects when applied to the singular circumstances in which he was placed.

It is not enough that we set before us the commanding figure of the eminent divine, when he stood before princes and councils, and defied the malice of the court and the church. We must follow him to his university, his dwelling, his cloister, his closet; we must inspect, in secret, the workings of a heart swelling with vast designs and oppressed with anxious cares; we must mingle with the circle of friends in which his inmost fears and sentiments were breathed forth. The volumes before us enable us in some good measure to do this, and we believe that no one can rise from their perusal without acknowledging that he has acquired new and more satisfactory views of the character of the man, and has been relieved of many painful doubts and difficulties with regard to his conduct and motives. It must not be expected, however, that by any abstract or analysis of this correspondence, we should be able to communicate to the reader the correct and

vivid impression which arises from the examination of the letters themselves. The reason for the vagueness and inaccuracy of the ordinary estimates of Luther's character, must ever be the very reason why a second-hand representation must fail to be satisfactory. From a minute description by a man of discrimination and eloquence, we may gather some outlines of the peculiarities of one whom we desire to know; but how far does this fall short of that which we acquire by an hour's conversation with the subject himself? Our sole object in the extracts and remarks which follow, is to attract notice to this invaluable collection of documents, constituting at once the most authentic and the most complete biography of the venerated reformer.

The character of Luther is an interesting study to the theologian and the lover of truth, when viewed with regard to the gradual development of those opinions and feelings which led to consequences so momentous. It is known by all our readers that his entrance into the monastic order took place in the year 1505. Corrupt as were the motives by which multitudes were influenced in attaching themselves to conventual institutions, we have every reason to believe that the views of Luther were sincere and conscientious, and that it was from a hearty desire to consecrate himself to God that he united himself to the Augustinian monks of Erfurt. He had already acquired an admiration for the great patron of the order, as we learn from a desire which he expressed to exchange his name of Martin for that of Augustine. In the year 1507 he was admitted to the priesthood, and we are persuaded that it will gratify many readers to give a translation of a letter in which he invites an intimate friend to attend the solemnity of his ordination, especially as it is the earliest production of his pen which is extant.

"To John Brown, Vicar in Eisenach.

"I should fear, most courteous friend, to vex your kindness with my importunate letters and solicitations, if I did not call to mind the sincere affection of your benevolent and ardent heart towards me, which I have proved by so many arguments and favours. I have not, therefore, hesitated to address to you this epistle, confiding in the intimacy of mutual love, that it will find acceptance with you, and that you will not be inexorable.

"Since then, God, who is holy and glorions in all his works, has vouchsafed so greatly to exalt me, a miserable and in every respect unworthy sinner, and of his mere and most free mercy to call me to

his sublime ministry; in order that I may be grateful for the magnitude of the divine mercy, (however little mere dust can do,) I am bound entirely to fulfil the office entrusted to me.

“ For this cause, agreeably to the decree of my fathers, it is determined, under favour of God's grace, to solemnize this ordinance upon the fourth Sunday from this time, which we usually call *Cantate*. This day is set for dedicating my first fruits to God, to suit the convenience of my father. To this I invite you, humbly, yet perhaps too boldly; not, I am sure, because I deem it proper, on the ground of any obligations laid on you by me (there are none such) to incommode you with the toil of such a journey, or that you should attend upon the poverty of my low estate, but because I learned your kindness and easy forbearance towards me, on a former day, and abundantly at other times. Be pleased, therefore, dearest father, master, brother, (for one is the title due to your age and care, the other of merit, and the third of pious regard), if by any means your time, church affairs, or domestic business will permit, to attend, and assist by your grateful presence and your prayers, that our sacrifice may be acceptable in the sight of God. You will have for a fellow-traveller my kinsman Conrad, formerly sacristan of St. Nicholas', and whomsoever else you may desire, provided he also is willing, and free from domestic cares. Observe, lastly, that you are to come directly to our monastery, and tarry for a short time, (I have no fear indeed that you will take up your abode here,) and not seek for lodging through the streets without. It will be necessary for you to become a *Cellarius* [butler], that is, an inmate of a *cell*. Farewell, in Jesus Christ our Lord. From our convent at Erfurt, 10 Calends May, (22d April) 1507.

(Signed) FRATER MARTINUS LUTHERUS EX MANSFELD.”—*Ep.* 1.

There is in this earliest relic of Luther, no striking indication of that greatness which ten years later astonished Europe; but how little did the young monk imagine that the note of simple-hearted friendship, in which he invited a friend to his ordination, would ever be sought out, and published, and subjected to remark. The style of this and other writings of that period is rude and contorted, clogged with the barbarous words and accumulated superlatives of the *infimæ latinitatis*. It breathes, however, the humble, fearful spirit of one who approaches the sacred office with a deep sense of accountability. It was in this very year that the writer first obtained a copy of the whole Bible; which soon became the standard of all his opinions.

In 1508 the humble monk became professor of ethics and dialectics in the university at Wittenberg, and devoted him-

self to the promotion of genuine learning. It was about this time that the persecution of the celebrated Hebraist *Reuchlin*, or *Capnio*, was at its height, not without exciting the most lively interest in the mind of Luther. One of his letters, supposed to be written in the year 1510, being the first which remains of the long-continued correspondence with *Spalatin*, contains allusions to this persecution, and to the corruption of the times, which appear to be the very first tokens of any desire for a reformation. "The theologians of Cologne," says *De Wette*, "had, in 1509, instigated a converted Jew, *Pfefferkorn* by name, to procure from the emperor Maximilian plenary authority to destroy all Jewish writings; by which they intended to give a blow to Hebrew literature, which *Reuchlin* had brought into favour. As *Pfefferkorn*, however, met with difficulties, and asked new orders and authorities from the emperor, the latter commissioned the elector of Mentz to obtain from *Reuchlin* a statement of the case; which he gave in such a way as to pronounce the determination to destroy all Jewish writings preposterous. *Pfefferkorn* attacked this in a production which was answered by *Reuchlin*. The affair went to greater lengths, as may be seen in *Planck's* History of Protestantism." The letter of Luther contains the following paragraphs:

"Peace be unto thee, venerable Master George. Brother *John Lange* has asked me, in your name, my opinion concerning the case of the innocent and very learned *John Reuchlin*, in opposition to the jealous inhabitants of Cologne, and whether he is in peril as it regards faith and heresy. You know, most kind sir, that I hold the man in high esteem and affection, and my judgment is perhaps suspicious, since (as is said) I am not free and impartial. Yet, as you demand it, I shall say what I think; that there appears to me, in all his written statement, nothing that is dangerous." "For if such protestations and opinions are dangerous, there is cause to fear, lest perchance those inquisitors, at their good pleasure, shall begin to swallow camels and strain out gnats, and denounce the orthodox as heretics, in spite of all their protestations. Now, in truth, what shall I say of this, but that they are plotting to cast out Beelzebub, not by the finger of God? This is what I often deplore and bewail. For we Christians are wise out of doors, and senseless at home. There are blasphemies a hundred fold worse throughout the streets of Jerusalem, and every place is filled with spiritual idols. Now, while these ought with all possible diligence to be removed, as intestine enemies, we are neglecting those things which most sorely press us, and turning away to external and foreign matters, at the

suggestion of the devil; deserting our own affairs, and doing no good in those which are extraneous."—*Ep.* 3.

As we have named *Reuchlin*, it may not be irrelevant to insert in this connexion an extract from a letter of Luther, eight years later, after the triumph obtained by the former. It is the 102d of this collection, and bears date December 14, 1518.

"The Lord be with thee, most courageous man; I give thanks for the mercy of God, most learned and accomplished Reuchlin, which is in you, and by which at length you have succeeded in stopping the mouths of those that uttered unrighteousness. You have, indeed, been an instrument of the divine counsels, unknown by yourself, but longed for by all who were interested in pure theology; so that far other effects were wrought by God, than appeared to be accomplished by you. I was one of those who desired to be with you, but lacked opportunity. Yet I was ever present with you in prayers and wishes. What was then, however, denied to me as your associate, is now accumulated upon me as your successor. The teeth of that Behemoth are assailing me, that if possible, they may be indemnified for the ignominy which they received from you. And though I oppose them with genius and strength of erudition far inferior to that with which you met and prostrated them, yet with no less determination of soul. They decline argument with me, and refuse to answer, but with mere force and violence embarrass my path. But Christ lives, and I can lose nothing, for I have nothing to lose. Not a few of the horns of these bulls have been broken by your firmness. For God hath wrought this by your means, that the tyrant of sophists might learn to resist sometimes more tardily and meekly the true study of theology, and that Germany might begin to breathe once more, since, alas, for centuries the doctrines of the scripture have been oppressed, or rather extinguished."—*Ep.* 102.

With the views which Luther had obtained of the true source of theological truth, it is natural to suppose that he would soon be led to condemn the scholastic method of argument. This was not, in his case, the result of any ignorance of the system of the schools. He thoroughly knew the citadel which he was about to attack; and if he had been disposed to glory in human strength, no path to honour lay more fairly before him than that of dialectic warfare. As professor of logic he had been eminent, in an age when all were ambitious of this honour, and through life he displayed a remarkable adroitness in turning the weapons of the Aristotelians against themselves. Yet we find in a letter of date February 9, 1516,

that he thus commences his attack upon the peripatetic philosophy. The temper of the age and of the man will excuse some of the expressions:

“*To John Lange.* I send these letters, father, to the excellent *Jodocus Isenacensis*, (his former instructor at Erfurt,) filled with questions opposed to logic, philosophy and theology; that is of abuse and maledictions against Aristotle, Porphyry and the Sententiarii, in other words the ruinous studies of this age. For so it will be interpreted by those who give command to be silent (not for five years with Pythagoras, but) perpetually and eternally with the dead; to believe all things, to listen to all things, and never, even by way of light prelude, to ‘peep or mutter’ against Aristotle and the sentences.” “My mind burns for nothing so much as to expose to the public that impostor, who has so truly deluded the church under a Greek mask, and if there were time, to manifest his ignominy to all persons. I have in hand annotations upon the first book of the physics, wherein I have resolved to enact the drama of Aristaeus, against this Proteus of mine, the most crafty seducer of minds, for if Aristotle had not been flesh and blood, I should not scruple to say that he was truly a devil. It is indeed the greatest of my crosses that I am forced to see the best minds among my brethren, formed for noble pursuits, spending life and losing labour in these sloughs; while the universities do not cease to burn and condemn good books, and then indite, yea, dream bad ones.”—*Ep.* 8.

These were daring words for a young man in such an age, and here we perceive the spirit of the reformation, and the temper of the man, who never hesitated to express his honest convictions, at every hazard. The same intrepidity of mind forbade him to conceal the sentiments which, it appears, he had long entertained upon the great doctrine of justification by faith, which had been so long perverted and concealed by these subtleties. *To George Spenlein*, a brother Augustinian, he writes, April 7, 1516:

“I desire to know how it is with your soul, and whether at length, weary of its own righteousness, it has learned to live (*respirare*) and confide in the righteousness of Christ. For in our age the temptation to presumption is lively in many persons, and especially in those who seek with all their might to be righteous and good. Being ignorant of the righteousness of God, which is given us in Christ most abundantly and gratuitously, they strive of themselves to work what is good till such time as they may attain confidence to stand before God, adorned, as it were, with their virtues and merits; which is impossible to be done. Therefore, my dear brother, learn Jesus Christ, and him crucified; learn to sing praise to him, and to say to him, despairing of yourself: ‘Thou, Lord Jesus, art my

righteousness, but I am thy sin ; thou hast assumed what was mine, and given me what was thine ; thou hast assumed what thou wast not, and given me what I was not.' Beware lest at any time you aspire to such purity, as to be unwilling to appear to yourself to be a sinner ; nay, to be such. For Christ dwells in none but sinners. For he descended from heaven, where he dwells in the righteous, that he might even dwell in sinners. Meditate upon this his love, and you shall behold his most sweet consolation. For if, by our own efforts, we can obtain peace of conscience, for what end has he died ? So that you can find peace only in him, by a *fiducial despair* of yourself and your own works : you shall learn moreover from him, that as he has taken thee and made thy sins his own, so likewise has he made his righteousness thine."—*Ep. 9.*

In these sentences we discover the sum and substance of that precious truth in which all the reformers gloried, and although the nicety of theological argument would at this day demand greater precision of language, yet the precious doctrine is that which commends itself to the judgment and the heart of every unsophisticated Christian. It was a matter of lamentation to the Saxon divines, that *Erasmus*, to whom they had looked as the great restorer of letters, the satirist of many papal abuses, and the leader in scriptural interpretation, should have so soon diverged from them upon this fundamental point. Luther thus states his opinion of *Erasmus* and his doctrine, in a letter to his friend *Spalatin*, October 19, 1516.

"The things which disturb me, with regard to Erasmus, who is a most learned man, are these, that in explaining the words of the apostle, he understands by 'the righteousness of works,' or 'of the law,' or one's 'own righteousness,' (for so the apostle calls it,) the ceremonial and typical observances. And then, as to original sin, (which indeed he admits), he will not allow that the apostle treats of it in the 5th of Romans. Now if he would read Augustine in those books which he wrote against the Pelagians, especially *of the spirit and letter*, and *of the demerit and remission of sins*, and against the two epistles of the Pelagians, and likewise against Julian, almost all of which may be found in the eighth part of his works; and would observe that he holds nothing peculiar to himself, but what was held by the most eminent of the fathers, Cyprian, Nazianzen, Rhæticus, Irenæus, Hilary, Olympius, Innocent and Ambrose, it might perhaps be, that he would not only understand the apostle aright, but would also consider Augustine as deserving greater respect than he has hitherto believed. In this I hesitate not to dissent from Erasmus, because in the interpretation of scripture I prefer Augustine to Jerome, as much as he prefers Jerome, in every thing, to Augustine. Not that I am drawn, from regard to our order, to approve St

Augustine; for before I had alighted on his works, he was not in the slightest favour with me; but because I see St Jerome, as if with design, attaching himself to the historic sense, and what is more remarkable, interpreting scripture more soundly when it occurs incidentally (as for instance in his epistles) than when he treats it elaborately, in his works. The righteousness of the law, or of works, therefore, consists not merely in ceremonies, but more properly in the deeds of the whole decalogue.' 'For we are not justified by doing justly, as Aristotle supposes, except *simulatorie*, but in being made and in being just (*justi fiendo et essendo*) so to speak, we do justly. The person must first be changed, then the works. Abel was accepted before his offerings; but of this at another time.' 'You would say that I was presumptuous in causing such men to pass under the rod of Aristarchus, but that you know that I do these things for the sake of theology and the welfare of the brethren.'"—P. 39.

In the early part of the ensuing year (1517) he expresses in a letter to *Lange* more decided doubts respecting Erasmus. The mortification and pain of the reformed theologians was the greater, because they had numbered this celebrated scholar among their coadjutors, and had already profited very much by his critical investigations and liberal sentiments. They had yet to learn what so soon appeared in a most glaring manner, that it was simply the republic of letters, and not the kingdom of Christ, for which Erasmus was concerned:

"I am reading our Erasmus, and my regard for him decreases day by day. It pleases me indeed, that with equal constancy and learning he attacks both the monks and the priesthood, and convicts them of their inveterate and lethargic ignorance; but I fear he does not sufficiently bring forward Christ and the grace of God, in which he is much more ignorant than Stapulensis. Human things are of more weight with him than divine. Though I judge him with reluctance, yet I do it, that you may be admonished not to read—still less to receive every thing without discrimination. The times are now perilous, and I see that one is not a truly wise Christian because he is learned in Greek and Hebrew, since even St Jerome, with five languages, was not equal to Augustine with one; though Erasmus judges far otherwise. But that man who attributes something to the human will, judges differently from him who knows nothing except grace."—*Ep.* 29.

The admiration of Augustine, already noticed, continued to be manifest during his whole life, and the works of this father appear to have been, under his auspices, used as text-books in the university of Wittemberg.

“Our theology,” he says to Lange, “and St Augustine go forward prosperously, and, through the favour of God, reign in our university. Aristotle goes down by degrees, and totters towards that impending ruin, which is to be eternal. The *sententarii* excite surprising disgust; nor can any one hope for auditors, unless he is willing to teach this theology, that is to say, the Bible, or St Augustine, or some doctor of ecclesiastical authority.”—*Ep.* 34.

The year 1517 was signalized by the attack made upon the doctrines of the Romish church, and more especially those which relate to indulgences. The general outline of this controversy must be fresh in the recollection of all who are familiar with ecclesiastical history. It is nevertheless pleasing to be able to extract from this correspondence some of the earliest declarations of the reformer, respecting this atrocious imposture, as they afford new proofs of that decision of character which marked his entire course. In a letter written October 31, the time at which he commenced the campaign against indulgences, he says to *Albert*, archbishop of Mentz,

“Papal indulgences for the building of St Peter’s are circulated under your honoured name, and I do not complain so much of the proclamations of those who publish them, (which I have not heard,) as of the false impressions taken up concerning them by the populace, and which they publicly glory in; for the wretched souls believe that if they purchase letters of indulgence, their salvation is certain, and that souls are freed from purgatory the instant their contribution falls into the chest: *deinde, tantas esse has gratias, ut nullum sit adeo magnum peccatum, etiam (ut ajunt) si per impossibile quis matrem Dei violasset, quin possit solvi.*” “Good God!” he adds, “the souls committed to your charge are led to destruction, and the awful account which you will have to render for all these, is every day on the increase. For this cause I could be silent no longer, for no one can be certain of his salvation by any gift conferred upon him by a bishop, since not even the infused grace of God gives absolute security; but the apostle exhorts us always to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; and even the righteous is scarcely saved.”—*Ep.* 42.

“Concerning the efficacy of indulgences,” he writes to Spalatin, a few months later, “the affair is still pending in doubt, and my disputation is tossed upon the waves of calumny. Two things, however, I will say. *First*, to yourself and our friends, until it becomes public; my opinion is that indulgences are a mere illusion of souls, and absolutely useless, except to such as slumber in the service of Christ. Although Carlstadt does not maintain this opinion, yet I am certain that he sets no value upon them. In order to dispel this illusion, the love of truth has constrained me to enter this pe-

rilous labyrinth of disputation, where I have raised up against me 'sexcentos Minotauros, imo et Rhadamanthotauros et Cacotauros.' *Secondly*, with reference to a point which is not left in doubt, since my opponents and the whole church are forced to grant it,—that alms and the relief of our neighbour are incomparably better than indulgences."—*Ep.* 54.

"The fabulous venders of pardons fulminate against me from their pulpits in a wonderful manner; so that at length they can scarcely find monsters to which they may compare me. They therefore add threats, promising that within a fortnight, (as one says,) or a month, (according to another,) I shall certainly be brought out and burnt. They oppose my positions with adverse arguments, insomuch that I fear lest they should burst from the very extent and vastness of their rage. I am advised by every one not to go to Heidelberg, lest perchance they should accomplish against me by stratagem that purpose which they cannot fulfil by force.—*Ep.* 58.

The first mention which is found of the noted *John Eckius*, is in a letter to J. Sylvius Egranus, a preacher in Zwickau. From this epistle it appears that Luther had entertained some feelings of regard for this zealous Dominican, and that he was surprised to meet him in the ranks of his antagonists. The title of the work of which Luther speaks, was "Obelisci," by which Eckius intimated that it was a mere collection of brief notes, alluding to the marks (††) which are used by printers in referring to such annotations. The date is March 24th, 1518.

"My positions have been opposed by certain *Obelisci*, written by John Eckius, doctor of theology, vice-chancellor at Ingolstadt, and now preacher to the court at Augsburg, a man of true and ingenious erudition, of cultivated mind, already celebrated and eminent for his writings, and (what most pains me) long united to me in the closest friendship. If I were ignorant of Satan's devices, I should wonder by what frenzy he was impelled to rend the cords of recent and delightful attachment, without writing, or giving me notice, or bidding me farewell. He has, nevertheless, written the *Obelisci*, in which he calls me a Bohemian, a virulent, heretical, seditious, petulant, and fool-hardy man. I pass over the gentler terms of abuse, such as dreamer, fool, ignoramus, and, at length, despiser of the supreme pontiff. In short, it is nothing but the basest contumely, with my name given, and my positions designated, so that the *Obelisci* comprise merely the gall and rust of a frantic soul. I was willing to receive in quietness this sop, fit only for Cerberus; but my friends have urged me to reply, with my own hand. Blessed Lord Jesus! let him alone be glorified; let him cover us with deserved confusion! Rejoice my brother, rejoice, and be not alarmed by these flying leaves, so

as to desist from teaching as you have begun, but like a palm tree in Kadesh rise against the burdens which weigh you down." "The more they rage, the further do I proceed." "I am almost ready to aver that there is not a scholastic theologian, especially of Leipsick, who can understand a single chapter of the Bible, nay, a single chapter of the philosopher Aristotle. I hope to prove this triumphantly, if any opportunity occur; for thus it is, unless a knowledge of the gospel consists in pronouncing its syllables, no matter in what way."—*Ep.* 59.

In August of the same year, cardinal *Cajetan* was commissioned, as legate of the pope, to make a thorough investigation of the whole proceedings and opinions of Luther, and empowered, in the event of his contumacy, to excommunicate and anathematize him and his adherents. Such was the poverty and the humility of the man, that he made this fatiguing journey from Wittemberg to Augsburg on foot, and arrived on the 8th of October at the latter place, in a friar's cowl, which he had borrowed on the way. "*Veni pedester et pauper Augustam, stipatus sumptibus principis Frederici.*"

Upon reaching the place of his destination, he writes to Melancthon, (*Ep.* 82,) "There is nothing new or remarkable, except that the city is filled with the rumour of my name, and every one desires to see the Herostratus* of this great conflagration. Quit yourself like a man, as you have ever done, and instruct our young men in the truth. I am going to be offered up, if it be the Lord's will, for them and for you. I would rather die, and forever be deprived of your most sweet friendship, (which is the greatest of my trials,) than to retract the truth which I have uttered, and become the occasion of destroying the noblest studies." Instead of giving any history of the interviews with Cajetan, we shall introduce an extended extract from Luther's own statement, as given in a letter to the elector Frederic the Wise, November 19th, 1518. From this will be apparent, not only the boldness, conscientious zeal and sincerity of the reformer, but also that remarkable acuteness and native policy which enabled him to thwart the designs even of the wily and practised Italian courtier.

"I have received, most eminent and illustrious prince, through my excellent friend George Spalatin, certain letters, together with a copy of the epistle of the most Reverend Thomas Cajetan, Sixtine Cardinal, Legate of the Apostolic See, sent to me by the favour of

* Alluding to the celebrated incendiary of Diana's temple

your lordship; they have been received with respect and joy. For I find here a most pleasing opportunity of making an exposition of my whole case. One single request I have to make of your illustrious highness—that the splendour of your greatness would tolerate this grovelling and suppliant monk in his childish discourse.

“The reverend lord cardinal, has, in the first place, written to you, that I was anxious to be fortified by a safe-conduct at Augsburg. This was not in consequence of my own judgment, or that of your highness, but the counsel of the whole of those friends to whom I was commended by your letters; one only excepted, the eloquent *Urban*, who dissuaded me at great length. It was, however, necessary that I should prefer the majority to one, so that if any evil should befall me, they might not have to write that I had slighted the recommendation of your highness, and their very faithful care. So that it was not a perverse, but a natural disposition in me, to prefer the many Germans already known, and noted for life and authority, to a single Italian.

“Your apprehensions, therefore, are not to receive the blame, most illustrious prince; for indeed there was more confidence placed in the reverend legate than my friends had expected, so that they wondered at my rashness, or (as they did me the honour to say) my courage, in entering Augsburg without a safe-conduct. For your highness had advised me, through *Spalatin*, that a safe-conduct was unnecessary; so that you had reposed all confidence in the reverend legate.

“I shall now proceed to other portions of the reverend legate's epistle, and reply to them in few words.

“He says truly that I at length appeared, and apologised for my tardiness, and for having demanded the safe-conduct; for I said that I had been advised by men of high rank, and of both orders [civil and ecclesiastic] not to go beyond the walls of Wittemberg, as plots of sword and poison were laid for me. I then added the reason above named, the wish of the friends who gave me counsel in the name of your highness. I prostrated myself likewise at the feet of the very reverend legate, and craved forgiveness with all reverence and humility, for whatever I might have said or done rashly, declaring that I was ready (as I feel this day) to be taught and led into more correct opinions.

“The reverend legate here raised me up in a paternal and most clement manner, commending me, and congratulating me upon this humility. He immediately proposed to me three things, with reference (as he said) to the commandment of our most holy master, pope *Leo X.*, (for he refused me a sight of the brief:)

“First, that I should return to a sound mind, and recant my errors.

“Secondly, that I should promise to abstain from the same in future.

“Thirdly, that I should abstain from all other things whereby the church might be disturbed.

“With regard to the first, I begged that he would point out wherein I had erred. He presently stated this, that in my seventh conclusion, I had said ‘that it behooved him who comes to the sacrament to believe that he shall obtain the grace of the sacrament.’ This tenet he held to be adverse to sacred scripture and the sound doctrine of the church. I replied firmly that in this point I should not forbear, either now, or to all eternity. ‘Willing or unwilling,’ said he, ‘you must this day recant, or I will, for this point, condemn all that you have said.’

“And although he declared that he would treat with me, not upon the opinions of doctors, but the holy scriptures, or the canons, yet he did not adduce a syllable of scripture against me, whilst I, on the other hand, pressed him with many scriptural passages, as may be seen in the schedule of my reply; he did cite to me certain councils concerning the efficacy of sacraments, which I did not gainsay, and indeed they were not against me. He was, however, constantly gliding into the opinions of doctors, in his discourse; and I still wait, and seek and pray, up to this present time, for a single authority of scripture, or of the holy fathers, which is against this my sentiment.

“To you, illustrious prince, I may speak from the heart: I grieve with all my soul that this principle of our faith is not only doubtful and unknown in the church, but even held to be false. I protest the truth, before God and his angels; as it regards any other declaration of mine, let whatever may happen, let it be false, let it be against the *extravagans*, let it be condemned, let it be recanted; all this shall be done, if necessary: but this principle will I profess with my dying breath, and will deny all, rather than recant it. For, even if the merits of Christ are a treasury of indulgences, nothing thereby accrues to indulgences themselves: if they are not, nothing is lost; indulgences remain what they were, by what name soever they are honoured or puffed up. Neither am I a worse christian for rejecting indulgences, which he so greatly extols and defends; but if I change this principle of faith, I deny Christ. Thus I believe. Thus I will believe, until the opposing doctrine is proved from the scriptures, and the authorities adduced by me are invalidated; which has not yet been done, and (with God's aid) never shall be done.

“Thus far,” he adds after a short digression, “we proceeded upon the first day, that is, these two objections were raised. I requested a day for deliberation, and withdrew. For I did not see

any advantage in controversy, so long as he, sitting in the place of the pontiff, desired me to receive whatever he might deem just, while, on the other hand, whatever I rejoined was hissed, exploded, yea, laughed to scorn, even if I adduced the holy scriptures. For I am omitting to state, that he endeavoured to exalt the authority of the pope, above both the scriptures and councils, alleging the case of the pope's having abrogated the council of Basil. When, in reply, I cited the appeal of the university of Paris, '*Videbunt poenas suas,*' was his answer. Finally, I know not how many of *Gerson's* followers he condemned; for I had brought up the council of Basil, or certainly *Gerson*, (in the resolutions,) which greatly moved him.

"In short, that fatherly kindness, so often promised to your highness, consisted in this, that I must either suffer violence, or recant; for he said that he was unwilling to dispute with me. It therefore seemed advisable to rejoin in writing; which mode affords certainly this solace to the oppressed, that it can be examined by the judgment of others, and that it sometimes conveys a degree of conscience and fear to such as at other times have the advantage in verbal controversy.

"On the next day, therefore, I returned, accompanied by the reverend father vicar *John Staupitz*, who had in the mean time arrived, and with four distinguished men, senators of his imperial majesty, began, in the presence of a notary, whom I had brought with me, to protest that I was not willing at this, or any future time, to utter aught against the doctrine of the holy Roman church, and that I was ready, if in any thing I had erred, to be instructed and led, submitting my opinions to the supreme pontiff, and then to the four universities of Basil, Freyburg, Louvain, and (if this was not enough) likewise to the very parent of learning, the university of Paris; as is shown by the schedule of my protestation.

"In derision of this determination, he again began to advise me to return to a sound mind and acknowledge the truth; said that he was desirous that I should be again reconciled to the church and the supreme pontiff, and the like, as if I had been declared a heretic, apostate and excommunicate. When, however, I promised to reply, not orally, but by writing, and suggested that it had been sufficiently battled between us on the day before; he seized in a vehement manner upon this word *battled* (*digladiatum*) and said, smiling, 'I have not battled with thee, my son, nor do I wish to battle with thee, but to admonish, and at the instance of the illustrious prince Frederic, to hear thee in a paternal and benignant manner;' that is (as I was forced to understand it) to urge to nothing but recantation.

In the mean time, as I was silent, the reverend lord vicar arose, and (as I had requested) begged that he would hear me in writing,

which at length we obtained with difficulty. For he would not consent to a public disputation; he refused also to argue with me in private, and until that hour he had rejected all reply in writing, pressing the single matter of recantation.

“Returning the third time, I offered answers in writing to two objections, concerning which he uttered many vain words, as he now writes, saying that I had replied in a most senseless manner, filling the paper with irrelevant citations of scripture, and that he had given their true meaning. When, however, I declared that I stood to it that the *extravagans* said, that Christ by his passion had acquired a treasure for his church, he instantly seized the writing, read it, and alighted on the word *acquisivit*, at the same time dissembling that he had so done. At length he said, rising,

“‘Depart, and either recant, or never return into my sight.’ I therefore withdrew, believing firmly that I should never dare to return, since I had more strongly resolved never to recant, unless better instructed. I omit to mention a rumour that permission was given by the Father General, for me to be apprehended, and put in irons, unless I recanted. I remained nevertheless in Augsburg that day; it was Friday.

“Let your highness now judge what more I should have done, or ought now to do. In the face of so many dangers of life and death; in opposition to the advice of all my friends, I made my appearance, when even now they acknowledge that I was under no obligation to appear; and then rendered an account of my doctrines before the most reverend lord legate. I might with rightful liberty have answered in a single word, that I would enter into no examination; especially since my resolutions had been presented and made known to the supreme pontiff, so that the cause no longer pertained to me, except that I should await my sentence. For I had rested in the decision of the church, transferring it from myself, yet out of veneration towards the most reverend legate, I endured a still further examination. I was not deceitful, but evaded violence from most just apprehension. I think I have omitted nothing but the six letters *REVOCO**.

“Wherefore, illustrious prince, lest, on my account, any evil should befall your highness, (which is most remote from my intention,) I leave your dominions, to go whithersoever the merciful God pleases, committing myself to his divine will in every event. For there is

“Das weiss ich, dass ich der allerangenehmst und liebste wäre, wenn ich diess einig Wort spräche: *revoco*, das ist: ich wiederrufe. Aber ich will nicht zu einem Ketzer werden mit dem Widerspruch der Meinung, durch welche ich bin zu einem Christen worden; *ehe will ich sterben, verbrannt, vertrieben und vermaledeyet werden.*”—*Ep. 85. to Carlstadt.*

nothing I desire less than that any mortal (not to say your highness) should on my account incur either malice or danger.

“Wherefore, illustrious prince, I reverently bid farewell to your highness, and heartily salute you, rendering perpetual thanks for all your favours towards me. In whatever region of the earth I may be, I shall never be unmindful of your highness, but shall always pray sincerely and gratefully for the happiness of you and yours.”—

Ep. 95.

We are bound, however, to remember that it is not a biography of Martin Luther which is now attempted, but simply a notice of his correspondence; we shall, therefore, pursue no further the chronological order of his epistles, but remark, in a desultory manner, upon some of the striking points of character which are illustrated in these volumes. From the extracts already made, we find ample reasons for retaining the opinion which has been universally received, of the imperturbable resolution and heroic intrepidity of this Christian champion. To form a proper estimate of this, it must never be forgotten that the authority of the papal court was at this time unquestioned, and the anathemas of the pontiff invested with an awful sanctity. It was long after this that Luther was clearly convinced of the futility of ecclesiastical denunciations. He distinguished, indeed, between the pope and the court of Rome, but was still in the dark with respect to the real presence, the authority of councils, the doctrines of penance and purgatory, and the invocation of saints. As late as 1522, he holds such language as this concerning the last mentioned point.

“On the worship of the saints, I am surprised to find that the world is still solicitous that I should make public my opinions. I desire that this inquiry should be untouched, simply because it is unnecessary, and will move many questions, as Paul says, without end. It is the work of Satan to draw us away from faith and charity by superfluous and unnecessary debates, that he may, in an unperceived way, insinuate new sects and heresies. It is unwise to labour in unimportant matters, to the neglect of those which are necessary. The invocation of saints will fall of itself, without any efforts of ours, whenever it shall appear to be useless, and Christ shall be left alone upon Mount Tabor. It is just in this manner that such worship has ceased with me. I know not how or when I desisted from prayer to the saints, having become satisfied with Christ and God the Father alone. Therefore I cannot approve those who absolutely condemn such as worship the saints.”—

Ep. 403.

With all these remains of ignorance, he was still undaunted in his opposition to whatever he plainly saw to be corrupt or

false. He was equally bold in speaking of his temporal as of his spiritual superior. To *Spalatin*, who was a courtier as well as an ecclesiastic, he wrote, June 1516, "there are many things pleasing to your prince (the elector) and dazzling to his eyes, which are displeasing and abominable in the sight of God. Not that I would deny that he is the wisest of men in secular pursuits, but in those which pertain to God, and the salvation of souls, I consider him almost seven times blind." What must have been thought of the man who, as early as 1520, could thus address the pontiff:

"Therefore, Leo, my father, beware how you lend an ear to those sirens, who represent you as something more than mere man, as having some divine mixture, so as to command and enforce whatever you will. It will not be so, nor can you prevail. You are the servant of servants, and, beyond all mankind, placed in a station wretched and perilous. Be not deceived by those who feign that you are lord of the world, who allow none to be a Christian without your authority, and who prate concerning your power in heaven, hell, and purgatory*."—*Ep.* 264.

This confidence was far removed from unthinking temerity. It was deeply founded in the conviction, that as he was bound to surrender all to God, so God would preserve and deliver him as long as he chose to use his services.

"I am," says he, in the year 1518, to his friend *Link*, "like Jeremiah, a man of strife and a man of contentions, daily vexing the Pharisees with what they call new doctrines. But as I am conscious that I teach only the purest theology, so I have long ago anticipated that it would be to the righteous Jews a stumbling-block, and to the wise Greeks, foolishness. Yet I hope that I am a debtor to Jesus Christ, who says, it may be, to me also, *I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* The more they rage, the greater is my trust; my family is provided for, my possessions, house, and substance are disposed of; my fame and glory is already torn to pieces. All that remains is this frail and broken body, which if they take away, they may make me poorer by one or two hours of life, but cannot take away my soul. I sing with John Reuchlin, 'he who is poor, fears nothing, can lose nothing, but is settled in good hope, for he hopes to gain.'—I know that the

* "Darumb, Mein H. Vater L., wollist je nit hören deine sussen Ohrensinger, die do sagen: du seyest nit ein lauter Mensch, sondern gemischt mit Gott, der alle Ding zu gebieten und zu foddern habe. Es wird nit so geschehen; du wirst auch nit ausführen, &c." This specimen of Luther's antique German may serve to entertain philologists.

genius of the word of Christ has been this from the beginning, that he who is willing to bear it in the world, must, like the apostles, do so, abandoning all things, and living every hour in expectation of death. If it were not so, it would not be the word of Christ. It was purchased by death, published by death, maintained by death, and now must be preserved by means of death."—*Ep.* 73.

This was the same contempt of danger which had led him to say, in the year 1516, when the plague was raging at Erfurt, "you advise me and brother Bartholomew to take our flight to you. Whither shall I fly? I hope that the world is not in danger of perishing, even though brother Martin should perish. If the plague make progress, I shall disperse the brethren in all directions; as to myself, being placed here under obedience, it is not lawful for me to fly, unless commanded by the same duty. Not that I am above the fear of death, (for I am not the apostle Paul, but only a student of the apostle Paul) but I trust that from this fear the Lord will deliver me." In a subsequent epistle, numbered clxv., he expresses his firm conviction, that although weaker Christians might fly from pestilence, it was the duty of ministers of the gospel to abide with the flock.

Many anecdotes might be related which exemplify the same fearless spirit. In the year 1525 a Polish Jew was despatched to Wittemberg, with the promise of two thousand gold pieces, on condition that he should procure the death of Luther by poison. He was discovered, with his accomplices. The event is thus coolly mentioned in a letter to Spalatin. "You will learn to-morrow what you have desired to hear, that the Jewish prisoners who were seeking to poison me, would perhaps have revealed the names of those by whom they were employed. As however they would not do this voluntarily, I was not willing that they should be put to the torture, but procured their discharge, although I am very certain that this is the person concerning whom my friends warned me, as all the marks agree."

It was the fervour of unfeigned piety which was, in this holy man, the moving principle; a piety which breathes in all his correspondence, and in some instances with an engaging simplicity which goes at once to the heart. His childlike trust in God, his love for the body of Christ, his unconditional self-dedication, his jealousy for the honour of pure religion, make his confidential writings a treasury of instruction for the private Christian. He writes thus to the provincial of his order, *John Staupitz*, for whom he entertained a filial reverence :

“The case is serious; Christ himself seems to suffer. Even if heretofore it was right to be silent and concealed, yet now when the blessed Saviour who gave himself for us is made a reproach throughout the whole world, shall we not contend for him? Shall we not lay down our necks for him? My father, the danger is greater than many suppose. Here the Gospel begins to apply, *whosoever shall confess me before men, &c.* Let me be accused as proud, avaricious, an adulterer, a murderer, an anti-pope, as guilty of all crimes, but of impious silence let me never be accused, while our Lord suffers and says, *I looked upon my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me;* I write the more earnestly to you because I greatly fear that you hang in neutrality between Christ and the pope, although you see them to be in the greatest degree opposed to one another. Let us therefore pray that the Lord Jesus would destroy this son of perdition with the breath of his mouth.”—*Ep.* 291. *Feb.* 9, 1521.

There could be no situation more likely to afford temptations to pride than that in which Luther was placed, surrounded by multitudes who regarded him as their great spiritual leader and defender. He was nevertheless enabled to inculcate the duty of humility upon others, and to practise it himself:

“I wrote to the prince respecting your case, but your letters were not pleasing to me, savouring of I know not what spiritual presumption. Do not glory in your readiness to do and suffer many things for the word. Let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. You have not yet grappled with death; the thing is not so easy, however easy it may be to talk about it. Walk in fear and self-contempt, and pray the Lord that he would work all in you, that of yourself you may do nothing, but rest in Christ, (*sis sabbatum Christo.*)”—*Ep.* 395. *To Zwilling,* *May* 1522.

“It is the infelicity of this most wretched life, that our admirers and friends are the more injurious, the more nearly they are attached to us. The favour of God recedes, in proportion as the favour of man approaches. For God is either our sole friend, or not at all. The evil is increased by this, that if you abase yourself, and refuse applause and honour, by so much the more are you pursued by applause and honour, that is to say, by danger and perdition. O how much more salutary are the hatred and calumny of all, than their praise and love!”—*Ep.* 28.

“When therefore I gave a universal challenge,” he says in accounting to the bishop of Brandenburg for his attack upon indulgences, “and still no one came forward in reply, and I saw my disputations spreading more widely than I had desired, and regarded everywhere, not as disputable, but as asserted positions; I was forced,

contrary to my wishes and intentions, to expose my puerility and ignorance to the world, and to publish the proofs of these faults, esteeming it better even to incur the disgrace of unskilfulness, than to suffer those to err, who perhaps suppose that my propositions were asserted as undoubted truths"—“Had not these things been so, I should never have been known beyond my own corner.”—*Ep.* 66. 1518.

No fault has been more frequently charged upon Luther than the harshness and virulence of his controversial works, and the keenness of his language, approaching often to vituperation. The temper of the man, the spirit of the age, and the high provocation which impelled him, must be regarded in judging of this charge. That hardihood in projecting, inflexibility in conduct, and constancy in execution, which made him the powerful defender of the truth, were united, as they must be in almost every individual of choleric temperament, with occasional manifestations of abruptness, impetuosity and violence of passion. Such a soul, in the course of energetic operation, could not so readily brook the opposition of malice and imposture, as the more gentle spirit of such an one as Melancthon. The controversies of the day, moreover, were not conducted with the studied deference and decorum which public sentiment now demands. If there was a fault in the asperity of Luther's writings, it was the fault of the age, and he is by no means an unhappy exception, standing out amidst a host of refined and courtly combatants. He felt himself pressed in spirit to unmask the imposture of a system which was leading its thousands to perdition. His whole soul was in a glow of ardent zeal, which suffered not a thought to be expended upon the courtesies of life. He could not pause to adjust his expressions, when his business was to pluck brands from the burning. There was, besides, not a little design in his adopting this style of controversy, as will appear from the following extracts:

“Almost all condemn my acrimony, but my own opinion, like yours, is that in this very manner God is probably pleased to discover the impostures of men. For I observe that, in our age, those things which are gently handled presently fall into oblivion, no one regarding them. The present age judges amiss; posterity will form a more just opinion. Paul, likewise, denominates his opposers, ‘dogs,’ ‘concision,’ ‘vain speakers,’ ‘false workers,’ ‘ministers of Satan,’ and the like, and reviles to his face the ‘whited wall.’”—*Ep.* 251. *To Wenceslaus Link*, 1520.

“Erasmus,” says he in another place, “thinks that all matters

are to be discussed courteously, and with a certain polite kindness; but *Behemoth* cares not for this, and is no whit the better thereby."—*Ep.* 337. 1521.

It is not to be dissembled that there is frequently manifested in the productions of this reformer a fierceness which seems scarcely compatible with Christian charity. Yet when we come to take a survey of his whole character and life as developed in his most confidential effusions, we are convinced that he has been grossly misapprehended. Towards whatever he deemed erroneous or sinful, he knew not how to be tolerant; but it must be firmly denied by all who are conversant with the general tenor of his feelings, that there was in him any destitution of forbearance, meekness, and even tenderness of heart. He was as ready to forgive, as he had been to offend; he was often precipitate in his very confessions, and he never withheld the tear of sympathy from the afflicted. Among the charges brought against him, he was never accused of conniving at persecution. In this respect he was singularly elevated above his contemporaries. What can be more sweetly consolatory than this word of Christian advice to a bereaved husband, whom he had never before known?

“Remember the words of Job, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord*; and thus shall your Grace sing praise to a true and living God, who gave you so faithful and dear a consort, and has now taken her again. She was his before he gave her to you; she was still his, after he had given her to you; she is no less his, now that he has taken her away, as we all are his. Therefore when he causes grief, and takes from us what is his own, the heart should take still higher comfort in his most excellent will, than in all his gifts. For how immeasurably is God better than all his gifts! So that it is even in this case better to abide his will, than to possess the best and noblest wife.”

The *naïveté* and childlike simplicity of the original German is lost in this version, yet it shows a heart not inaccessible to the gentlest emotions. And even in controversy, Luther often sighed for peace. “I wrote” says he, “to Erasmus, wishing for peace and concord, and desiring the end of this pompous tragedy. In this I pray that you may concur, if you have any influence. There has been on both sides enough of conflict and contempt; at last there ought to be some place for Christ, some yielding of Satan to the Holy Spirit.”—*Ep.* 593. *To Oecolampadius.*

In close connexion with the interests of vital piety, the early

reformers always placed those of genuine learning. Of the latter there was scarcely a semblance in the Romish church at the time that Luther arose. The influence of such men as Petrarch, D'Ailly, Clemange, Valla, Reuchlin and Erasmus, had been as yet felt only in their own circumscribed spheres. In the schools of philosophy, the whole strength of the intellect was concentrated upon the puerilities of the scholastic logic. As has been observed, the assault was early made upon this citadel. Let us hear the sentiments of Luther upon the subject, as addressed to his friend Spalatin, in 1518:

“ You inquire how far I consider dialectics useful to the theologian; in truth I see not how dialectics can fail to be injurious to the genuine theologian. Grant that the study may perhaps be important as an entertainment or exercise for juvenile minds; still in sacred learning, where simple faith and divine illumination are sought for, the whole of syllogistic argument is to be abandoned; as Abraham, when about to sacrifice, left the lads with the asses. This is what John Reuchlin affirms fully in the second book of his *Cabbala*, that if any dialectic discipline is needed, that natural, innate reason may suffice, whereby man compares belief with belief, and thus concludes upon the truth. I have often conferred with my friends, as to the amount of profit which appeared to have accrued to us from such anxious pursuit of philosophy and dialectics, and truly we have with one accord wondered at and lamented the lot which befel our minds, in finding no utility, but an ocean of mischief. If therefore you will confide in my judgment, whatever dialectics may otherwise profit you, in theology they will be injurious. I have attended to the discipline and rules of scholastic theology, but when I endeavoured to apply them to the holy scriptures and the ecclesiastical fathers, I have shrunk back alarmed as from tartarean confusion.”—*Ep.* 72.

There seems therefore to be some correctness in the remarks of *Stäudlin*, upon the character of Luther's systematic theology, although he scarcely does justice to the views of the reformer. “Luther,” says he, “reformed the church rather than theology, and wrote more for the necessities of the times than for science and system. He acquired the philosophical, exegetical and historical knowledge which he needed, in order to undermine the papacy, and raise another structure, and introduced this kind of knowledge also among his followers. He operated, in other respects, far more by means of genius, sound understanding and eloquence, than of profound and extensive learning and accomplishment. As he excluded *philosophy* wholly from theology, and made faith of divine origin,

the central point of his system and his whole religious and theological views, he had no recourse to scientific and recondite divinity*.”

In the great work of translating and expounding the scriptures he exhibited a depth of research, and a justness of apprehension which may well astonish those who consider how he was oppressed with public labours. In his commentaries, he treats with contempt the ancient anagogical and tropological method of interpretation, and pursues the simple and safer path adopted in modern times. He was led in the commencement of these studies to appreciate the importance of the original languages of scripture, and espoused with zeal the cause of the persecuted Reuchlin. In 1518 he concerted with Spalatin a plan for the introduction of these branches into the University of Wittemberg, and his subsequent correspondence with this friend is enriched with innumerable discussions of exegetical difficulties. His accuracy in translation was truly wonderful, when we reflect upon the rapidity with which he laboured. He even went so far as to procure specimens of all the precious stones which could in any way aid him in the version of the names of ancient gems. The sentence in Gen. ii. 18, remained long unfinished until his fastidious taste could determine between the expressions *neben ihm*, *für ihn*, and *umb ihn*. His first proposal to translate the New Testament was made December 18th, 1521. On the 13th of January 1522, he thus writes to Amsdorf :

“I am translating the scriptures, though I have undertaken a work above my strength. I now see what it is to interpret, and why it has hitherto been attempted by no one who was willing to give his name. I dare not attempt the Old Testament, unless with your presence and assistance. If it were possible for me to have a private chamber with you, I would come at once, and translate the whole from the beginning, that there might be a version deserving the perusal of Christians : for I hope that we shall present a better one to our Germany than the Latins possess. This work is great, and deserves the labours of us all, since it is for the public, and for human salvation.—*Ep.* 357.

In March he writes that Matthew is completed; in April that he has proceeded as far as John; in July that the work is half done, and finally, that the New Testament was fully completed on the 21st of September 1522.

* Stäudlin Geschichte der Theol. Wissenschaften. Vol. I, p. 154.

In the meantime he was far from undervaluing general and polite learning:

"I am persuaded, that without the accomplishments of literature, pure theology cannot be sustained; as up to the present time it has in a lamentable manner fallen and languished, whenever this has been the case with letters. But I observe that there has never been made any signal revelation of the word of God, for which the way was not prepared by the revival of languages and letters as its precursors. Nothing is further, indeed, from my wishes, than that our youth should neglect poetry and rhetoric. My desire certainly is that as many as possible should become poets and rhetoricians, since by these studies, as by no others, men are wonderfully fitted both to receive, and in a dexterous and felicitous manner to handle sacred truth. Wherefore I pray you, that in my name (if it avails any thing) you would urge your youth to apply themselves vigorously to poetry and eloquence. I frequently lament that on account of the times and the state of society, I have no leisure for poets and orators. I had purchased Homer that I might become a Grecian.—*Ep. 478. To Eobanus Hess, 1523.*

It was the same conviction of the importance of human learning which led him to say to a correspondent, some months after, "I pray you that you would urge upon those around you the cause of education. For I see that the greatest ruin is impending over the gospel, if the education of boys is neglected. This thing is of all others the most necessary."—*Ep. 596.*

The following parts of letters, taken almost *ad aperturam libri*, are introduced for the single purpose of exhibiting this interesting man in the amiable character of an ordinary friend.

"MAY 26, 1522.

"*To Philip Melancthon, Theologian, Doctor of the Church of Wittemberg, my dear brother in Christ.*—I am reluctantly answering James Latomus, for I had composed my mind for quiet study, yet I perceive it to be necessary that I should reply to him. To this is added the wearisome task of reading what is written in so bad and prolix a manner. I had determined to give in German the expositions of the epistles and gospels, but you have not sent the printed discourses.

"I send the psalm (68th) sung upon those festivals, which if you judge it proper, you may print, dedicating it to whom you will,—provided that the types are unemployed. If you think otherwise, present it to my friends, and give it to Christian Aurifaber or Amsdorf to be perused.

"I rejoice that Lupinus [Radhemius] has had a happy departure

out of this life, in which I would that we also lived no longer. So great is the wrath of God, which every day I deliberately observe more and more, that I am in doubt whether, with the exception of infants, he will preserve any from that kingdom of Satan : for thus hath our God departed from us. Yet his decease has affected me not a little, beholding that passage of Isaiah—*The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart, and merciful men are taken away, none considering, &c.*

“The recent marriage of Feldkirch fills me with surprise, since he fears nothing, and is so expeditious even amidst these tumults. The Lord direct him, and mingle satisfaction with his bitter herbs ; which indeed will take place without my prayers. I am disappointed because your *Methodus* [Loci theologici] has not been received, as far as it is printed. I wish to know who reigns in my pulpit ; and whether Amsdorf still slumbers and indulges. The Lord preserve and increase what you mention concerning the prosperity of letters. Amen.

“Beware lest you be disheartened ; sing to the Lord in the night the psalm which is enjoined, I also will sing with you ; only let us be zealous for the word. Let him who is ignorant, be ignorant ; let him who perishes, perish ; for they cannot complain that we have been wanting towards them in duty. Suffer the men of Leipsick to glory, for this is their hour. As for us, it is our part to forsake our country, our kindred, our father's house, and for a season to be separated in a land which we know not. I have not abandoned the hope of seeing you again, yet in such a manner as to leave God to do what is good in his sight. If the pope should assail all who are of my opinion, Germany will not be free from tumult ; and the sooner he attempts it, the sooner shall he and his adherents perish, and I return. God stirs up my mind, and even the hearts of the populace in such a manner, that it seems improbable to me that this thing can be suppressed ; or if it begin to be suppressed, it will be to increase tenfold. Your sadness is my greatest evil ; your joy is mine also. Therefore I salute you in the Lord, to whom you commend me in your intercessions, as I trust ; I also, according to ability, am not unmindful of you. Preserve the church of God, in which the Holy Ghost hath made you bishops, not the images of bishops. Written among the birds sweetly singing in the branches, and praising God day and night, with all their strength*.”—*Ep.* 321.

The second is a letter to his father, of date November 21, 1521, written upon the occasion of declaring himself free from his monastic vows, and appears to have served as a dedication to his book *De votis monasticis*.

* Written during his retreat at Wartburg.

“*Martin Luther to Hans Luther, his beloved father.*—I have inscribed this book to you, my dear father, not that I may make your name renowned through the world, which would be, contrary to the Apostle Paul’s teaching, to seek honour after the flesh, but because I had reasons for presenting to the Christian reader, by a preface, the occasion, the contents, and a specimen of this work. And to begin with this, I will not conceal from you that your son has now gone so far as to be convinced and assured that nothing is to be esteemed more honourable, nothing more spiritual, than the commandment and word of God. But now you will say ‘God help thee, hast thou ever doubted of this, or now learned it for the first time?’ I reply, that I have not only doubted, but have never even been aware that this was taught. And what is more, if you will suffer me, I am ready to make it plain that you also have been in the like ignorance.

“It is now nearly sixteen years since I became a monk, into which state I entered without your knowledge or consent. You entertained much solicitude and fear for my weakness, because I was a youth of twenty-two years, [*ein jung Blut bei 22 Jahrn*] that is, as Austin says, it was yet idle boyhood with me; and you had learned, from many examples, that monkery has made many wretched, and were also desirous for me to enter into an attachment by rich and honourable wedlock. This your fear and anxiety and reluctance proved for a time unalterable, notwithstanding the counsel of all friends, who told you, that when you made an offering to God, you should give him what was dearest and best. God did indeed speak to your heart that verse of the Psalms, *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity*, but you hearkened not. At last you yielded, and submitted to the will of God; not, however, laying aside your fear and anxiety. For I still remember but too well, how kind you were towards us again, and that you spoke with me, and that I told you how I had been called from heaven by a dreadful apparition. For I was never willingly or of choice a monk, still less from any sensual motives; but being encompassed with the dread and anguish of impending death, I entered into a forced and reluctant vow. You likewise said, ‘God grant that it be not a deception and diabolical ghost!’ That word, which God probably spake by your mouth, soon penetrated and sunk to the bottom of my soul, but I closed and hardened my heart, as well as I could, against your counsel. There was yet another incident: while I, as a son would do towards a father, deprecated your anger, you were disgusted, and retorted upon me in such a manner that I have scarcely in all my life heard from man’s lips a word which so touched and pierced me. For it was this—‘Ah! hast thou not heard, then, that one should be obedient to his parents?’ I was,

however, entrenched in my own piety, and heard and contemned you as no more than a man. Nevertheless I could never banish that word from my heart. Now, therefore, what think you of it? Will you now rescue me from monkery? For you are still my father, I am still your son, and all these vows are stark naught. On your side is the command and power of God, on my side the trifles of man; for the celibacy, which the papists laud so extravagantly, is nothing without obedience. Celibacy is not commanded, obedience is commanded. Therefore I am now a monk, and at the same time no longer a monk, but a new creature of Christ, not of the pope. For the pope also has his creatures, and is a creator, but only of stocks and idols, like himself, mere masks and puppets. I therefore send you this book, in which you will perceive with how great signs powers and wonders Christ has freed me from the monastic vow, and with how great freedom he has favoured me, making me the servant of all men, and yet subject to none, but to himself alone. For he is alone, so to speak, without the intervention of any, my Bishop, Abbot, Prior, Lord, Father, Master; besides him, I know no other. If the pope should strangle me, and lay me under a curse, and transport me beyond the grave, yet he is unable to raise me up again from the dead, that he may strangle me afresh. As to my banishment and excommunication, my wish is that he should never give me absolution. For I hope that the great day is near, when the kingdom of abomination shall be broken and destroyed. And would to God that we were worthy to be strangled and burnt by the pope, that our blood might cry aloud, and accelerate his judgment, that he might come to an end. As, however, we are not worthy to testify with our blood, so let us leave him to himself, that we may supplicate for mercy, and with our lives and voices declare and witness, that Jesus Christ alone is the Lord our God, blessed for ever. Amen. And until you are saved by Him, dearest father, and my mother Margaret, and all our kindred, receive my greetings in Christ the Lord."—*Ep.* 348.

It only remains to mention very briefly the valuable labours of De Wette in preparing this first complete edition of the correspondence of Luther. The remarks which have been offered above, have principal reference to the first two volumes. Five have already been published, and the work is still unfinished; the original expectation was that it would be comprised in about eight octavo volumes. The statement which follows is in substance that of the editor himself.

None of the preceding collections have embraced all the letters which are extant. Walch indeed gave, in his edition, all those which the earlier works of Aurifaber and Buddens contained; but great additions have since been made by Schütze,

Strobel, and Faber. But after all these attempts, some of the letters already in print, and a multitude of those which exist in manuscript, have been entirely overlooked. De Wette appears to have done all that was possible in order to furnish a complete work, examining the archives of Weimar, the libraries of the universities, and other public and private collections, thus bringing to light more than a hundred epistles before unknown. He has had recourse to the most unexceptionable sources, consulting the autographs or the earliest impressions, in every case, and scrupulously noting the different readings of the text. The letters had so frequently been translated from German into Latin, and *vice versa*, that it became important to determine the original language in which each was written, which has been carefully done, and the ancient orthography and phraseology have been restored.

This work is so arranged as to constitute a copious journal of Luther's life. Each volume is prefaced with a chronological table of the principal events of the period to which it belongs. The strict order of time has been observed in the relative position, and each letter is preceded by a brief but comprehensive introduction and sketch of its contents. The volumes are moreover enriched with a likeness of the reformer, engraved after the portrait by Kranach, his contemporary and friend, and numerous facsimiles of his hand-writing.

REVIEW.

1. *Memoirs of John Frederic Oberlin, Pastor of Waldbach, in the Ban de la Roche. Compiled from authentic sources, chiefly in French and German.* London, 1829. Pp. 352, 5 plates.
2. *The Life of John Frederic Oberlin, Pastor of Waldbach, in the Ban de la Roche. Compiled for the American Sunday School Union, and revised by the Committee of Publication.* Philadelphia, 1830. Pp. 140, 2 lithographic plates.

We are surprised that the abridgment of these "Memoirs," issued by the American Sunday School Union, should be the