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THE

Protestant Reformation and Its Influence

1517-1917

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THE ADDRESS BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The address was delivered before the General Assembly, Saturday, May 19, at 11:30 A. M. Rev. Wallace Radcliffe, D.D., LL.D., pastor of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, Washington, D. C., and a former Moderator of the Assembly, presided. In introducing the speaker Dr. Radcliffe spoke of the importance of the Reformation and the distinction of the speaker's father, Dr. Philip Schaff, as a Church historian.

THE ORIGIN AND PURPOSE OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

BY

DAVID SCHLEY SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D.

*Mr. Moderator, Members of the Assembly, Ladies, and
Gentlemen:*

THE Protestant Reformation, the four hundredth anniversary of which we are now commemorating, is the most memorable event since the days of the apostles. It marked the close of the Middle Ages and ushered in these modern centuries. It was a protest against the ecclesiastical system built up by the practice of able pontiffs and justified by the acute reasoning of the Schoolmen. It was more than a protest: It was a reproclamation of the gospel. It announced emancipation from the papal monarchy. It brought release from bondage to the priesthood, which claimed as a monopoly the function of mediating between the soul and God. It gave the Scriptures to the common man. It republished salvation by free grace. It asserted for all alike the right to go at once for pardon and life to the chief Bishop and Shepherd of our souls. It proclaimed the sovereignty of the individual man. Setting aside the monastic ideal, it taught once more the true use of the world and the dignity of all legitimate human occupations; it taught that every creature of God is

good, and nothing to be despised, if it be received with thanksgiving.

The impulse which gave the Reformation birth was wholly religious. Social and economic unrest prevailed in the sixteenth century as in the twentieth. Social and economic changes were engaging the dreams and speculation of the age—not all Utopian. Social and economic betterments followed the preaching of the Reformers. But, in the first instance, and all through, the Reformers had it as their controlling aim to reannounce the plain way whereby a man may be just with God.

Starting in Wittenberg, the movement spread to Switzerland, where it had Zwingli and Calvin for its chief leaders. It extended to Holland and crossed the channel to England and Scotland. In Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, the new system completely replaced the old. In Hungary it divided the population. In France it promised well, but met with disfavor from the king, and by the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day and bloody wars was almost blotted out. In Spain and Italy the Inquisition soon crushed the seeds of the rising faith. The extensive spread of the uprising shows how widely religious dissatisfaction prevailed. But for the divisions among Protestants, which we lament, the principles of the Reformation would have been planted in a wider area than the land which proved to be a permanent soil for them. Save for these divisions, there probably would have been no Thirty Years' War, no

century-long struggle in England, no harrowing of the Covenanters.

Like the apostles of the first century and the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages, the Reformers form a group by themselves. Belonging to different nations and speaking different languages, they were united in a common purpose and remarkably agreed in their teachings. They had no thought of constituting a new Church. Their purpose was to clear the Medieval Church of corruptions and once more conform it fully to its charter, the New Testament. To the question once put to a Protestant, "Where was your Church before Luther?" the reply was made, and aptly, "Where was your face before it was washed?" The aim of the Reformers was to cleanse. No new truth did they invent any more than Columbus and the Cabots created a new world. The Italian navigators found the old lands lying under the western sun and made them known. What the Reformers did was to open the old Book and make known what they found written therein. This, at least, they professed to do.

But, though their aim was one, the Reformers were distinguished by personal traits and also by the specific contributions which they made to the main movement.

To Martin Luther it was given to be the leader of the Reformation and to state its leading Biblical principles. His life was full of dramatic scenes: his sudden withdrawal from the world in favor of the "religious life"; his visit to Rome; the posting of the Ninety-five Theses; the appearance before Cajetan; the colloquy at

Leipzig; the burning of the papal bull at Wittenberg; the trial before the emperor at Worms; the confinement in the Wartburg; the meeting with Zwingli at Marburg in 1529. He gave to his people—to follow the Catholic historian, Döllinger—what no other single man gave to a people: the Bible, the catechism, and the hymn book; and in these respects he set an example to the other Reformers. He was the strongest of the strong. He felt the full onset of the papal opposition. Yet nowhere was he more himself than in the home, translating “Æsop’s Fables” for his children and praying at the deathbed of his little daughter, Lena, weeping as if his frame would be shaken to pieces. After the Diet of Worms he could write, “If I had a hundred heads, they should be all cut off before I would yield up my conscience.” On the other hand, his letters to his wife are full of tenderness, and parents were never shown more filial devotion by a distinguished son than Martin Luther gave to his old father and mother. It is one of the noblest of his traits that he was never spoiled by honors, never forgot his lowly origin. “I am a real peasant,” he used to say. “My father and grandfather and all my forefathers were peasants.”

Ulrich Zwingli, brought up in the humanistic culture, was as firm as Luther. It was characteristic of him, as later of Calvin, that he used the State to help the new views to prevalence. As a patriot, he died on the field of battle. The strictest of the Reformers in his view of divine predestination, he was yet the mildest of them all in the application of divine mercy, extend-

ing salvation to all children dying in infancy, heathen or Christian, baptized or unbaptized.

John Calvin, exile from the land of his birth, made Geneva the bulwark of Protestant liberties and the outpost of free education. With a strong hand, sometimes gloved with steel, he established a Christian commonwealth. He died in surroundings solemn and august. He did what Luther did not do. He won the peoples of far western Europe permanently for the Reformation, and, either through his efforts or through his disciples, has proceeded the representative form of Church government. Upon him Renan pronounced the judgment that "he was the most Christian man of his age."

In England the new views won against the old, lost, and won again, until, under Elizabeth and by the defeat of the Armada, England was established as a Protestant nation. But not without "times both sharp and bloody," as Heylin put it. Martyrs form a bright cloud of witnesses. One of these witnesses, William Tyndale, was strangled and burnt at Vilvorde for having dared to translate the New Testament into English. One of the chief heirlooms handed down from that age, is the saying of Bishop Latimer: "Play the man, Master Ridley, we shall this day light such a candle in England as by God's grace shall never be put out."

In the northern kingdom, the land of the kirk and the covenants, Knox, in the spirit of John the Baptist, denounced the introduction of a single Mass into the realm as more fearful than the landing of ten thousand armed men. Over his grave the regent might fitly say,

"Here lies the man who never feared the face of man."

To all these men Protestant peoples owe a debt. They opened a new religious era; they gave the Bible to the people; they taught justification by faith alone; they laid the foundation of popular institutions; and it is fair to say that if you want to read the chapter of growing religious liberty, the chapter of popular intelligence, the chapter of civil liberties based on the dignity of the individual man, if you want to read the chapter of enterprise in commerce and invention, you must go to the lands which stopped to listen to the voices of Luther and Calvin, Zwingli and Beza, Latimer and Knox.

When the Reformation came, it was like a bolt out of a clear sky. This does not mean that there was not religious unrest in Europe. It does not ignore the premonitions and presentiments of doctrinal reform voiced by Marsilius of Padua, Wyclif, Huss, and Savonarola, and John of Wesel and John Wessel along the lower Rhine. John Wyclif anticipated the movement of the sixteenth century by setting aside the doctrine of transubstantiation and almost all the medieval dogmas which the Protestant Reformers renounced. John Huss was burned to death. Both of these men pronounced certain popes antichrists and defined the Church as the body of the elect. Wyclif gave the Scriptures in the vernacular of his people. Huss accomplished more, perhaps, by his death than was ever accomplished by the death of any other mere human being. In noble words he expressed the watchword of religious sincerity and

progress when he said, "Not custom are we to follow, but the law of Christ and the truth." A splendid testimony was given by Savonarola when, dying on the square of Florence, he replied to the words of the bishop of Vasona, "I separate thee from the Church militant and the Church triumphant," with the words, "Nay, not from the Church triumphant." Wessel anticipated the coming movement when he declared: "The Church can not err, but what is the Church? It is the communion of saints, to which all true believers belong, who are bound by one faith, one hope, one love to Christ."

A noble body of men were these reformers before the Reformation, but no general uprising followed their teachings. The Church went on after they were dead as it had gone on before, if we except the movement in the remote kingdom of Bohemia. When Luther began his work, he was independent of them all. To him they were all heretics. He had not read their writings. From them he did not get his message. His career was not the last act fulfilling a drama. It opened a drama.

When the Reformation came it came from a most unexpected quarter. It did not arise among the peoples of the South, moved by those impulses which gave to culture and art a new birth, and to the study of philosophy and statecraft a fresh impetus. It did not arise with the prelates of the Church, the presumed guardians of apostolic teaching and the infallible superintendents of Christian progress. It did not originate in the central seat of western Christendom, hallowed by the blood of early Christian martyrs, the goal of genera-

tions of pious pilgrims, the throne of the vicar of Christ. It originated among that people of the North which in Rome and Italy was called a race of barbarians and beasts. It originated in an obscure town—as it were in another Nazareth—and, as if further to confound the calculations of men, it was proclaimed by a simple monk of lowly origin.

Nor was there any collusion between Luther and any group of men of his time to overthrow the inherited ecclesiastical institutions. As soon as that remarkable critic and scholar, Erasmus, came to recognize that a religious change was threatened, which would involve the punitive opposition of the Church authorities, he discreetly passed by on the other side. “I abominate tumult more than anything else,” he wrote. “I am not so insane as to do anything against the chief vicar of Christ and I am unwilling to cross even a bishop.” Addressing Leo himself, he spoke of that pontiff “as the chief imitator of Christ, who spends himself for Christian salvation.” These words were written at the time when the Diet of Worms was impending, and in several other letters Erasmus went on to say that if they wanted Luther to roast or to boil, it mattered not to him.

In passing a judgment upon the Reformation, it is of prime importance to bear these facts in mind. Luther entered upon his career as a Reformer, not with any hostility to the Church, not through a message from the reformers before the Reformation, and not in collusion with any body of men, his contemporaries. If ever mortal man since the days of Paul started off on his

mission independently of human aid, it was Martin Luther.

When Luther entered upon his career in 1517, he was impelled by an inward conviction won through the study of the Bible. Poring over its open pages, he received his message. The Reformation was an experience in Luther's own soul before it became a historic movement which spread over Europe. He proclaimed a new era, because the new era had first dawned in him. Not of man, not by man, did this conviction arise. It developed gradually as by a process and yet he became conscious of it suddenly as if by revelation. Through recent and most unexpected literary discoveries this statement of the origin of the Reformation has had abundant confirmation.

In entering the convent at Erfurt, Luther sought to make his calling and election sure, to escape or appease the punitive justice of God. The monastery was the surest way, known to the Middle Ages, to reach holiness here and heaven hereafter. Anselm, in his letters, declared that no other way was so sure. St. Bernard was not satisfied until he had persuaded all his brothers to enter the convent and his sister to take the veil. The monkish vow came to be treated as equivalent to a second baptism by which the monk was restored to innocence. This was the teaching of St. Bernard and Thomas Aquinas. The meritorious holiness to which the monkish vow was the introduction, no one following a lay calling could ever hope to secure.

With singular intensity Luther devoted himself to

monastic rule and wasted his body with asceticisms. "If monk," so he said in after years, "ever got to heaven by monkery, surely I should have got there."

He had the privilege of seeing religion in practice at its central hearth, Rome. In that city he ran from altar to altar and crypt to crypt, saying Masses and wishing his parents were in purgatory, that he might pray them out. He climbed the *Scala Santa*, at every step making petition that his grandfather might be released from that uncomfortable abode.

His opportunities for cultivating piety were the best the age knew. Strong in religious purpose, he yet failed through these experiences to find religious peace. But his punctuality in religious exercises, together with his abilities, made him a marked man. He was held up by his superiors as a model monk. The head of the Augustinians, John of Staupitz, gave him his warm friendship, and when he went to Rome it was as a delegate of this order. On his return, Luther was chosen its district vicar, and on the recommendation of Staupitz, he was called to a professorship in the University of Wittenberg. A year later, he received the theologian's highest academic honor, the doctorate of divinity, an honor of which he was proud. But at the time of receiving the doctorate, so he tells us, he did not know what justification by faith means. Then followed the period of five years leading up to the hour of high noon when he posted the Theses on the church door in Wittenberg, October 31, 1517. What was he reading in those years? What thoughts were making

pathways through this monk's mind? What messages was he delivering to his students? Was he undergoing any special preparation for his public career? By the literary discoveries, to which allusion has been made, these questions have all been answered.

We now possess some of the very books which Luther read and diligently annotated during these five years. From Melanchthon we knew that he was lecturing on The Psalms and The Epistle of Paul to the Romans, but nothing more. Now we have the very texts of those lectures, in copies taken down by students in the lecture room, and, in the case of the lectures on Romans, we have in addition the very manuscript which Luther wrote with his own hand. The lectures on The Psalms were delivered 1513-1514, the lectures on Romans 1515-1516.

It is noteworthy, on first sight, that the new professor took up the very books of the Bible which set forth in every verse the immediate communion of the soul with God and elaborate the doctrine that the sinner is saved by faith alone. The Schoolmen, one after another, had reveled in the imagery of the Song of Songs; Luther interpreted the cold statements of Paul in his fullest epistle.

But most noteworthy is the progress which these lectures show as going on in Luther's mind as he sank himself in the teachings of God's Word. As he proceeds we find him denouncing Aristotle, the authority of the Middle Ages, "as the accursed heathen philosopher," and dissenting from Thomas Aquinas, the prince

of the Schoolmen. The Schoolmen themselves he pronounces "swine theologians," a designation somewhat offensive but expressing forcibly what Luther meant, that they had fed upon the husks of the human reason instead of upon the pure wheat of Scripture. He even dares to dissent from the African Father. More and more he holds forth Augustine as the reliable teacher on the doctrines of human inability and unmerited grace. More and more his independence as a student and expositor comes into view. He pronounces treatises ascribed to Augustine spurious, a judgment confirmed by modern criticism. He compares Scripture with Scripture, making it its own interpreter—a principle the Reformers afterwards with unanimity insisted upon. He goes back to the original Greek text, saying again and again, "The Greek is thus and so." Finally, in the comments on the latter chapters of Paul's epistle, the reader is fairly swept along by the spirit with which they are pervaded, the spirit of triumphant joy and assurance of salvation. Here Luther seems to be lifted above himself with the conviction of justifying grace. "Man," he says, "is at all times a sinner, at all times penitent, at all times righteous"—*semper peccator, semper penitens, semper justus*. If it be true that Jonathan Edwards, as he tells us, studied Locke's philosophy with the greed with which a miser counts coins of gold, so this monk in the silence of his study, was searching with intense craving for the meaning of Paul's chapters setting forth God's grace.

Gradually, by severe study of the Scriptures, Luther

came to his conviction that justification is by free grace through faith alone.

It is not at all inconsistent with this experience that the apprehension of this truth came to him as by a flash. Suddenly, so Luther said in later years, in the convent in Wittenberg, the meaning of the passage, "The just shall live by faith," burst upon him, opening to his soul, as it were, the very gates of paradise. This happened sometime between the years 1512 and 1517. Sir William Hamilton had a like experience. For months he had been working upon a higher problem, when suddenly, while walking on the street, the solution flashed upon his mind. So it was with Anselm in the case of the ontological argument. That celebrated argument for the existence of God was the result of a long process going on in Anselm's mind and yet its solution came as a revelation, when in the darkness of the night its outline suddenly stood before the great Schoolman's intellect in clear statement.

When Luther posted up his Theses, he had already made the transition from a Church-taught man to a Bible-taught man. To him, as the lectures on Romans state again and again, the Scriptures had come to be of compelling authority. Not upon Church teachers did he depend for their meaning but upon the plain text as he found it in the original. Before he posted up the Theses, this doctrine, and the doctrine that we are justified by faith apart from works of the law, had taken full possession of his thought. The opening words of those Theses were a firm statement of the former con-

viction. "Our Lord and Master, when he said 'repent,' meant that the entire life should be a repenting." They had the ring of a new era. They were the assertion of the supreme immediate authority of Christ to which all other authorities were to be subordinated. On this point Luther and the other Reformers never wavered. It was the victory that overcame.

The experience of Calvin was likewise the result of a process of study and struggle and yet also, as it were, a sudden revelation. He has left on record two brief accounts. "By a sudden conversion," so he said, he was transferred from the mire and his feet set upon the rock. "After trying," he said, "by all the ways of the Catholic faith to reach peace, I failed, and finally the Gospel, like a sudden ray of light, showed me the deep abyss of error I was in, and, frightened and with tears, I took God's way."

The inner experiences of these two leading Reformers stand, as it were, like bastions of rock at the entrance of the reform movement of the sixteenth century. All sorts of psychological explanations of Luther's course may be attempted, but these things stand sure of these two men: They left the old system with reluctance; they knew its workings by training and experience; they were diligent students of the Scriptures; they were in no conspiracy to establish a new system; a compelling conviction from within moved them to enter on their new course.

The same is true of other Reformers. In his first sermon on The Lord's Prayer, Bishop Hugh Latimer

declared: "I was as obstinate a papist as any was in England, insomuch that, when I should be made a bachelor of divinity, my whole oration went against Philip Melanchthon and against his opinions. Then having met Master Bilney, or rather Saint Bilney, that suffered death for Christ's sake, I learned more by his confession than before in many years, so that from that time forward I began to smell the Word of God and forsook the school doctors and such fooleries." The bishop then went on to give an account of the practical ministries he set out to perform in Bilney's company.

Again, if we would pass a fair judgment upon the Reformation, we must bear in mind another consideration, of prime importance: Its leaders, the Reformers, were men imbued with the highest education of their time. I have no intention of enlarging upon their writings which constitute a large contribution to religious literature. I am now interested in calling attention to a single feature.

The Reformers studied the latest books and were familiar with the most recent investigations of their age. The study of Greek and Hebrew, a new thing, was looked upon with suspicion by many of their contemporaries or denounced as reprobate. The Reformers, on the contrary, gave themselves to it diligently and were, in respect to theological studies, in the van of their age. "The old ways are good enough," said many. "We cannot improve upon the Fathers and the Schoolmen. What they did not know is not worth knowing. The Vulgate is sufficient. It has served for a thousand

years and more." "Man," said the old English priest, when Tyndale told him he was intending to make God's laws accessible to the boy that drove the plow (that is, translate the Scriptures into English), "we were better without God's laws than the pope's."

If the Reformers in Wittenberg, Zurich, Basel, Strasbourg, Geneva, and Cambridge, had not been up-to-date men, there would have been no Reformation. Gregory the Great knew no Greek. Anselm knew no Greek. Thomas Aquinas knew no Greek. Bernard knew no Greek. Wyclif knew no Greek. John Huss knew no Greek. During the seven or eight centuries before 1500—if we except the hazy traditions of Irish convents—not a single western Churchman knew Greek. But Luther did, and Calvin did, and Zwingli and Æcolampadius and Bucer did, and Bullinger and Beza did.

In Luther's lectures on Romans we can point almost to the precise moment when he had a copy of Erasmus' Greek New Testament in his hands. No sooner did that epochal volume appear, March, 1516, than Luther was using it at the ninth chapter of Romans. Later in his replies to his assailants who fortified their statements with conciliar decisions and papal decretals—precedents of the canon law—Luther bulwarked his pages with texts from the Scriptures and referred back to the Greek, notably to the word *metanoeo*, which, he told his assailants, did not mean to do works of penance, as the Vulgate translated it, but to experience an inward change of heart.

To accurate linguistic attainments Calvin also added a

mind of rare acumen and logical precision. This was abundantly recognized in the schools where he studied law under eminent jurists. He was a humanist before he was a Reformer and issued a commentary on Seneca's treatise on mercy. Luther translated the Scriptures from the originals for the first time in ten centuries. Calvin was the chief critical expositor among the Reformers, basing his studies on the original text for the first time in ten centuries or more. Even Augustine did not do this and had to content himself with the *Itala* and the *Vulgate*.

As for Zwingli, no sooner did he see one of Erasmus' New Testaments than he copied the Greek of the Pauline epistles for his own use. He had studied in Vienna and Basel and his humanistic attainments won from the pope an annual pension.

Beza was an expert Greek scholar, as his edition of the Greek Testament shows. Among the English Reformers were Cambridge and Oxford men, who had sat at the feet of Grocyn, Colet, and Erasmus. When these and other Reformers spoke and wrote it was as men endowed with high intellectual gifts, conversant with the medieval system and unequaled in their knowledge of the Scriptures in the original.

If ever a body of men was competent to speak against a prevailing system, then the Reformers by reason of mental gifts, by reason of scholastic training, by reason of experience in convent and university, by reason of familiarity with the customs of the people and priesthood, were competent to speak against the prevailing

religious system inherited from the Middle Ages. Who of his age was so quick as Luther to accept the proof given by Laurentius Valla that the Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals were an invention? Who was more deeply read in the Fathers than Calvin? Who introduced the modern school method into Germany, if not Melancthon? Who insisted on general education for poor as well as rich, if not Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and John Knox? These men were acquainted with the past and familiar with the conditions of their age before they advocated the policies which these modern times have put into practice.

The medieval scheme, against which the Reformers with one consent contended, presented three main constructions: The monarchical papacy, the sacramental system, and the Inquisition, all so deeply grounded by the dialectics of the Schoolmen that they seemed to be as firmly established as the foundations of the medieval cathedrals.

The papacy was accepted as the final arbiter in all things human. The notorious bull of Boniface VIII, the *Unam Sanctam*, issued 1302, asserted three things with a clearness which leaves nothing to be desired. As against the claims of the Greek Church, it asserted the unity of the Church under the Roman pontiff. As against the independence of the State, it asserted that both swords, the spiritual sword and the sword of steel, are subject to the will of the Roman pontiff. As against the idea that Christ can give eternal life independently of all seen institutions, it asserted that it is "altogether

necessary for the salvation of every human being that he be subject to the Roman pontiff." A crass assertion, this last, as opposed to our Lord's words, "He that believeth hath eternal life"! These assertions of Boniface stirred up many a pamphleteer from Dante and Marsilius of Padua to Wyclif and Huss and Gerson and Nieheim; but, in spite of opposition, they remained the unmodified view of the hierarchy. The Council of Constance, 1415, declared that the final arbiter in ecclesiastical matters should be a general council. This decision solemnly made, with such men as Gerson, d'Ailly, and Cardina Zarabella, leaders in the council, was easily superseded fifty years later by Pius II in his famous *bullæ execrabilis*. Just six months before Luther posted up his Theses, the bull of 1302 was solemnly reaffirmed by Leo X. According to Prierias, Leo X's spokesman against Luther, the pope is above all councils: he judges all and is judged by no man. From his tribunal there is no appeal: his word releases from purgatory; the Scriptures themselves get their authority from his approval. This notable treatise was written in 1520.

The sacramental system, to further which the Schoolmen bent their best energies, placed the priest at the gate of heaven. Except by his sufferance, no man can have entrance. The sacraments which he dispenses act like drugs. They contain and confer grace by a virtue inherent in themselves and grace cannot be had without them.

By the Inquisition, the Church took away the right

of private opinion in religious matters and denied existence on earth to anyone daring to dissent from its dogmas. This is the explicit teaching of Thomas Aquinas.

To these three mighty constructions, the Reformers opposed the open Bible as every man's Book, and the teaching that justification is by faith in Jesus Christ, independent of works or sacerdotal ministrations.

As for the papacy, to Luther the pope came to be an antichrist, "the very worst that all devils with all their power could do." Luther's words were vehement and, when it came to calling names, as one of my students once put it, Luther "could beat them all." But the provocation was great. If we choose to forget Alexander VI, recently deceased, his mistresses, the open marriage of his children from the Vatican, his sale of cardinals' hats; if we forget Julius II, whom Luther called the sanguinary pope, clad in armor and fighting without mercy against the French in upper Italy, himself also the father of children; if we forget Leo X, entering the Vatican with the frivolous words, "God has given us the papacy, let us enjoy it," his pawning of the tiara to keep up the extravagances of his court, his duplicity in politics—if we choose to forget such papal practices, we must remember that Leo X called Luther the boar out of the woods and the wild beast of the forest, a heretic—and heretics were burnt—and that the cardinal legates, Cajetan and Aleander, called Luther "that German beast," that "pernicious monster," that "scoundrel and dog for whom the iron and fire were

prepared." No one was in doubt that they were seeking Luther's blood, and, from the broad human standpoint, the monk of Wittenberg was no more guilty in using strong words than was the man at Rome or the cardinals in Augsburg and at Worms. Of one thing we are pretty certain—that Luther, the Wittenberg monk, never sought the life of pope or cardinal or commended injury to their persons.

As for the sacraments, the Reformers set aside the sacerdotal function of the clergy and the sacrificial element from the Mass, and recovered for every man the right to go immediately to the throne of grace to find mercy and obtain help in every time of need.

As for the Inquisition, we confess with regret that the Reformers did not give full swing to the principle, enunciated by Luther at the outset, that it is against the will of the Spirit that compulsion be used in matters of religious opinion. It is quite possible, as Nicolas Paulus shows in his work on religious toleration, to prove that the Protestants erred badly and not infrequently in this matter, even to the dealing with the presumed witches at Salem. Nevertheless, the Reformers were headed in the right direction and, among Protestant peoples, the right of private judgment found expression in William the Silent's edict of religious tolerance, 1576, in the noble expression of the Westminster divines that "God alone is Lord of the conscience," and in the article giving "soul liberty," which that spiritual and somewhat heady descendant of Calvin,

Roger Williams, put into the constitution of one of our colonies.

The Reformers have been called revolutionaries. So they were. They destroyed and they built up. A new era was not otherwise possible. The plea that an orderly current of religious reform was moving in Europe is hardly worth consideration until we have set aside contemporary popes, beginning, say, with Sixtus IV and Alexander VI and ending with Alessandro Farnese and Julius III, or until the testimonies of all the Reformers are set aside, from Luther's and Tyndale's to the very last of them, as ignorant or malicious perjuries. Stigmatizing epithets heaped upon Luther and the persons of the other Reformers will not be sufficient permanently to darken the Reformation and discredit its principles, any more than the fires at Smithfield and Oxford and St. Andrews could burn up the good names of British martyrs. The main question will always be: Did the teachings of the Reformers accord with the Word of God? By the Word of God those teachings stand or fall. What God may have in store for the Church in the future in bringing together into hearty fellowship and coöperation Christians, Roman Catholic and Protestant, I do not presume to be able to foresee. But Protestant Christendom will have its mission, we may be assured, so long as it remains true to the confession that Christ is the immediate Head of his Church and of every individual member of the Church, even as in the body the head is in immediate connection with every one of the members; so long as it holds to the

declaration made before the powers of the world at Worms in 1521: "My conscience is bound captive in the Word of God and to do anything against conscience is unsafe and dangerous. Here I stand. I can do no otherwise. God help me. Amen."