

THE REFORMATION AS DESCRIBED BY THE REFORMERS.

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[Cont. next.]

On Nov. 10th, 1511 Luther writes to one of his friends, that "he had almost abandoned all hope for Germany, so universally had avarice, usury, tyranny, dissension, and the whole host of untruth, wickedness, and treachery, as well as disregard of the word of God, and the most unheard of ingratitude, taken possession of the nobility, the courts, the towns, and the villages." In the March of the following year, he writes in much the same strain, adding, that "his only hope is in the near approach of the last day;—the world has become so barbarous, so tired of the word of God, and entertains so thorough a disgust for it." On the 23rd of July, he declares, that "those who would be followers of the gospel, draw down God's wrath by their avarice, their rapine, their plunder of the churches; while the people listen to instructions, prayers, and exhortations, but continue nevertheless to heap sin upon sin." On another occasion, (October 25th, 1512), he declares that "he is tired of living in this hideous Sodom," that "all the good which he had hoped to effect has vanished away; that there remains naught but a deluge of sin and unholiness, and nothing is left for him but to pray for his discharge." And in reality, not only did he wish for death as a boon to himself, "that he might be released from this satanical generation," but he was even able calmly to see his little daughter Margaret, to whom he was devotedly attached, die before his eyes. "Alas!" he cried to the prince of Anhalt, "we live in Babylon and Sodom." Everything is growing worse each day. And even in the very last hours of his life, so bitterly did he feel the immorality and irreligion of the city which he had made the chosen seat and centre of his doctrines, that he had actually made up his mind to leave it for ever. So sensible was he made of the connexion between his doctrines and the moral condition of Wittenberg, that the thought of residence there became insupportable. "Let us but fly from this Sodom!" he wrote to his wife a few months before his death, "I will wander through the world, and be my bread from door to door, rather than embitter and disturb my poor old last days by this spectacle of the disorder of Wittenberg, and the fruitlessness of my bitter dear toil in its streets." It is a significant commentary on the fruitlessness of the mission to which he had devoted his life, that it needed all the influence of the Elector to induce him to abandon his determination!

Such is a faint outline of Luther's own report of the moral state of his reformation. It is but too well borne out in its worst details by his friends and fellow-labourers. The reader will perceive that we are drawing but lightly upon Dr. Dollinger's abundant and overflowing pages; and for what reason, we must be even more sparing in our extracts. We shall only observe that those which we mean to present are taken almost at random; that it would have been easy to find hundreds of others equally striking; and that the effect of all is grievously impaired by the broken and fragmentary form, in which, of course, they must appear in such a notice as the present.

Few of the reformers dealt less in extremes than the mild Mr. Amon. What therefore are we to think of the state of things which drew even from him the exclamation, that "in these latter times the world has taken to itself a boundless licence; that very many are so unbridled as to throw off every kind of discipline, though at the same time they pretend that they have faith, that they invoke God with true fervour of heart, and that they are lively and elect members of the church, living, meanwhile, in truly Egyptian indifference and barbarism, and in savagish subjection to the devil, who drives them to adulteries, murders, and other atrocious crimes?" "These also," too, he tells us, "are firmly wedded to their own opinions, and entirely insensible of remonstrance. Men receive with avidity the inflammatory harangues which exaggerate liberty and give loose rein to the passions; as, for an example, the cynical, rather than christian, principle, which denies the necessity of good works." Positively will stand amazed that a

generation should have ever existed, in which these ravings have been received with applause. "Never in the days of our fathers," he avows, "had there existed such gluttony as exists now, and is daily on the increase." "The morals of the people, all that they do, and all that they neglect to do, are becoming every day worse.—Gluttony, debauchery, licentiousness, wariness, are gaining the upper hand more and more among the people, and in one word, every one does just as he pleases."

"Most of the preachers," writes Bucer, "imagine, that if they inveigh stoutly against the anti-christians [papists], and chatter away on a few unimportant fruitless questions, and then assailed their brethren also, they have discharged their duty admirably. Following this example, the people, as soon as they know how to attack our adversaries, and to prate a little about things far from edifying, believe that they are perfect Christians. Meanwhile there is nowhere to be seen modesty, charity, zeal, or ardour for God's glory; and in consequence of our conduct, God's holy name is everywhere subjected to horrid blasphemies." "Nobody," writes Althamer, in the preface of his Catechism, "cares to instruct his child, his servant, his maid, or any of his dependants, in the word of God or his fear; and thus our young generation is the very worst that ever has existed. The elders are worthless; and the young follow their example." "The children," says Colmann, "are habituated to debauchery by their parents, and thus comes an endless train of diseases, seductions, murders, robberies, and thefts which unhappily, owing to the state of society, are committed with security. And the worst of all this, that they are not ashamed to palliate their conduct by the examples of Noah, Lot, David, and others."

In one word, it would be as difficult to add to the catalogue of popular crimes enumerated by these men—contempt, falsification, and persecution, of God's word, abuse of his holy sacraments; idolatry, heresy, simony, sorcery, lechery, and epicurean fine, indifference to God, absolute infidelity, disregard of public worship, ignorance of the first elements of religion, and the whole hideous deluge of shame and sin shamelessly committed, as if God's commandments, not the mere result of human weakness and frailty, but persevered in remorselessly and unrepentingly, and regarded by the majority of men as no longer sinful and disgraceful, but as downright virtues, and legitimate subjects of boast and self-gratulation. As it would be to add to the evidence of the universal prevalence of such crimes which they supply, and for the truth of which they themselves challenge a denial. "Take any class you please," says Dietrich, "high or low, you will find all equally degenerate and corrupt. What is more, there is no longer any social honesty to be found among the people. The majority pervert the Gospel, and cling to the old idolatry. The rest, who have received God's word and Gospel, are also lawless, insensible to instruction, hardened in their old sinful life, as is evident from the whoredom, adultery, usury, avarice, lying, cheating, and manifold wickedness which prevail."

There is one branch of this subject which we do not approach without great repugnance, but which, nevertheless, it would be most unhistorical, as well as unphilosophical, to overlook, because there is none in which the working of the positive teaching of the reformers is so palpably and unmistakably recognised. We refer to the avowed and undeniable deterioration of public morality,—the indifference to the maintenance of chastity, to the observance of the marriage vow, and indeed to the commonest decencies of life, by which the spread of Lutheran was uniformly and incessantly followed. We cannot bring ourselves to pollute our page with the hateful and atrocious doctrines of Luther (vol. i pp 428-9.), of Strydom (p 431), Dresser (p 432), Bugenhagen (p 434), and many others (p 434), founded upon what they allege to be the physical impurity, or, in other words, the unchastity, of Adam, and the consequent corruption of the human race, and the necessity, in order to establish the kingdom of God on earth, of these doctrines (which, at least by reason, were refuted by Luther himself in his Ger-

man treatise and sermons addressed to the entire people) with the moral consequences which we shall proceed to detail, as briefly and as slightly as circumstances will permit, in the words of the authorities collected in the pages before us.—Nothing can be more revolting than the picture of universal and unrestrained depravity which they reveal.

"The youths of the present day," says Bronstius, in 1533, "are hardly released from their cradles when they must take women to themselves, and girls, long before they are marriageable, begin sometimes to think of men; priests, monks, and nuns, marry in despite of every human law." Four years earlier the reformer of Ulm, Conrad Jan, complained that "impurity and adultery were universal in the world, that each one corrupted his neighbour, that it was no longer reputed a sin or a shame, but was even made subject of public boast." In 1537, Osander complains, that "so commonly, and, unhappily, in all places with such impunity, were fornication practised, that, revolting and unchristian, as it is, wives and daughters were hardly secure among their own blood relations, where their virtue, honour, and purity should be most highly respected; and his colleague Lank avows that "now-a-days the vice of unchastity is made a subject of laughter and of amusement." Mathias discovered a token of the approach of the end of the world in the prevalence of this. "How universal was the practice of debauchery, adultery, fornication, incest, conjugal infidelity, was learnt partly from the criminal processes, the conspiracies, and the superintendents, partly from private intercourse. Assuredly either the last day is at hand, or there is some awful presence at our door." "We Germans, now-a-days," says Strydom, in 1551, can boast but little of the virtue of chastity, and that it is disappearing so fast that we can hardly speak of it any more. The number who still love it are so small, that it would be matter not of surprise, but of absolute horror; and debauchery prevails without fear and without shame. The young learn it from the old, one vice leads to another, and now the young generation is so steeped in every vice, that they are more experienced in it than were the oldest people in former times. Braumüller, minister of Wittenberg in 1559, complains that "basinardy is very common. Every one is so hardened, and so habituated to this dishonourable vice, that it is not considered grievous, for it is as daily bread everywhere around. Almost every wife is unfaithful, and hence no one need wonder at the band of adulterers in these our days is more powerful and influential than it was in the days of our ancestors, or even of the heathens." Again, five years later, Andrew Hopperd raised the same complaint in Mansfeld. "We see and hear (alas! God help us!) that impurity and fornication have made frightful inroads among christians, and have sunk their roots so deeply, that it is hardly any longer reputed a sin, but is rather gloried in as a noble and desirable thing, without sorrow or remorse of conscience." In 1573, Christopher Fischer, superintendent in Brunswick, complains in like manner, that "such is the prevalence of whoredom and debauchery, that they are no longer looked upon as sinful; any one who has the opportunity thinks he does well in availing himself of it, for the world does not punish it; and, as for adultery, so completely has it obtained the upper hand, that no punishment can avail any longer to suppress it."—Vol. ii. pp. 433-7.

We cannot venture to extend our extracts on this subject. It need only be added that the frightful state of morality depicted in these pages is attributed without disguise, even by the Lutherans themselves, to the doctrines of Luther already alluded to. The reader will find at pp. 438-40 a long and most remarkable extract from Czezanovius, in which the connexion is fully and freely admitted. Districts in which these crimes were utterly unknown, were scarcely mentioned in the principles of the Reformation till they became corrupted to the heart's core.—A most remarkable example of this is Danzig, a district in Holstein, in which the Catholic religion was abolished in 1522. So remarkable was this province been for the purity and simplicity

"After all one can hardly wonder at this, when one reflects the chaos of what is still popularly preserved as Luther's favorite chant, 'Wer liebt nicht Weiber, Wein, Gesang, Er bleibet ein Narr sein Leben lang!' 'Who loves not women, wine, and song,

city of its population, that it was known under the name of *Maryland* [Marionland]; cases of unchastity were so rare and unexampled, that the fortune of her virtue on the part of a female was visited with perpetual disgrace, and was generally atoned for by voluntary exile, and even in some cases by the suicide of the despairing defaulter. Before Lutheranism had been established ten years, its own apostle, Nicholas Jöns (in 1511), was forced to complain that "public crimes—especially whoredom, adultery, and moreless, heathenish, Jewish, nay, Turkish usury—prevail so universally, that he was obliged to call God to witness that neither preaching, teaching, instruction, messages, nor the terror of God's wrath, and of His righteous judgments, was of any avail." The practice of divorce, too, was in every reformed country an immediate consequence of the Reformation; and if there were no other evidence of the connexion between the introduction of the new religion and this frightful deterioration of morals, it would be found in the numberless laws against adultery, fornication, bigamy, &c. which date from this period, and the frequent and flagrant convictions and sentences, under these laws, in every Protestant province in Germany. Thus abundant and convincing evidence of all this, we must refer the reader to the fifteenth section of the first volume, which is a mine of authentic and most extraordinary learning, but not free from that coarseness and indecency in which learned writers too often flatter themselves, and which is not only disgusting, but also tedious. Indeed, to add further testimony would be but to weary and disgust the reader. We have said with truth, to call even these few from this mass of painful and revolting records, had been anything but an agreeable task; and that the reader who will be content to pursue the general enquiry further for himself, to read through the evidence of Adolf Spalatin, Bugenhagen, Gerbel, Major, Glorius, Myricus, Brunsius, Schneck, Westhus, Camerarius, and the numberless others whom the author's industry has accumulated, must make up his mind to encounter much shocking and disagreeable details, for which the popular representations of the social and religious condition of the great era of the Reformation will have but ill prepared him.

OLD SAWS AND PROVERBS.

A knave discovered is the greatest fool.
A sharp reproof is better than a smooth deceit.
A young man idle, an old man needy.
A friend in simplicity is refused imposture.
An evil heart can make any doctrine heretical.
An idle brain is the devil's workshop.
An open door will tempt a saint.
Bacchus has drowned more than Neptune.
Be always at leisure to do good.
Be timely wise rather than wise in time.
Better to live well than long.
Cheerfulness is perfectly consistent with poverty.
Cure not severely, nor punish hastily.
Command your temper lest it command you.
Conscience is never dilatory in its warnings.
Comply cheerfully where necessity enjoins.
Conscience is the chamber of justice.
Gentility without ability is worse than plain beggary.
Good wine needs no bush.
Credit lost is like a broken looking-glass.

DEDICATION OF ST. JOSEPH'S CHURCH, CINCINNATI.—This interesting religious ceremony, to assist at which the various religious and charitable societies marched in procession with music and banners, attracted an immense, but a most orderly assembly, last Sunday. The Benediction was performed by the Right Rev. Bishop Purcell, with whom there was in attendance a large number of the Clergy of the city and diocese. The Bishop also celebrated a solemn High Mass, at which the Rev. Mr. Forneiding was assistant priest, Rev. Messrs. Jaucher and Schenck deacon and subdeacon, and Rev. Mr. Hammer minister of ceremonies. Rev. Mr. Gaviezel preached at the Gospel and Rev. Joshua M. Young addressed the audience after the Communion. Such are converts, the one a representative of the power of divine grace over the descendants of Luther and Calvin in Germany and Switzerland, the other of the Puritan stock of New England. Both testifying that truth and a holy life were to be found only in the Roman Catholic Church, and congratulating the faithful people who had feared such a glorious moment of its triumph over all opponents for eighteen hun-