

as well as spiritual directors. So, when the bishops were very severe in matter of discipline, submission to them was rather suggestive of subjection to foreign temporal power; on the other hand, when they were the creatures of the prince, put under obligation to him by benefices they exercised no authority over him. In either case it created a contempt for authority. Moreover the spread of pagan ideas gave birth to a desire of returning to the Roman form of government of pagan days. Caesarism became popular, especially in the Southern nations. Princes became impatient of papal rule; disrespect for his authority among the people was encouraged, the encouragers well knowing that if the authority of the Church were rejected they had a grip on their subjects which no power on earth could loose. The riches accumulated by the clergy and religious orders by their own industry and the generosity of the people were coveted by profligate princes.

Among Christian nations there were two distinct groups—the Romanic comprising the southern nations, and the Germanic the Northern. The former being the elder in Christianity had infused more of its principles of government into the administration of Church government, which was in fact officered chiefly by Romanic clergy. Now antagonism between Rome and Germany is older than Christianity itself; it dates back to ante-Cæsarean times. This repugnance to Romanic rule was in the case of the Northern states an incentive to that spirit of independence which resulted in the rejection of spiritual authority.

Such were some of the agents of Protestantism among the nations. If we descend from rulers to people we will discover like influences at work here. To the revival of pagan literature, which took place at this time, can be traced a great deal of the change of attitude. After the diffusion of Greek and Roman literature, Europe abandoned itself to a base adulation of every thing Greek or Roman. True science gave way to erudition; pagan sentiments, instead of being compared with the great truths of Christianity, were adopted unchallenged. In fine, paganism became the fashion; as an instance of its abnormal influence,

the Blessed Virgin was spoken of as "déesse" and our Saviour as the "Son of Jupiter." All the licentiousness of pagan authors was sown and bore fruit many fold. From the steady growth of healthy sober thought, not suppressed but directed by the censorship of the Church, the human mind broke away into a license of thought only to grow wild.

There were three incidents in the two centuries preceding the reformation which stand out as more prominent stepping stones to that event than the gradual influences we have been considering. The first of these was the scandal committed by Philip the Fair of France. At the beginning of the XIV century, Pope Boniface VIII, having been insulted by Philip, published a bull in which he fearlessly denounced Philip for his cruel wars against Christian nations and the exorbitant taxation of his subjects. In this action the Pope never dreamed of opposition; he acted on the precedent of the papal power by which he was to censure the powerful of the earth as well as the weak, and to protect subjects from the unjust oppression of their sovereigns. But here he had not reckoned with the man he was chastising. The time had come when Christ's vicar was no longer supreme. Philip resented, raised a sedition against the Pope, seized his person at Anagni and confiscated his court. This sacrilege, though shocking to popular feeling at the time, and heartily denounced by succeeding Popes, was nevertheless a fatal stroke at the spiritual supremacy of the Holy See and cherished in the minds of the laity a growing disregard for it.

The second event was the heresy of Wycliffe in England. This was a start along the line which Luther was to pursue a little later; he was but the forerunner of Luther. Disappointed in an appointment of the Pope his anger turned against him and he soon began a regular heresy. His doctrine was pure Presbyterianism; the Pope was denied to be the head of the Church Militant; Church dignities were superfluous, priests and deacons could perform all functions. A doctrine so agreeable to the general spirit of insubordination did not fail to become eminently popular and to strengthen the trend of popular feeling.