

CLAIMANT.

Revelation can... It must be... Man can... only by revealing... out by... The knowledge... of it is de... pernatural and...

THE GERM OF DEGENERACY.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, despite all facts to the contrary, continues to be lauded in popular text-books in our language as the dawn of a new era of enlightenment.

But the fact must be borne in mind that the Reformation began with Martin Luther—and that on the very day on which he posted up his ninety-five heretical theses on the door of the Schlosskirche of Wittenberg, viz., on the third day of October, 1517.

Whatever the Reformers themselves could boast of in the way of culture was due to the fostering care of the Church, and not to the influence of the Protestant Reformation.

Luther's public teaching removed every restraint from the animal passions of man. Man was no longer accountable for his evil deeds.

are heard everywhere." Drunkenness, he assures us, was so widespread among the youth that "the greater part of the finest and most talented young men prematurely undermined their health, their body and their life."

"Wherever the new Gospel was preached," says Dr. Janssen, "numberless preachers deliberately used their influence to bring about the downfall of education. There was a systematic effort made to establish on the ruins of ecclesiastical and educational institutions the ascendancy of an ignorant populace under the lead of religious demagogues.

A contemporary writes in the year 1521: "In these most troublous times I fear that all learning, together with all linguistic knowledge, will be lost. That is the object of certain preachers who boast to be the revivers of piety and scourges of the 'Sophists,' while they themselves are much more foolish than the 'Sophists.' I cannot, however see how piety can be sustained without learning and the knowledge of the Greek language.

Melancthon felt greatly chagrined at the tactics of these fanatics, and writes that "those who go on preaching to the unwary youth to abandon literary studies would deserve to have their tongues cut out."

and insulted him, whenever it was possible." The decline of the universities went hand in hand with that of the elementary and middle schools.

Herein Luther was seconded by numberless other preachers of the Word, who indulged in similar invectives. Their abuse was levelled chiefly against the study of the classics and polite literature, which, as we have shown in a preceding article, had stood in high esteem, and were cultivated with great zeal and extraordinary success.

In 1523 the Humanist Eobanus Hessus, professor at the University of Erfurt, wrote: "Under the pretence of the gospel, the apostate monks here are completely undermining the liberal arts. In their pernicious preaching they rob the true studies of their prestige, in order to palm off their insinuations as wisdom on the public. Our school is deserted; we ourselves are objects of contempt."

These evidences, though of a private character, are of the greatest weight. Yet we have the strongest evidence of an official character to the same effect.

lation of 800 students yearly, the number dwindled down to 33 in 1524, and 15 in 1525. Basel, Heidelberg and Freiburg, in South Germany, present the same sorry spectacle.

The University of Vienna, one of the very first in Europe, which in Catholic times had some hundreds of professors on its staff and 7,000 scholars, was reduced to such a state that there was hardly a dozen of students left in it.

Such was the sudden check which the Reformation put on education and culture in Germany. A golden age was fast approaching when the religious upheaval took place. It was retarded for three centuries by that unfortunate catastrophe.

What we have said in these pages and preceding articles presents but a very imperfect idea of education in Germany on the verge of the Middle Ages and the first years of the Reformation—the old regime and the new.

LUTHER'S DEATH.

About the death of Martin Luther there has always been some mystery, and of such a character that it will now probably never be cleared up. Much has been written on the subject both by Protestants and Catholics—the former especially vehement in the effort to make it appear that the noted "Reformer" died under perfectly natural circumstances; and the latest addition to the literature relating to this matter is a work by Father Kleis, a missionary priest of Norway, reviewed in the current issue of the American Catholic Quarterly Review.

The statement that Luther committed suicide is an old one, dating from a period almost immediately after he had died, and this has been freely discussed—only a year or so ago by a Lutheran clergyman in Brooklyn, who, in a sermon, gave at much length reasons why he regarded the report as unfounded. One version has it that Luther hanged himself another that he was found dead in bed; and it seems that one of Luther's servants was the authority for the former statement.

One may say, at least, considering all the circumstances, that it is not incredible that Luther should have committed suicide. He was a man much subject, after he had left the Church, to "black humors"—to periods of dark despondency—and to extraordinary hallucinations; and his erratic and contradictory pronouncements, and the obscene character of much of his "Table Talk," suggests, indeed, a species of insanity.

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CHURCH BELLS & PEALS. FAVORABLY KNOWN SINCE 1826. THE LARGEST ESTABLISHMENT MANUFACTURING CHURCH BELLS & PEALS. PUREST BRASS METAL, COPPER AND TIN. MORGAN BELL FOUNDRY, BALTIMORE, MD.

When I was young," says Luther, "it was no less a crime to neglect a pupil than to corrupt innocence. But now children are born and grow up uncared for amongst us; and alas! there is no one to take any interest in them or to direct them; they are allowed to go as they please. So much money is yearly spent on rifles, roads, bridges, embankments and numberless other such things, for the peace and comfort of the town, why, then, not spend so much on the poor shiftless youth as to employ at least one or two competent teachers."

Luther is very modest in his demands; he only asks the people to contribute one tenth of what they spent voluntarily on "Popery." "We must," he says, "have some one to administer God's word and the sacraments to us, and to be the spiritual guardians of the people. But whence shall we get such if we allow the schools to go to ruin without building up other Christian schools to take their places?"

In the same year, 1521, he writes to his followers in Riga and Livland: "I have preached and written much to have good schools maintained in the cities, to educate learned men and women. In order that we might have good Christian pastors and preachers to keep the word of God in vogue; but the people behave so indifferently in this matter as if every one despised of his own daily bread and the necessities of life, so that it seems to me it will come to such a pass that both school masters and pastors and preachers must give up their professions and devote themselves to menial or other work—they must give up the word of God to save themselves from hunger."

Luther lived to see the effects of his teaching on education, and has borne unmistakable testimony to it himself. In a former article we have seen what care was bestowed on the home education of the young in Germany before the Reformation. After the introduction of the Reformation Luther says: "It is a shame how badly we now bring up our children. ... Parents allow their children to do what they please. Mothers do not look after their daughters. ... do not chastise them, do not teach them to live modestly and chastely." "Complaints about the insubordination, lawlessness and impudence of our young people

are heard everywhere." Drunkenness, he assures us, was so widespread among the youth that "the greater part of the finest and most talented young men prematurely undermined their health, their body and their life."

There was a similar decline at Wittenberg. In 1523 Melancthon, who was at this time professor at Wittenberg, writes to his friend Eobanus: "I see you chagrined, as I am myself, at the degeneracy of our studies, which but a short time ago were a matter of pride, but now begin again to decline. Those who despise profane learning, it seems to me, have no higher esteem for the sacred sciences."

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Similar was the condition of the other universities of Northern Germany. At Leipzig University, in the fourteen years preceding 1525, 6455 students matriculated; in the fourteen years following 1525 only 1865 were entered. At Rostock University, where there used to be an average matricu-

lation of 800 students yearly, the number dwindled down to 33 in 1524, and 15 in 1525. Basel, Heidelberg and Freiburg, in South Germany, present the same sorry spectacle. "The university is dead and buried; the students' benches are empty and so are the chairs of the professors." This is the report from Basel from the year 1524. In 1522 only twenty-nine students were registered; in 1525 they were reduced to six. In 1525 the number of professors at Heidelberg was in excess of the number of students. "I have barely five regular hearers," writes Ulrich Zasius, the great jurist, from Freiburg in 1523, "and these five are Frenchmen, to boot. I am discharging the duties of my office as professor with great painstaking, though I do not know what pupils I shall have, or whether I shall have any at all or not; however, my position becomes irksome to me, as the science of the law is thoroughly despised."

The decline in every other phase of culture kept even pace with that of education. Before the Reformation in Germany the publishing business was in a most flourishing condition. Great works in large and numerous editions were printed and circulated among all classes of the population. Now truly meritorious works were supplanted by a flood of controversial pamphlets, scurrilous satires and unbecomingly representations of Popes, Bishops, priests and monks, which were peddled about throughout town and city.

The Lenten season never requires any especial commendation to obtain from Catholics a becoming observance. Conscious that during its days exceptional opportunities are afforded the soul of gaining large spiritual profit for itself, the faithful, as a rule, of their own accord, welcome the coming of this season of grace and enter eagerly into its spirit, as the crowded attendance at the Lenten devotions abundantly attests. It is but a brief period, after all, from Ash Wednesday to Easter; and the more fully we compassionate with the suffering Saviour, in commemoration of Whose forty days' fast in the desert Lent is kept by the Church, the more largely will we share in the triumph and joys of His Resurrection.—Sacred Heart Review.

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Fifty years ago a Protestant writer who should advocate arduous confession would be hounded out of church-meeting as a heretic. The marvelous change wrought since then may be best appreciated from these three principles laid down by a writer in the Columbus Theological Magazine: 1. Private confession is neither commanded nor forbidden in the Sacred Scriptures. By private confession we understand the personal confession of the individual penitent, and the direct absolution of such a penitent by the confessor. 2. Private confession is not an essential mark of a truly Christian congregation, and therefore those churches that do not practise it are not to be denied Christian fellowship. 3. Private confession is of great advantage and a special comfort to the believer, and should be encouraged in the churches.

But the writer takes care to note that there is no obligation to mention all one's sins, naively adding that this might be "distressing"—and Protestantism is nothing if not comfortable. Aside from the question of the priestly power to absolve sins, it may safely be said that the Catholic doctrine of confession, consoling and indispensable as it is to all who have the true faith, will never be acclimated in the sects; though it would be no surprise if some Protestant theologian were to assert that private confession is commanded in the Sacred Scriptures.—Ave Maria.

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