

THE CHRISTIAN SENTINEL.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.—HAB. ii. 1.

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LUTHER'S CONFESSION BEFORE THE DIET OF WORMS.

Continued from last week.

Such was the result of his first hearing; and it was by no means of a nature to infuse any great hopes into the breasts of his supporters. Many of the gentry, therefore visited him at his lodging, for the purpose of encouraging him under his difficulties, and promising to stand by him, if matters were pushed to extremity.

Luther, however, was sorely beset with apprehensions during the brief space which had been allowed him for forming his resolution. It was not with proofs or explanations that he had to deal; he was called upon to state the substance of his convictions, and lay open the character of the priesthood. His thoughts never rested for a single moment on the subject of a recantation; but he wavered as to the choice of the expressions in which he should decline it, and, at the same time, impart the full glow of his convictions to the assembled states. He subsequently confessed the tumult which raged within him upon this trying occasion, though he also acknowledged with gratitude, that nothing had armed his soul with so much resolution as the fervent aspirations he offered up to the Omnipotent.

An attempt at a recollection of those inspirations exists under his own hand; and it strongly illustrates the character of the man, and the vehemence of his feelings, which were wrought to such a pitch, as to make him cry aloud in his prayers. "O God! my God! my God!" he exclaimed, "help me in this hour of my necessities. Thou art my helper, and thou alone. Behold! it is not my cause, but thine; a just cause, and an eternal one. O Lord! Thou knowest, O Lord, I am ready to lay down my life for its sake. Let this body of mine be brought to destruction, yet shall not the power of the whole world undo my conscience! Thou must not, thou wilt not abandon me, O good Lord! Thou wilt be my stay, through the name of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, who shall be my shield, and my protection, and my strong castle, through the power and strengthening of thy Holy Spirit. Amen!"

The immediate effect of this outpouring of the heart, was to restore his mind to that lucid and healthy state which he was earnestly desirous of possessing in this crisis of his fortunes, and to enable him to view and examine, in all their bearings, the few, though momentous points, on which he had to explain himself. When he returned amongst his friends, he displayed a life and cheerfulness which bore little trace of the severe ordeal which his spirits had undergone. In the meanwhile, the interval allotted to him had expired, and the marshal and herald appeared with their summons. The throng which filled the bishop's court was even greater than on the preceding day, and two hours were suffered to elapse, and the tapers had been lighted, before he was again admitted.

After silence had been obtained, the official opened the proceedings by explaining their object, and closed his address with calling upon him to declare, whether he were resolved to defend or recall the writings in question?

Luther began his reply with entreating, that his noble auditory would forgive him if he should express himself in the language of the cloister rather than in that of courts. He then repeated the acknowledgment he had made the day before, with respect to the writings themselves; but in reference to the second question, he begged them to recollect that those writings were of a varied cha-

acter. Such portions of them as concerned Christian faith and practice, would not be conceived, be deemed of an injurious tendency: others, he admitted were calculated to affect the authority of Rome, inasmuch as they assailed those ordinances, which had been the occasion of sore vexations: these he could not, and dared not retract, without giving great prejudice to the German empire, and Christendom in general. Otherwise the world would naturally conclude, that the abuses which characterized the hierarchy, and the most insupportable pressure with which they had so long afflicted both princes, scholars, and nations, had been formally recognized as sound and wholesome, under the very eye and by the special direction of his Imperial Majesty and the princes of the empire. Did not the papal decrees themselves affirm, that all things, which were contrary to the Gospel were to be taken as so many errors? If therefore, he had declared that "such things were erroneous, as being at variance with the Gospel," and had made such declaration in the teeth of his own convictions, he would according to the tenet of the Church itself, have committed a most culpable wrong. "And should I then have been any thing better," he exclaimed "than a detestable pander to every thing that is wicked and tyrannical?"

He next observed, that a third description of his writings was polemical; those in which he had had to deal with his opponents. He considered that every theologian possessed an indefeasible right to deliver his opinions on the doctrines of the Saviour; and he declared that he would not retract them, though on many occasions he might have been intemperate, and have used sharper language than befitted his station. He bade them remember that he was not a saint, but a man, and confessed he found it difficult to restrain his feelings, when he was defending the truth and purity of Jesus' doctrines. It could scarcely be expected of him to recal chance expressions, seeing, moreover, that they had been extorted by the violence of his adversaries; it was rather a recantation of his opinions and dogmas, which was demanded of him. To this he would only reply, in the words of the Lord and Saviour, "If I have spoken evil, then shew me that it is evil."

For these reasons, he besought his Imperial Majesty, and his noble auditory, graciously to direct, that proof should be given to him from the words of the Prophets and Apostles, of the matters and things in which he had gone astray. And if he were convinced of his errors, he was ready to retract them, and would be the first to commit his own writing to the flames. He admitted, that much disunion and controversy had grown out of his interference; but those had originated in the cause itself, not in any act of his. The warfare had the word of God for its object, and could least of all be stemmed and suppressed by persecution. This was a course which, it was possible, might occasion detriment to the government of His Majesty, their young Emperor; yet he did not hazard this remark by way of counsel or warning to his noble auditory; they would be fully as sensible as himself, and even more so, of what the emergency required. He had made it out of regard for the German people, and his beloved country; and he entreated his majesty, and their princely highnesses, most humbly, that it might not be permitted to his antagonists to proceed against him without showing due cause.

These were the principle topics advanced in a long address, which Luther delivered with much modesty and warmth of feeling. Von Eck, however, observed in reply, that his speech had not addressed itself to the point in question, and that he had not been called upon to meddle with things which had long since been set at rest by the fathers of the Church and the Coun-