

He was twenty years of age, and had received a liberal education; but as yet he had never seen the sacred volume. From the moment of the discovery, that book was inexpressibly dear to him. He read it with wonder and delight. Charmed by its histories, instructed by its truths, his soul received an impression which was never effaced, and a new direction was thenceforth given to his thoughts and aims. That young man was Martin Luther; and the circumstance which has been now related may be considered as the germ of the reformation. Two years afterwards, Luther became a monk. In the convent of the Augustinians, he continued to study with his characteristic ardour, and might often be seen in the library reading the solitary Bible belonging to the establishment, and which was chained to the spot to prevent its removal. All this time the Spirit of God was working on his mind, and preparing him for the great enterprise by which his life was to be distinguished. A saying of his in later years was strikingly illustrated in himself: "Three things make a divine, namely, meditation, prayer, and temptation." His mental exercises were of a painful kind, though highly salutary in the issue, and were combined with severe bodily affliction. In this state, he found relief only in the word of God and prayer. The effect of gospel truth was peace, quietness and assurance; and the gift of a copy of the Scriptures by Staupitz, the vicar-general of his order, completed his happiness.

At the suggestion of Staupitz, Luther was appointed one of the professors in the newly established university of Wittemberg. This was in 1508. In the following year, he took the degree of bachelor of divinity, and immediately commenced delivering lectures on theology to a crowded and admiring audience. He was advanced to the doctorate in

1512. The oath he took on that occasion, to "defend with all his might the gospel truth," was in his case no unmeaning form. It expressed the purpose of his heart, and was most religiously observed during the whole course of his extraordinary and eventful life. Turning away from the muddy streams of scholastic theology, he repaired to the only pure fountain, and, having slaked his thirst there, went forth refreshed and strengthened to invite his fellow-creatures to the waters of life.

From the opening fight with Tetzel to the close of his career, Luther's motto was, "The Bible, the Bible only." Fathers, universities, the decrees of councils, and the bulls of popes were alike rejected, if they opposed, or seemed to oppose the oracles of God. He would allow of no appeal from the Bible. All doctrine, all discipline was to be brought to this test, measured by this standard, and judged accordingly. When urged, at the celebrated diet of Worms, to retract his opinions; he answered in these memorable words: "Unless I shall be convinced by proofs from Scripture, or by evident reason, (for I believe neither in popes nor in councils, since they have frequently both erred and contradicted themselves,) I cannot choose but adhere to the word of God, which has possession of my conscience; nor can I possibly, nor will I ever make any recantation, since it is neither safe nor honest to act contrary to conscience. Here I take my stand; I cannot do otherwise: God be my help! Amen." His sermons, lectures, correspondence and conversation breathed the same spirit. The restoration of the long lost dominion of the Bible was the grand object to which he had consecrated himself, and the history of Protestantism is the record of his success.

Of all the efforts of this illustrious reformer the most important and use-