

world, insulting its subjects by the effrontery of its ministers, the insolence of its pretensions, the mountains of lies which it was teaching as sacred truths. Luther spoke; and over half the Western world the Catholic Church collapsed, and a new theory and Christianity had to be constructed out of the fragments of it.

There was left behind a fixed belief in God and in the Bible as His revealed word, in a future judgment, in the fall of man, in the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ, and in the new life which was made possible by His resurrection. The change was in the conception of the method by which the atonement was imagined to be efficacious. The material or sacramental view of it, though it lingered inconsistently in the mind even of Luther himself, was substantially gone. New ideas adopted in enthusiasm are necessarily extreme. The wrath of God was held to be inseparably and eternally attached to every act of sin, however infirm the sinner. That his nature could be changed, and that he could be mystically strengthened by incorporation with Christ's body in the Church, was contrary to experience, and was no longer credible. The conscience of every man, in the Church or out of it, told him that he was daily and hourly offending. God's law demanded a life of perfect obedience, eternal death being the penalty of the lightest breach of it. No human being was capable of such perfect obedience. He could not do one single act which would endure so strict a scrutiny. All mankind were thus included under sin. The Catholic Purgatory was swept away. It had degenerated into a contrivance for feeding the priests with money, and it implied that human nature could in itself be renovated by its own sufferings. Thus nothing lay before the whole race except everlasting reprobation. But the door of hope had