

Martin Luther

Martin Luther, the greatest of reformers, was born in Saxony, in 1488. When a poor boy, a benevolent lady took him in charge to educate. At first he studied law, but a narrow escape from death so affected him with the uncertainty of life that he retired to a monastery. Here he came in possession of a Bible, and was struck with the difference between the teachings of the gospel and the practices of the Romish Church. Being sent on an errand to Rome, the impression was deepened, and when the pope issued his famous bull granting the sale of indulgences, Luther, who was then professor of divinity in the University of Wittenberg, was prepared to oppose it, which he did so ably that multitudes, including many nobles, upheld him. He was ordered to appear to Rome, but refused. The pope issued a condemnation, which Luther burned. At the Diet of Worms he refused to retract, and soon spread his views throughout the kingdom by his writings. He also translated the Bible into German. A decree being passed the mass should be universally observed, a protest was issued by the reformed party, from which they received the name Protestants. The confession of Augsburg, the standard of their faith, was then drawn up. He still kept on writing and laboring until he died, worn out by excessive toil, in 1546.