

been bought. From Calvary stream rays of light to cheer our sorrowing minds; from Calvary flow words of peace which bid us not despair. It was thither Luther should have gone, and with his weeping eyes and trembling soul, have looked upon the Deity-Incarnate. . . . He afterwards did this, and immediately "a joy unspeakable" filled his mind. But in the early stages of his spiritual struggle he had no clear perception of the plan of salvation as unfolded in the Bible. All the doctrines of theology, and all the members of the Church, were limited in their views by traditions which for generations past had been gathering o'er the Church. The common idea of a religious life was in the seclusion of the Convent. It was only by fasts and penances, by severe flagellations of body, by gloomy dejection of mind, and by austere devotion of life, that the penitent could hope for pardon and peace. The delusion took full possession of the mind of Luther. He entered the Augustinian Convent with a clear persuasion that there was no other door through which he could enter heaven, and with an earnest resolve to prove himself worthy of the illustrious brotherhood, and of his future heaven.

The convents of the middle ages are not to be indiscriminately condemned. There were many deplorable evils connected with them. They were often marked by idleness and luxury, by tyranny and lust. Many of their inmates were contemptible hypocrites, with shallow brains and polluted souls, too idle to work, and too ignorant to teach. Such "houses" were a curse to the land, and a reproach upon the Church. But the principle on which monastic institutions were based was not originally bad. In some cases they realized the idea of their founders, and became at once asylums for the destitute, and schools for the preservation and growth of art, and literature, and religion. . . . Their revival, however, in our day, and in this our land, is undesirable. The phases of society, and the requirements of the Church, have undergone a change; and allowing even a life of religious seclusion and spiritual contemplation to have thrown around it a sacred and fascinating charm, we want men and women with zeal and courage to enable them to grapple boldly with the evils of society, rather than Simon Stylites or Sister Marys, who, contrary to the laws of nature and of God, make themselves oblivious to the world around them.

It is not to be regretted that Luther became the inmate of a convent. His novitiate was another step in preparation for the grand drama of the age. He thereby acquired a familiarity with the inner workings of the Church, and a power of self-discipline and control, without which he could not have become the leader of reform. The testimony of his enemies is that he was studious and devout; that he spent long nights in prayer, that he watered the convent floor with his tears. He was exposed indeed to many humiliating restrictions, and had exacted from him the most servile labours. It was his duty to sweep out the dormitories, to wind up the clock, to open and close the chapel doors. With a wallet on his back he was sent through the town to beg from house to house; and often did he return weary and foot-sore, but courageous and resigned. In this there was nothing to daunt his courage; in this there was much to fortify his mind. His prayer was to be holy; his cry was for peace. He became more rigid in his fasts, more severe in his mortifications, until the color faded from his cheeks, and his native energy declined,