

what he must do. The thoughts that formerly troubled him return with redoubled power. He has endeavoured, it is true, to fulfil all his duties. But what is the state of his soul? Can he, with a polluted soul, appear before the tribunal of so terrible a God? He *must* become holy"—for this he will go into the cloister, he will enter a convent, he will become a monk and a priest in the Augustinean order. He will there become holy, and be saved.

It was a terrible blow to his parents when Luther entered the convent at Erfurt, and an astonishment to all his friends, and, as it proved in the end, a painful experiment and a vain one, to gain salvation. Christ alone could pardon sin, but Luther had that yet to learn. He thought to merit salvation. Christ alone is the sinner's righteousness and sanctification, but he fully believed the way to become holy and just was to shut himself up within holy walls, amongst a holy brotherhood, and perform holy offices. God designed him to be the foremost reformer of the Church, and therefore led him through all the processes of the Church, to show him their emptiness and vanity: led him at last to Rome itself, and made him see the blasphemous hollowness of all its ceremonies, and the vile corruption of the men he held in such veneration. But it is no part of our design now to follow him through all this wearisome course, or to recount the painful revelations of vanity and corruption made to him step by step as he was led along. It is rather with Luther's experience as a Christian than as a Reformer, that our present purpose is concerned. The object before us is to see how the Lord brought him out of bondage into liberty, and out of darkness into light, and brought him at last out of church processes, and out of the ways of his own devising, to take the Lord Jesus as the all in all, rather than to shew how he was trained to break the bondage, and dispel the darkness, of an enslaved and benighted Church.

Buried in the convent at Erfurth, he toiled and suffered two terrible years in vain for salvation. He became emaciated, pale, hollow-eyed, down-cast, hopeless. The lovely and noble Staupitz, Vicar-General, and head of the Augustine order in Thuringia, was the first to shed any ray of light upon the dark and troubled mind of Luther. Staupitz pointed Luther to the Word of God and to the grace of Christ, and inspired him with some gleams of hope that hope might some time be his. But although the floods of wrath from the windows of heaven were stayed, and the fountains of hell from beneath were closed, the waters gone over him had not yet subsided, the dove of peace found yet no resting-place in his soul, and the bow of the covenant of promise had not yet sprung forth to his view. Indeed, his struggles, and watchings, and fastings, brought him to the brink of the grave. He was seized with an illness that threatened his life. One day a venerable monk came into his cell. Luther opened his heart to him. Despair had seized upon him. The pains of hell got hold of him. The good old man pointed him to his *credo*. Luther had learned the apostles' creed in his childhood, and had said it over thousands of times; but when the monk repeated to him, in the tones of a sincere faith, the words, "*I believe in the forgiveness of sins,*" they carried a light and a consolation never before felt to the sufferer's soul. "Ah!" said the monk, "you must believe not merely that David's sins or Peter's are forgiven; the devils believe that. The commandment of God is that we believe *our own sins* are forgiven. St. Bernard says, in his discourse on the annunciation, 'The testimony of the Holy Ghost to your heart is, *Thy sins are forgiven thee.*'"

Luther believed, and joy filled his soul. He rose quickly from the depths of despair, and from the bed of sickness. Life from the dead was given him in a twofold sense. The forgiveness of sins was ever after a living article in his faith, and not a dead letter in the Apostles' creed. He knew, and was a witness to others, that the greatest sinner may be forgiven. But, as yet, the