

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

stances to be tinged with the influence of the strict Independency prevailing in Great Britain, we think no reader can fail to admire the spirit of candor and independent research which pervades the work.

The limited space to which notices of new works are necessarily confined in this Journal, allows us only to commend this new treatise, on what is destined to prove one of the greatest questions of our times, to the American public, with the assurance that though they may not agree with the learned and estimable author in all respects, they will find substantial results which we doubt not will be generally recognized as an addition to our literature in this particular department.

G. E. D.

Northampton, Ms.

ARTICLE IX.

THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF LUTHER IN THE CLOISTER OF ERFURT.

By B. Sears, D. D., President of Newton Theol. Institution.

THE origin of the Reformation, as a religious movement and as connected with the efforts of Luther, is to be traced to what he himself experienced in the convent at Erfurt. There he first made thorough trial of that outward and legal system of religion which had nearly banished the gospel of Christ from the church. There he groped his way through the mazes of papal error, and found the path that led to Christ as the simple object of his faith and love. He went through all the process of overcoming the elements of a ceremonial and of appropriating those of an evangelical religion by the force of his individual character, and by the power of the word and the Spirit of God. He found himself standing almost solitary on the ground of justification by faith alone, and private judgment in interpreting the Scriptures. From the time of his going to Wittenberg to the year 1517, he was chiefly employed in working out these two ideas, reconciling his experience with well established truths, and trying upon the minds of others, namely, of his pupils and some of the younger professors, the same experiment which he had unconsciously made upon himself. When he came to feel the full strength of his foundation, and, with the Bible and the sober use of reason as his weapons, prostrated the scholastic theology, and professor and student confessed their power,

his conscience impelled him to seize upon the first and upon every public opportunity to propagate these principles that others might share with him so unspeakable a blessing.

The study of Luther's religious experience has a two-fold interest, first, in itself as one of the most striking on record, and then as a key to the religious character of the Reformation. Until recently the subject has been wrapt in such obscurity and confusion that it has appeared more as a romance than a reality. To Karl Jürgens¹ belongs the honor of having first collected and arranged all the known facts of the case in such a way, as to furnish a pretty clear history of what was before both imperfect and chaotic. Availing ourselves for the most part, of the results of his recent investigations, we shall venture to attempt an outline of Luther's religious history from the time that he entered the monastery to that of his removal to Wittenberg, when the stupendous moral change in him had become complete.

The Bible.

We learn from Mathesius, what we might, indeed, infer from his subsequent character, that Luther was a young man of buoyant and cheerful feelings; and, at the same time, that he began every day with prayer, and went daily to church service. Furthermore, "he neglected no university exercise, put questions to his teachers, often reviewed his studies with his fellow students, and whensoever there were no appointed exercises he was in the library."

"Upon a time," continues the same writer, "when he was carefully viewing the books, one after another, to the end that he might know them that were good, he fell upon a Latin Bible, which he had never before seen in all his life. He marvelled greatly as he noted that more text, or more epistles and gospels were therein contained than were set forth and explained in the common postils and sermons preached in the churches. As he was looking over the Old Testament, he came upon the history of Samuel and of his mother Hannah. This did he quickly read through, with hearty delight and joy; and, because that this was all new to him, he began to wish from the bottom of his heart that our faithful God would one day bestow upon him such a book for his own." Luther, who often alludes to this incident, once says that it occurred "when he was a young man and a bachelor of arts." At another time he says, "when I was twenty years old, I had never seen a Bible." In another place, he intimates

¹ Luther von seiner Geburt bis zum Ablass-streite von Karl Jürgens. 3 vols. 8vo. 1846—1847.

that he saw the Bible only once while he was in the university, and that an interval of about two years intervened before he saw another copy in the cloister. "I was reading," he says, "a place in Samuel; but it was time to go to lecture. I would fain have read the whole book through, but there was not opportunity then. I asked for a Bible, however, as soon as I had entered the cloister." He became owner of a postil, which pleased him much, because it contained more of the gospels than were commonly read during the year. The study of the Scriptures, therefore, seems, in the case of Luther, to have commenced rather in the cloister than in the university.

Luther becomes Monk.

The whole course of Luther's training tended to impress upon his mind the sanctity of the monastic life. This, in his view, was the surest way of pleasing God, and of escaping the terrors of the world to come. Educated as he was to a legal view of religion, and conscious, at the same time, that he had not fulfilled the law, nothing remained to him but to continue as he was at the risk of his salvation, or to seek for a higher kind of piety, by which the law of God might be satisfied. His prevailing feeling was to continue in his former course of life; but any sudden terror would revive the alarms of his conscience, and suggest the thought of putting his anxious mind forever at rest by fleeing to a cloister as a refuge for his soul. In this way was his mind finally determined. In 1505, Alexius, a friend of Luther in the university, was assassinated. Soon after, about the first of July, as Luther was walking in a retired road, between Erfurt and Stotterheim, he was overtaken by a violent thunderstorm, and the lightning struck near his feet. He was nearly stunned, and exclaimed in his terror: "Help, beloved St. Anne, and I will straightway become a monk."¹

Besides the above-mentioned occurrences, there was an epidemic raging in the university; many of the teachers and pupils had fled, and it was quite natural that Luther's mind should be in a very gloomy state. St. Anne was the reigning saint in Saxony at this time, having recently become an object of religious regard, to whose honor the Saxon town Annaburg was built, and who for a time was

¹ Such is the view in which the testimony of Luther, Melancthon, Mathesius and other early witnesses is best united. The representation of less competent and later witnesses, that Alexius was killed by lightning is now abandoned by all the historians.

the successful rival even of the virgin Mary. Hence the invocation of this saint by Luther.

Referring to this event in a dedication of a work on Monastic Vows to his father, Luther says: "I did not become a monk cheerfully and willingly, much less, for the sake of obtaining a livelihood; but being miserable and encompassed with the terrors and anguish of death, I made a constrained and forced vow." He again says, "it was not done from the heart, nor willingly." These statements taken in connection with several others, where it is said that certain views of religion drove him to the monastery, make it plain that it required the force of excited fears to induce him to enter upon a life which he had always regarded as the most sacred, and as most surely leading to heaven. How much he then needed the instruction which Staupitz at a later period gave him!

Before executing his purpose, he took two weeks for reflection. It has been said that during this interval, he regretted his rash vow. No doubt he had to pass through severe mental struggles, that in his calmer moments opposite considerations would present themselves to his mind, and none with more force than that of having gone counter to the known wishes of his father, by whose toils he had been sustained at the university. In his Commentary on Genesis 49: 13, he says, "When I had made a beginning in the study of the liberal arts and in philosophy, and comprehended and learned so much therein that I was made master, I might, after the example of others, have become teacher and instructor in turn, or have set forth my studies and made greater advancement therein. But I forsook my parents and kindred, and betook myself, contrary to their will, to the cloister and drew on the cowl. For I had suffered myself to be persuaded that by entering into a religious order, and taking upon me such hard and rigorous labor, I should do God a great service." Here may properly be introduced a few other sayings of Luther, in respect to the motives which led him to take this step. In a manuscript preserved at Gotha, he is represented as saying, "I went into the cloister and forsook the world because I despaired of myself." "I made a vow for the salvation of my soul. For no other cause did I betake myself to a life in the cloister, than that I might serve God and please him forevermore." "I thought God did not concern himself about me;" he says in one of his sermons, "if I get to heaven and be happy, it will depend mostly on myself; I knew no better than to think that by my own works I must rid myself of sin and death. For this cause I became a monk; I had a most bitter experience withal." "O! thought I, if I only go into a cloister and serve God

in a cowl and with a shorn crown, he will reward me and bid me welcome."¹

During the interval of two weeks, while he kept his design from his parents and from his fellow students, the Gotha manuscript says that he communicated it to Andrew Staffelstein, as the head of the university, and to a few pious females. Staffelstein advised him to join the Franciscan order, whose monastery had just been rebuilt in Erfurt, and went immediately with him to the cloister, lest a change should take place in Luther's mind. The teacher resorted also to flattery, no doubt with a good conscience, saying that of none of his pupils did he entertain higher hopes in respect to piety and goodness. When they were arrived at the cloister, the monks urged his connecting himself immediately with the order. Luther replied, that he must first make known his intention to his parents. But Staffelstein and the friars rejoined, that he must forsake father and mother and steal away to the cross of Christ. Whosoever putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back is not worthy of the kingdom of God. In this "monstrous unfriendliness," as Luther calls it, "savoring more of the wolf and the tyrant than of the Christian and the man," the monks were only carrying out the principle which Jerome had taught them and which was the more weighty, being sanctioned by his great name. As quoted by Luther, in his Commentary on Gen. 43: 30, the words of that ancient father run thus: "Though thy father should lie before thy door weeping and lamenting, and thy mother should show the body that bore thee and the breasts that nursed thee, see that thou trample them under foot, and go onward straightway to Christ." By such perversion of Scripture and reason did the monks deprive many a parent of the society of his children. "That," says Luther again, "is the teaching of antichrist, and you may boldly tell him, he lies. Next to obedience to himself, before all things and above all things, God requireth obedience to parents. — A son or a daughter runs away from his father, and goes into a cloister against his will. The pope with his party of Herodians approves the act, and thus compels the people to tear in pieces a command of God in order to worship God." "Hadst thou known," it is said in the above-mentioned dedicatory epistle of Luther to his father, "that I was then in thy power, wouldst thou not, from thine authority as a father, have plucked me out of my cowl? Had I known it, I would not have attempted such a thing against thy will and knowledge, though I must suffer a thousand deaths." It seems, therefore, that Luther's mind was in a conflict between a sense of duty to his parents,

¹ Comm. on John 15: 16.

and a false persuasion of duty to his own soul and to God. Even the father was somewhat puzzled by the speciousness of the monastic logic. But the son made the former consideration yield to the latter, which the father always maintained was an error. We must not be surprised that such scruples were entertained in respect to the filial obligation of one who was about twenty-two years of age; for, not to mention that by law a son did not reach the age of majority till he was twenty-five years of age, filial obedience was, as in the patriarchal age, considered as due to an indefinite period of life.

Luther, however, did not enter into the cloister of the Franciscans, but preferred that of the Augustinian Eremites. Undoubtedly his respect for Augustine, and for the literary and more elevated character of that order decided his choice. This took place about the middle of July, 1505. On the evening preceding, he invited his university friends to a social party. The hours passed away in lively conversation and song. Until near the close of that evening, according to Melancthon, the guests had no intimation of what was to follow. When Luther announced his purpose to them, they endeavored to dissuade him from it. But it was all in vain. "To-day," said he, "you see me; after this, you will see me no more." The very same night, or early on the following morning, he presented himself to the door of the convent, according to previous arrangement, and was admitted. His scholastic, classical and law books he gave to the booksellers; his master's ring, given when he took that degree, and his secular habits he sent to his parents. The only books which he retained were the two Roman poets, Virgil and Plautus, a circumstance that throws light upon the peculiarly susceptible and almost romantic character of his mind, no less than the festive hour with which he had the resolution to close his secular career. He informed his other friends and his parents by letter of the important step he had taken. The former, lamenting that such a man should be buried alive, as it were, almost besieged the cloister, seeking for two successive days an interview with their friend. But the cloister door was bolted against them, and Luther was not to be seen by them for a month. Luther's father, probably, did not come immediately to the cloister, as some writers have asserted, confounding this occasion with that of his ordination as priest, but replied to his son's letter in a manner which showed the highest displeasure, withholding the respectful form of address (*Ihr*) which from the time the degree of master of arts was conferred, he had ever given him, and employing one (*du*) which was ordinarily given to children and servants. To human view, the course of Luther, in leaving the university and the

study of the law, and in entering a cloister, seems a most unfortunate one. The best years of his life, one would think, were thrown away upon solemn trifles. But, if we consider that, after a public education, an introverted life often contributes most to true greatness, by holding a man long at the very fountain head of thought and reflection, as was the case with Chrysostom, Augustine and many others, and if, moreover, we consider that the false foundations of a system of error are often best understood by him who has made the most perfect trial of them, we shall conclude with Luther, "God ordered that I should become monk not without good reason, that, being taught by experience, I might take up my pen against the pope."

Luther in the Cloister.

1. The novitiate—1505. The first act was that of assuming the dress of the novitiate. The solemn ceremonies of that occasion were settled by the rules of the order. The transaction was to take place in the presence of the whole assembly. The prior proposed to the candidate the question, whether he thought his strength was sufficient to bear the burdens about to be laid upon him, at the same time reminding him of the strictness of their discipline, and the renunciation of one's own will which was required. He referred to the plain living and clothing, the nightly vigils and daily toils, the mortifications of the flesh, the reproach attached to a state of poverty and mendicancy, the languor produced by fasting, and the tedium of solitude and other similar things which awaited him. The candidate replied, that with God's assistance, he would make the attempt. The prior said, we receive you then for a year on trial, and may God who has begun a good work in you, carry it on and perfect it. The whole assembly then cried, "Amen," and struck up the sacred song, *Magne pater Augustine* (Great father Augustine). Meanwhile the head was shorn, the secular robes laid aside, and the spiritual robes put on. The prior intimated to the individual that with these last he was also to put on the new man. He now kneeled down before the prior, responses were sung, and the divine blessing was invoked thus: *May God who has converted this young man from the world, and prepared for him a mansion in heaven, grant that his daily walk may correspond with his calling, and that he may have occasion to be thankful for this day's decision, etc.* Then the procession moved on, singing responses again, till they reached the choir, where they all prostrated themselves in prayer. The candidate was next conducted to the common hall of the cloister, where he received from the prior and all

the brethren the fraternal kiss. He then bowed the knee again before the prior, who, after reminding him that he who persevereth to the end shall be saved, gave him over to the preceptor, whose duty it was to instruct him during his novitiate.

The order of Augustinian Eremites, which originated about the middle of the thirteenth century, was said to have nearly 2,000 cloisters, besides 300 nunneries and more than 30,000 monks. It was reformed and organized anew at the council of Basle, in the fifteenth century. The celebrated Proles, who was at Magdeburg when Luther was there at school, was the second vicar after the re-organization, and in 1503 Staupitz was the fourth, who in the following year, that is, the year before Luther entered the cloister at Erfurt, gave to the order a new constitution. The abler men of this order, such as Proles and Staupitz, were led, by the study of the writings of Augustine, to entertain his views of the doctrine of divine grace and of justification by faith. The Augustinian friars were generally more retiring, studious and contemplative than the ambitious, gross and bigotted Dominicans and Franciscans. Hence Luther's preference of the order.

According to the new rules laid down by Staupitz, the prior was to give to the novice a preceptor and guide, who should be learned, experienced and zealous for the interests of the order. It was the duty of this preceptor to initiate the novice into a knowledge of all the rules and regulations that had been established, to explain to him the system of worship to be observed, and the signs by which directions were silently given, to see that he was awaked by night to attend to all the vigils, that he observed at their proper times and places the prescribed bowings, genuflections and prostrations, that he did not neglect the silent prayers and private confessions, and that he made a proper use of the books, sacred utensils and garments. The novice was to converse with no one except in the presence of the preceptor or prior, never to dispute respecting the regulations, to take no notice of visitors, to drink only in a sitting posture and holding the cup with both hands, to walk with down-cast eyes, to bow low in receiving every gift, and to say, The Lord be praised in his gifts, to love poverty, avoid pleasure and subdue one's own will, to read the Scriptures diligently, and to listen to others eagerly and learn with avidity. Luther was so thoroughly drilled in all these practices, that he retained some of them, as a matter of habit, through life. "The young monks," says he, in referring to one of these practices, "were taught, when they received anything, if it were but a feather, to bow low and say, God be praised for everything he gives."

Trespases were classified under the heads of small, great, greater, greatest. To the smaller belong the failing to go to church as soon as the sign is given, or forgetting to touch the ground instantly with the hand and to smite the breast, if in reading in the choir or in singing the least error is committed; looking about the house in time of service; making any disturbance in the dormitory or in the cell; desiring to sing or read otherwise than in the prescribed order; omitting prostration when giving thanks at the annunciation or christmas; forgetting the benediction in going out or coming in; neglecting to return books or garments to their proper places; dropping one's food, or spilling one's drink, or eating without saying grace, etc., etc. To great trespases were reckoned contending with any one, reminding one of a former fault, breaking the prescribed silence or fasts, looking at females, or talking with them, except at the confessional or in brief replies, etc.

Luther was at once put into subjection to all these trivial and often senseless laws. The good monks seemed to delight in teaching lessons of humility. With his studies, in which he was already too much distinguished for them, they were not at all pleased. He himself says, "As I came into the cloister, they said to me, it shall be with you as it was with us, put the sack around your neck." Again he says: "In Italy there is an order of *Ignorants*, who vow sacred ignorance. All orders might lay claim to that title, for that they give heed only to the words, but not to the sense of what they read or repeat. They say, if you do not know the meaning of the Scriptures and the prayers, Satan does and flees. The alpha and omega of the monks is to hate knowledge and study. If a brother is given to study, they straightway surmise that he wishes to bear rule over them."

The Erfurt monks were not all of the most spiritual character. Luther says of the monks in general, that "for one fast they had three feasts. At the evening collation two cans of good beer and a little can of wine were given to each monk, besides spiced cakes and salted bread to stimulate their thirst. The poor brethren appeared like fiery angels." That Luther had in mind the monks at Erfurt is pretty evident from his saying that he had, in the papacy, never seen a proper fast; that "abstinence from meat" signified only to have the best of fish with the nicest seasoning, and good wine besides. "They taught," says he, "that we should despise riches, vineyards and fields; and yet they seek after them most of all, and eat and drink the very best. One brother in the cloister could consume five biscuits, when one was enough for me." One doctor, in the cloister, had

omitted the canonical hours for three months, so that he could not now make them all up. He therefore gave a few guildens to two brethren to help him pray, that he might get through the sooner.

Of the treatment which Luther received after entering upon his novitiate it is not easy to judge. Was it according to the spirit of the order, and consequently a mode of treatment to which all without distinction were at first subject? or was the deportment of the monks towards Luther particularly harsh and severe? Some considerations may be urged in favor of the former view. Luther himself represents it as the vice of the system. "True obedience, that alone of which they boast, the monks seek to prove by requiring unreasonable, childish and foolish things, all which were to be cheerfully submitted to." He never complains of faring worse than others; but he does complain that *no* distinctions were made according to the physical constitution and state of individuals—that "every man's shoes were made on one and the same last, and that all were governed by one inflexible rule." "Augustine, he says, "acted more wisely, teaching that all men were not to be measured by the same rule." So much, however, seems to be true in regard to the members of the cloister of Erfurt, that they looked with jealousy upon the distinguished and learned novitiate, and felt a satisfaction in seeing him performing the menial offices of door-keeper, sweep, and street-beggar in the very city where he had so many literary acquaintances to witness his humiliation.

With what patience and acquiescence he submitted to all the duties and tasks imposed upon him by his order, we learn from his own declarations. These are his words. "I was a monk without ever complaining; of that I can justly boast." "When I first became a monk, I stormed the very heavens." He speaks of having exposed himself in watchings "till he nearly perished in the cold;" of having afflicted and tortured his body, "so that he could not have endured it long;" and of having prayed, fasted, watched and inflicted bodily pains, and so seriously injured his head, "that he had not recovered, and should not so long as he lived." For the sake of the connection we will introduce here a passage that probably relates, in part at least, to a somewhat later period. "I verily kept the rules of my order with great diligence and zeal. I often fasted till I was sick and almost dead. I not only observed the rules straitly, but took upon myself special tasks, and had a peculiar way by myself. My seniors strove against this my singularity, and with good reason. I was a shameful persecutor and destroyer of my own body; for I fasted, prayed, watched, and made myself weary and languid beyond what I could endure."

Connected with such a state of mind and such religious severities, we should naturally expect to see the greatest reverence for the papal hierarchy. It cannot be surprising, therefore, that we should hear him say, "I can with truth affirm, if there was ever one who held the papal laws and the traditions of the fathers in reverence, I was such." "I had an unfeigned veneration for the pope, not seeking after livings, or places and such like, but whatsoever I did, I did with singleness of heart, with upright zeal and for the glory of God." "So great was the pope in my esteem that I accounted departing from him in the least article a sin, deserving damnation; and this ungodly opinion made me to hold Huss as an accursed heretic, so much so that I esteemed it a sin only to think of him; and, to defend the pope's authority, I would have kindled the fire to burn the heretic, and should have believed that I was thereby showing the highest obedience to God."

We have learned that Luther was driven to the cloister by a disquieted conscience, and superstitious fears and hopes. It is natural to inquire how far his conscience was quieted, his fears allayed, and his hopes realized. Let him answer for himself. "When I was a monk I was outwardly much holier than now. I kept the vow I had taken with the greatest zeal and diligence by day and by night, and yet I found no rest, for all the consolations which I drew from my own righteousness and works were ineffectual." Doubts all the while cleaved to my conscience, and I thought within myself, Who knoweth whether this is pleasing and acceptable to God, or not." "Even when I was the most devout, I went as a doubter to the altar, and as a doubter I went away again. If I had made my confession, I was still in doubt; if, upon that, I left off prayer, I was again in doubt, for we were wrapt in the conceit, that we could not pray and should not be heard, unless we were wholly pure and without sin, like the saints in heaven." It is difficult for us to conceive of the anguish which a tender and delicate conscience would feel under the doctrines which were taught in respect to confession. Who could be certain that he knew the nature and extent of all the sins he had committed? What infallible rule had he by which he could judge rightly of all the acts and circumstances connected with sin? Of his motives and intentions he might have a tolerably accurate knowledge. But how was it with acts in themselves considered, which were the main things in the ethics of the confessional? Even of those sins which were defined and measured by the rules of the order, since they related to a thousand trifling acts recurring almost every moment, few persons could retain a distinct consciousness or memory so as to be perfectly sure at each confession that nothing was omitted or forgotten. And yet one

such omission vitiated the whole confession and rendered prayer useless. This was the scorpion sting which Luther so keenly felt. He always doubted the completeness of his confession. If he prayed, it might be of no use; if he neglected prayer, his doubts were increased. "The confession was an intolerable burden laid upon the church. For there was no sorer trouble, as we all know by experience, than that every one should be compelled to make confession, or be guilty of a mortal sin. Besides, confession was beset with so many difficulties, and the conscience tormented with reckoning up such different sorts of sins, that no one could make his confession perfect enough." "If the confession was not perfect, and done with exceeding particularity, the absolution was of none effect, nor were the sins forgiven. Therewith were the people so hard pressed, that there was no one but must despair of confessing so perfectly (it was in very deed impossible), and no conscience could abide the trial, nor have confidence in the absolution."

"When I was a monk, I used oftentimes to be very contrite for my sins, and to confess them all as much as was possible, and performed the penance that was enjoined unto me as straitly and as rigorously as I could. Yet for all this, my conscience could never be tranquil and assured, but was always in doubt, and said, This or that hast thou not done rightly; thou wast not sorrowful enough for thy sins; this and that sin thou didst forget in thy confession." Though he "confessed every day, it was all in vain." "The smart and anguish of conscience," he elsewhere says, "were as great in the cowl, as they were before out of it." These declarations may easily be reconciled with others which represent him as feeling happy when he could say, "To-day I have done no wrong; I have been obedient to my prior, have fasted and prayed, and God is gracious towards me." These occasions were of rare occurrence, and were the results of that superficial feeling which the strongest and profoundest minds are liable to have in those passive moments when they surrender themselves to the influence of popular belief. But the chief current of Luther's feelings, in spite of all the violence he did to himself to prevent it, ran counter to that belief, so that in after life, when reverting to these scenes, he could speak of the predominant state of his mind as though there had been no other. The effect of such a view of religion as he then entertained, and of such an experience as he had of a daily deviation from its precepts, is truthfully described in the following words, undoubtedly the utterance of his own heart. "He who thinketh that a Christian ought to be without any fault, and yet seeth many faults in himself, must needs be consumed at length with melancholy and despair."

Not only did Luther suffer from the unexpected discovery of the real sinfulness of his heart, but he was scarcely less tormented with imaginary sins and false scruples of conscience. "The devil," says he, "seizes upon some trifling sin, and by that casts into the shade all the good works which thou hast thy life long done, so that thou dost see nothing but this one sin." "I speak from experience; I know his wiles and subtilties, how of one little mote he maketh many great beams, that is to say, of that which is the least sin, or no sin at all, he maketh a very hell, so that the wide world is too strait for one."

The fiery imagination of Luther, which solitude served but to kindle into an intenser flame, the strength and depth of his religious passions which found no such vent as they needed, and the bewildered state of his mind in respect to the elementary principles of Christianity, all conspired to give him an air of peculiarity which the monks could not comprehend. Too much of original character lay concealed beneath that demure yet singular deportment to be controlled even by the iron forms which the order laid upon all alike. Luther's mind had an individuality which separated him from the mass and heightened his solitude. In the mental processes through which he passed, he was alone and without sympathy. He was driven, at last, almost to phrenzy. Often was his bodily frame overpowered by the intensity of his excited feelings, and there was no skilful physician of the soul at hand to prescribe for his case. Speaking on this point, he observes, "In my huge temptations which consumed my body so that I well nigh lost my breath, and hardly knew whether I had still any brain left or not, there was no one to comfort me." If he opened his heart to any one, the only reply he received was, "I know nothing about such temptations," and he was left to the gloomy conclusion, that he "was to be alone in this disconsolate state." But as the melancholy mood here described only commenced during his novitiate and extended through the second year of his life in the cloister, we must break off the narration for the present, and direct our attention to his other employments during the first year.

"When I was received into the cloister," he said once to his friends, according to the Gotha manuscript, "I called for a Bible, and the brethren gave me one. It was bound in red morocco. I made myself so familiar with it that I knew on what page and in what place every passage stood. Had I kept it, I should have been an excellent textual theologian. No other study than that of the Holy Scriptures pleased me. I read therein zealously, and imprinted them on my memory. Many a time a single pregnant passage would abide the whole day long in my mind. On significant words of the

prophets, which even now I remember well, I cogitated again and again, although I could not apprehend the meaning thereof; as, for example, we read in Ezekiel, I desire not the death of the sinner." Again, he says, "Not till after I had made myself acquainted with the Bible, did I study the (scholastic) writers." By "the writers," he must mean the scholastic theologians. For he himself says, in a preface to Bugenhagen's edition of Athanasius, that he "read the colloquy between Athanasius and Arius with great interest, in the first year of his monastic life, at Erfurt." No doubt he also read the legends of the saints, the Lives of the Fathers (a favorite book with him), and other works of a similar tendency. The new rules of the order prescribed, however, the diligent study of the Scriptures, and the probationary year appears to have been designated for biblical study. But we must guard against being misled by the fact that there was such a rule, and by the name that was given to the study. Neither the sentiments nor the practice of the Erfurt monks coincided with the rule. Though they could not refuse to give a Bible to the novice who requested it, they discouraged the study of it. Besides, Luther's time was so much occupied with other useless and menial services that his progress in the study of the Scriptures must have been much impeded. He was, furthermore, destitute of suitable helps for studying them critically. He did not see the Bible in the original, nor had he then any knowledge of the Greek or Hebrew. He had only the Latin Vulgate, with a most miserable commentary, called the *Glossa Ordinaria*, or Common Gloss. And, what is more than all, he brought to the study of the Bible a mind overborne with monastic and papal prejudices. The method of what was called biblical studies, as then pursued in the monasteries and universities, was entirely different from that to which we, in the present age, are accustomed. The Bible was not studied as a whole, nor any of the sacred writers in a connected manner so as to learn the scope and general design of the book. Of course, the author was not made his own interpreter, nor were any sound rules of interpretation observed. A text was, in the first place, taken out of its connection, and interpreted metaphysically, as if it were a scholastic maxim, and forced at once into an unnatural connection with dialectics, or used as a secondary and subsidiary support of a doctrine which rested mainly on a metaphysical basis. In the next place, the literal sense was deserted at pleasure, and an allegorical one introduced to suit the object of the interpreter. The absurd conceits of Origen, Jerome and other early fathers of the church were handed down by tradition, and the study of such traditionary interpretation, collected in compends, was called

biblical study. The false interpretations to be found in the papal bulls and decretals, and in the approved works of the scholastic writers, would furnish a large chapter in the book of human follies. Luther was not only under these influences but yielded to them. In a letter to Spalatin, June 29, 1518, he says, "I myself followed the doctrines and rules of the scholastic theology, and according to them did I desire to handle the Scriptures." In his commentary on Genesis ix. he says, "I have often told you of what sort theology was when I first began the study thereof. The letter, said they, killeth. For this cause I was especially opposed to Lyra more than to all other teachers, because he cleaved so diligently to the text and abode by it. But now, for this selfsame reason, I prefer him before all other interpreters of Scripture." Again, he says, "When I was young, I loved allegories to such a degree, that I thought everything must be turned into allegories. To this Origen and Jerome gave occasion, whom I esteemed as being the greatest theologians." Well, indeed, might he afterwards say, "I did not learn all my theology at once." The beginning with him was feeble, and, the sincerity of his heart excepted, was of a very unpromising character.

Taking the Vow.—Second year in the Cloister, 1506.

Such was Luther's year of probation, a year in which he experienced some gratification in the study, however defective, of the Scriptures which he loved; but, on the other hand, was disappointed in respect to what was of the highest concern to him, namely, obtaining peace within himself. If it excite our wonder that he did not, at this time, while it was in his power, and before taking the irrevocable vow, determine to abandon the monastic life, and return to the university or seek some other occupation, there are other considerations which may remove our surprise. Luther's mind was of too determined a character to be turned from its course by any slight considerations. He had been trained in the school of adversity, and could courageously bear the privations and sufferings attendant on his present mode of life. The subject of religion interested him more than all others, and to this he could give his undivided attention here more easily than elsewhere. Here, too, he found a few friends, such as Usingen, his former teacher, Lange whom he assisted in study, and the excellent Susse, who is said to have been his room-mate. If his mind had as yet found no rest, possibly a longer trial, after actually taking the vow, might prove more effectual. Certainly a return to the world would imply a want of firmness, and would, besides, promise

no better results. Even if there had been no disgrace attached to leaving the cloister at the close of the novitiate, this would probably have made no difference with Luther, who seems to have made up his mind from the beginning. Speaking of the unsuccessful attempt of the friends who endeavored to keep him from entering the monastery, he says, "Thus did I abide by my purpose, thinking never again to come out of the cloister."

The rules of the order prescribed that the prior should, at the close of the year of probation, examine the novice as to his being worthy of admission. If the result was favorable, the bell was to be rung and the monks to assemble, and the prior to take his place before the steps at the altar and to address the kneeling novice in the following words: You have become acquainted with the severe life of our order, and must now decide whether you will return to the world or be consecrated to the order. If the answer was in favor of the latter, the individual was directed to put off the garb of the novice and the part of the service beginning with the words, "Our help is in the name of the Lord," was repeated, whereupon the prior laid the monk's apparel upon him, and then the ceremonies were very similar to those of entering the novitiate, described above. The vow was taken, in connection with the imposition of the hands of the prior, in these words, as reported by Cochlaeus: "I, brother Martin, make profession, and promise obedience to Almighty God, to Mary always a virgin, and to thee, my brother, the prior of this cloister in the name and in the stead of the general prior of the order of the Eremites of St. Augustine, the bishop and of his regular successors, to live in poverty and chastity, according to the rule of the said St. Augustine, until death." Then a burning taper was put into his hand, prayer was offered for him by the prior, and the brethren sung the hymn, *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, "Come Holy Spirit," after which the new brother was conducted by them to the choir of the church and received of them the paternal kiss.

The most extravagant ideas were entertained of the effect of such a formal consecration to a monastic life. As baptism was supposed to take away all sin, so this monastic baptism, as the initiation was called, was said to be equally efficacious and to have even a greater sanctity. Hence Luther was congratulated on the present occasion as being, by his own act, freed from sin and introduced into a state of primeval innocence. With this he felt flattered and pleased for the moment, but upon experiencing its utter futility, he came at length to regard it as "a pill of infernal poison, sugared over on the outside." In his Brief Reply to George, Duke of Saxony, he said: "That the

monks likened their monastic life to Christian baptism, they cannot deny; for so they have taught and practised through and through in all the world. When I made my profession, I was congratulated by the prior, the convent and the confessor that I was now innocent as a child, which had just come forth pure from its baptism. And verily I could heartily rejoice over such a glorious deed,—that I was such an excellent man, who could, by his own works, without the blood of Christ, make himself so good and holy, and that too so easily and so quickly. But though I could hear with pleasure such sweet praise and shining words concerning my own doings, and let myself pass for a wonder-worker, who could, in such a wanton manner, make himself holy and devour both death and the devil, yet would it fail when it came to the trial. For when only a small temptation of death or of sin came upon me, I fell away, and found no succour either in baptism or in the monastic state. Then was I the most miserable man on earth; day and night there was nothing but lamentation and despair, from which no one could deliver me. So I was bathed and baptized in my monasticism, and verily had the sweating sickness.”

Luther was three years in the cloister at Erfurt. Of his employments and of his state of mind during the first year, or the year of his novitiate, we have already had an account. During the second year, with which we are now concerned, he was devoted to the study of the scholastic theology and to his preparation for the priesthood. His religious feelings continued of the same character substantially as in the first year, except that his anxieties and his sorrows increased. It was not till in the third year, the year of his priesthood, that new views on the subject of works and of justification shed light upon his mind and joy upon his path, and not till after that change did he take up the study of the early Christian fathers. Here then we have the means of deciding, in most cases, to which of these three periods his numerous allusions to his monastic life in Erfurt refer. If, in any passage, there be a reference to the duties of the priestly office, saying mass for example, or to the study of Augustine and other church fathers, or to more cheerful and confiding feelings in respect to God, as a loving father rather than as a stern revenger, and to Christ, as a compassionate Saviour rather than as a dreaded judge, we may safely apply the passage to the last year of Luther's residence in Erfurt. If a state of bodily and mental suffering be referred to alone, it is doubtful whether Luther had the first or second year in mind. But if harsh treatment or the regular study of the Scriptures be mentioned in the same connection, the first year is thereby indicated; whereas

if occupation with the scholastic theologians and with works which treat of the duties of the priesthood be alluded to, the second year only can be meant.

Of the personal appearance of Luther about the time of this second year, probably near its close, this being the time of his most intense mental anguish, we have a representation in a portrait taken in 1572, preserved in a church at Weimar, when the artist had the means of ascertaining how Luther appeared at the time referred to. This is furthermore supported by a letter of Luther's, in which he describes his features as they then were. The youthful flush had disappeared from his countenance. His black, piercing and fiery eye was now sunken. His small and plump face had become thin and spare. With all his sadness and dejection, there was a solemn earnestness in his mien, and his look bespoke a mind in conflict and yet determined.

It was, no doubt, either during the latter part of the preceding year, or near the beginning of this, that Staupitz, general vicar or provincial of the order in Germany, on one of his visitations to examine into the state of the several cloisters under his care, first had his attention attracted to Luther. By the rules of the order drawn up by himself, it was made his duty, as general vicar, to visit the convents for the purpose of seeing that a paternal discipline was maintained, and particularly to inquire in respect to the care taken of the sick, the instruction given to novices, and the observance of the fasts, and other prescribed duties. Staupitz was a model which all provincials might well imitate. He made it his concern to promote the study of the Bible, though his efforts were not always seconded by others, and to seek out and encourage young men of talent and of elevated religious character, and to inspire them, as far as possible, with a sincere love of God and of man. Such a person as Luther, learned, able, ardent, perplexed, abused, and sinking both in health and in spirits, could not escape his notice. His singular attachment to the Bible was no less gratifying than it was surprising to Staupitz. "The monks," says Luther, "did not study the Scriptures, save hers and there one, who like myself took special delight therein. Often did I read them in the cloister to the great astonishment of Doctor Staupitz." Here commenced the most important acquaintance which Luther ever formed. Staupitz, at once, after knowing the character of the young monk, directed the prior to have more regard to his standing and previous habits, to release him from those humiliating and onerous tasks which had been imposed upon him. He, at the same time, encouraged Luther to prosecute the study of the Scriptures with

unabated zeal, till he should be able to turn readily to any passage that should be named. Luther now, for the first time, found a spiritual guide who was, in every essential respect, qualified to treat such critical cases as his,—one who, in his comprehensive view, recognized as well the laws of the physical and the mental constitution as the fundamental principles of the gospel. A varied order of living, and new trains of thought, originating in suggestions in regard to the true nature of Christianity, which were then as strange as those which were once made to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, were the beginnings of a healthful process, which ultimately wrought a complete religious revolution in Luther's mind and laid in his personal experience the foundation for the Reformation. In a letter to Staupitz in 1528, he says, "I ought not to be unmindful or forgetful of you, through whom the light of the gospel first began to shine out of darkness into our hearts."

John von Staupitz was descended from an ancient noble family of Meissen or Misnia in the kingdom of Saxony. In order to gratify his love of study and pious meditation, he became an Augustinian monk, and in various universities went through an extended course of scholastic philosophy and theology. In 1497, he was made master of arts, lector or public reader of his order, and connected himself with the university of Tübingen, in the south of Germany. He rose rapidly to distinction; for in the following year he was appointed prior of the convent of Tübingen; in the next, he took the degree of biblical bachelor, or the first degree in theology, that of sententiary, or the second degree, and in 1500, that of doctor of divinity. Early disgusted with the dry and unprofitable speculations of the scholastic theologians, he turned his attention to what are called the mystical theologians, or the spiritual and experimental Christians of that age. Bernard and Gerson were his favorite authors, men in whom a spirit not unlike that of the pious Thomas à Kempis prevailed. The influence of some of the professors at Tübingen, especially of Sommerhard, united to that of the writers above named, led him to appreciate the Bible more highly than any other book, and to look to that as his only safe guide in religion and the only sure foundation of Christian theology. "It is needful for us," says Staupitz, "to study the Holy Scriptures with the greatest diligence, and with all humility, and earnestly to pray that we fail not of the truth of the gospel." He regarded that principle of love which the Holy Spirit originates in us, and which produces a union with Christ by faith, as constituting the essence of religion. This is not produced by any good works of ours, but is itself the producer of all good works. Our piety, therefore, does not depend on the per-

formance of rites and ceremonies prescribed by the church, nor can it be estimated by such a standard; but it depends on the state of the heart and on the exercise of the spiritual affections. Our union with the church is not the cause of our union with Christ, but *vice versa*. "First, God gives to all the faithful one heart and one soul in him, and on this wise unites them together, and of this comes the unity of the church."

These are some of the characteristic features of the piety and faith of Staupitz; and in them we cannot fail to recognize the undeveloped germs of salvation by grace and justification by faith in Christ, as afterwards maintained by his greater disciple. Such a spirit was the very opposite of that which animated Tetzel in the sale of indulgences.

When, in 1502, the Elector Frederic of Saxony founded the university of Wittenberg, he employed Staupitz first as a counsellor and negotiator, and then as a dean or superintendent of the theological faculty. In the next year, the Chapter of the Order chose him general vicar; and it was in this capacity that he was brought into connection with Luther. His influence upon the cloisters under his charge was of the happiest kind; and his efforts to promote biblical studies, and to revive the spirituality of his brethren, no doubt prepared, in part, the way for multitudes of them to embrace the doctrines of Luther. The testimony of the latter to his worth, may properly have place here. "He was an estimable man, not only worthy to be listened to with reverence, as a scholar, in seats of learning and in the church; but also at the court of princes, and in the society of the great, he was held in much estimation for his knowledge of the world."

From the nature of the case, we could not suppose that the first interview of Staupitz with Luther could produce any great and sudden change in the latter. At that time, they were attached to opposite systems of theology, the mystic and the scholastic; and Luther's views were so interwoven with his entire character and previous training, that they could not be surrendered without many an inward struggle. Now we are expressly informed by Melancthon that Luther's mind did not find relief till after he commenced the study of the Christian Fathers; and we learn elsewhere that this did not take place till the third year of his residence in the cloister of Erfurt. Consequently, there was an interval of nearly a year at least, and, according to the common view, namely, that Staupitz saw Luther during his novitiate, an interval of nearly two years between their first acquaintance and the conversion of Luther to the evangelical faith. From all the circumstances of the case, we are not allowed to suppose that Staupitz, at the first interview, did more than to gain some general infor-

mation in respect to Luther's character and condition, and to make a few suggestions and leave them to their effect. But though the general vicar was well grounded in the truth, and the young monk almost equally fortified in error, there was one point of strong sympathy between them, and that was, the love of the Bible. But at this time, the Bible was to Luther a very dark book. It came to him, in his spiritual ignorance, almost buried under the rubbish of the papal glosses. The gospel itself was turned into law; Christ was but a second Moses, a stern legislator and judge, from whom the oppressed sinner fled in terror, because he had not a sufficient righteousness of his own, and knew nothing of the justifying righteousness of Christ. Such was the state in which Staupitz found Luther. Instead of proceeding from a consciousness of the necessity of redemption and gratuitous justification to the ascertainment of its reality and availableness, the benighted though learned young monk went back, in a contrary direction, to speculate upon the origin and nature of evil and upon the mysteries of Providence, over which lay a pall of still denser darkness. Thus he was sometimes subject to the keenest despair, and sometimes to the most distressing thoughts. "Why," said Staupitz to him, "do you vex yourself with these speculations and high thoughts? Look to the wounds of Christ and to the blood which he shed for you. From these will the counsels of God shine forth." That is, in the cross of Christ is the best solution of the mysteries of Providence. This undoubtedly took place at the first confession which Luther made to Staupitz as the general vicar. The scene, according to Luther, was equally surprising to both parties. Such a confession, going so deeply into the nature of sin as consisting not so much in single acts, as in a moral state, a confession of the doubts and daring speculations of a great mind abused in its religious training, and consequently in a perfectly chaotic state, Staupitz had never before heard. Luther knew no better what to make of the unexpected and strange directions given him by Staupitz. No name was more terrific to him than that of Christ, an avenger and a judge, to whom he did not dare to approach without first preparing the way by engaging in his behalf the more tender sympathies of the virgin mother to soften the severities of her Divine Son. In a sermon of his first published in 1847, Luther says, "Under the papacy I fled from Christ, and trembled at his name; * * * for I looked upon him as a judge only; and in this grievously erred. St. Bernard, otherwise a godly man, said: 'Behold, in all the gospel, how sharply Christ often rebuketh, upbraideth, and condemneth the Pharisees, and flieth at them, while the virgin Mary is ever gentle and kind, and never spoke or uttered one hard word.' From hence arose the opinion that

Christ reproacheth and rebuketh, while Mary is all sweetness and love." The first confession only created mutual surprise, and Luther was still left in his sadness. This we learn from an occurrence that seems to have taken place soon after. At table, Staupitz seeing Luther still down-cast and clouded with gloom, said to him, "Why are you in such heaviness, brother Martin?" "Alas!" replied Luther, "what then am I to do?" Staupitz rejoined, "I have never had knowledge nor experience of such temptations; but so far as I can perceive, they are more needful for you than your food and drink. You know not how salutary and necessary they are for you. God bringeth them not upon you without a purpose. Without them, nothing good would come of you. You will yet see that God hath great things to accomplish through you." Numerous passages in Luther's later writings were evidently suggested by his own experience as here described. One will here suffice as a specimen. "When the heart of man is in great anguish, either the Spirit of God must needs give him gracious assurance, or there must be a godly friend to comfort him and take from him his doubts by the word of God." But as we afterwards find Luther in his former state of mind, and devoting himself with more zeal than ever to the study of the scholastic writers, we must conclude that no great and permanent change was effected in his religious views during Staupitz's first visit.

He studies the Scholastic Theology.

The effect of Staupitz's influence was delayed by the fact that, according to the usages of the Order, which he could not think of setting aside, the monk who had finished his biblical studies, as they were improperly called, was to direct his chief attention next to the scholastic theology. Staupitz was not the man for energetic or violent reform; and Usingen, whose influence in the Erfurt convent was now great, and who was probably Luther's preceptor at this time, was a zealous scholastic. Luther himself says, "When I had taken the vow, they took the Bible from me again and gave me the sophisticated books. But as often as I could, I would hide myself in the library, and give my mind to the Bible."

Luther, who never shrank from a book because it was hard or disagreeable, but, on the contrary, with a consciousness of his power, took pleasure in its full exercise, now studied with iron diligence the sentences of the fathers, as collected into digests by the schoolmen. Biel and D'Ailly, he is said to have learned by heart. With the writings of Occam, Aquinas, and Scotus, he made himself very familiar.

Here we find Luther in a new conflict—his own inclination and re-

ligious wants, together with the influence of Staupitz, leading him to the Bible; the influence of the convent and his occupation with the scholastic writers, on the other hand, strengthening the false impressions under which he had grown up. Both these contending elements were exerting their whole power upon Luther, and he was to be prepared for his great work by a complete knowledge of each.

Preparation for the Priesthood.

This also constituted a part of Luther's occupation during his second year in the monastery. Biel, the last of the scholastics, his favorite author, was the writer most studied on this subject. In what follows, it will be made to appear that such employment, no less than the study of the scholastic writers in general, was adapted to carry him further and further from the Bible and the spiritualism of Staupitz and to involve him more deeply than ever in the labyrinth of papal error. We find here a striking analogy to the mazes of error through which the great Augustine passed, when half in despair, and half in docile submission, he was conducted step by step through the hollow and deceitful system of the Manicheans. The church service with which the priest was concerned, was a complicated system of symbolical acts, at the same time exercising the ingenuity, and furnishing ample materials for exciting the imagination of the students. The central point in the system was the service of mass. To this the passages of Scripture selected, their arrangement, the prayers and the hymns all referred. The antiphonies and the priestly ornaments both relate to the sacrificial offering in the mass. The rites themselves were sacred mysteries, and the officiating priest a sacred person. Luther never lost the impression which these imposing and solemn, though false forms of worship made upon him. Christ was considered as daily repeating the offering up of himself. "What an impressive moment," says a recent biographer of Luther, "when the priest finally kneeled down, the mass-bell was rung, the whole congregation fell prostrate, and the consecrated bread was changed into the body of Christ and then raised on high as the host!" What an ample field is here opened for the imagination, fired by religious superstition, to range in! "The priest," says Luther, "on account of his saying mass, is elevated above the Virgin Mary, and the angels, who cannot do so."

Biel had written an extended work on the mass-service, which was adopted as a text-book in the monasteries. He there teaches, that men must repair to the saints, through whose intercessions we are to

be saved; that the Father has given over one half of his kingdom to the Virgin, the queen of heaven; that of the two attributes of justice and mercy he has surrendered the latter to her, while he retains the former. The priest is intercessor between God and man. He offers the sacrifice of Christ in the supper, and can extend its efficacy to others. This neither the Virgin Mary nor the angels can do.

In another part of the work, Biel has several nice disquisitions on such questions as, whether the bread must always be made of wheat; how much ought to be consecrated at a time; what would be the effect of a grammatical blunder on the part of the priest in repeating the words. Thus Luther was trained by daily study to a system of practical religion which subsequently, when he was more enlightened, became abhorrent to all the feelings of his heart. "Let any one," he says, "read Biel on the Canonical Constitutions in respect to the mass, which is nevertheless the best book of the Papists on that matter, and see what execrable things are therein contained. That was once my book." Again; "Gabriel Biel wrote a book on the Canonical Constitutions which was looked upon as the best in these times; . . . when I read it my heart did bleed," that is, was in anguish from the scruples which it caused in respect to the duties of the priesthood. The rules laid down were carried into an astonishing minuteness of detail, and the least deviation from them was represented as highly sinful. Luther was so conscious of his sinfulness that he often despaired of ever being able to officiate worthily as a priest. We, in this age, cannot appreciate his feelings in this respect unless we place ourselves in imagination precisely in his circumstances and learn with him to feel a creeping horror at the ghostly superstitions of the times. His own language will best transport us to the gloomy cell and its spiritual terrors, and to the chapel with its over-aweing mysteries. "Those priests," he remarks, "who were right earnest in religion, were so terrified in pronouncing the words of Christ, delivered at the institution of the supper, that they trembled and quaked when they came to the clause, "This is my body;" for they were to repeat every word without the least error. He who stammered, or omitted a word, was guilty of a great sin. He was, moreover, to pronounce the words without any wandering thoughts." Again, he says, "It was declared a mortal sin to leave out the word *enim* (for), or *aeterni* (eternal). . . If one had forgotten whether he had pronounced a certain word or not, he could not make the matter sure by repetition. . . Here was distress and anguish. . . How sorely were we vexed with the mass, especially with the signs of the cross!" About fifty of these and some hundreds of other prescribed motions of the body

were to be punctiliously observed in the mass service. Special rules were given as to what was to be done if a little of the wine were spilled. Nothing can give us a better impression of the awe which the idea of Christ's real presence inspired than an incident which occurred but four years before Luther's death. In the year 1542, during the celebration of the Eucharist, some drops of the wine were accidentally spilled. Luther, Bugenhagen and the officiating minister sprang instantly and licked it up with their tongues! If such were the feelings with which the reformer noticed any little irregularity in this service in his old age, what must they have been when he was timidly preparing himself to become a Catholic priest?

In the mass itself, everything is Jewish and legal. Christ's original sacrifice is regarded as atoning only for original sin; all other sins were to be atoned for in the mass. Through the intercession of the saints, the sacrament effects an ablution from all actual sin, a defence against all dangers, against all the evils incident to the body or the mind, against the assaults of Satan, and a remission of the sins of the dead as well as of the living. How strangely is Christ here thrown into the back ground, and saints and priests raised to an impious eminence! How is the cross of Christ obscured, and an empty rite, a human invention covered with the halo of a divine glory!

Consecration as Priest in 1507.

The day appointed for his ordination as priest, the 2d of May 1507, at length arrived. Such a day was of too solemn interest, as it was observed at that time, to be allowed to pass without the presence of Luther's father, who had continued during nearly the whole period of two years to be alienated from the son in consequence of his entering the monastery. It is a mistake committed by several biographers of Luther, to represent the reconciliation, and even the visit of John Luther at the convent, as having taken place in 1505, a short time after Luther entered his novitiate. Martin was his father's favorite son. He had been sent to the university, and supported there by the father's hard earnings, in order that he might become a learned jurist and rise to distinction. His brilliant career as a student, and then as a teacher, and his entrance, under favorable circumstances, upon the study of the law, served only to give poignancy to a father's grief, when he saw that all his high hopes were to be disappointed. He was so chagrined that he refused to see his son. On the death of two other sons, who were carried off by the plague, and on the intelligence that Martin had also died of the same, his heart began to relent.

His friends took that opportunity to reason with him, and to convince him that he ought to be willing to make an offering to the Lord of whatever was dearest to him, even though it were his favorite child. To this reasoning he never assented, entertaining, as he always did, unfavorable views of monastic life; but he became so far reconciled as to accept the invitation to be present at the ordination. He came in the pomp required by the occasion, mounted on horseback with attendants, amounting to twenty in all, and honored his son with a present of twenty guldens. It was "with a sad, reluctant will," as Luther says, that his father finally consented to his permanent connection with a religious order. "Well, be it so," was his language, "God grant that it may turn out for good." When they were all seated at table, at the time of the ordination, Luther, trusting to the favorable impressions produced by the occasion, and to the influence of the company around him, ventured to touch upon the delicate subject with his father, in the following language: "Dear father, what was the reason of thy objecting to my desire to become a monk? Why wast thou then so displeased? and perhaps not reconciled yet? It is such a peaceful and godly life to live." He went on to recount the alarming events which he construed as indications of the divine will, and was warmly supported in all he said by the monks at his side. The plain-spoken, and honest miner, notwithstanding the place and the occasion, boldly and tersely replied, "Didst thou never hear that a son must be obedient to his parents? And you learned men, did you never read in the Scriptures, Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother? . . . God grant that those signs may not prove to be lying wonders of Satan." "Never," said Luther afterwards, "did words sink deeper into a man's heart than did these of my father into mine."

The sentiments of the age, in respect to the ordination of a priest, must be kept in view, if we would understand Luther's history at this period. He himself informs us that "a consecrated priest was as much above an ordinary Christian as the morning star was above a smoking taper." "It was a glorious thing to be a new priest, and to hold the first mass. Blessed the mother who had borne a priest. Father and mother and friends were filled with joy." "The first mass was thought much of, and brought many, for the gifts and offerings came like drops of rain. The canonical hours were then observed with torch-lights. The young priest danced with his mother, if she was still living, and the bye-standers, who looked on wept for joy. If she was dead, he delivered her from purgatory."

We learn from Luther, that the bishop at his ordination gave him

the cup, and said to him, "Receive power to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead," and Luther adds, "it is a wonder that the ground did not open and swallow us both up." The words which Luther was then to employ in the mass service, which immediately followed, were, "Accept, holy Father, this unblemished sacrifice, which I, thine unworthy servant, offer to thee, the true and living God, for my innumerable sins, offences and omissions, and for all who are here present, and for all believers living, and also for the dead, that it may be for our salvation." Luther was filled with trepidation and fear, and faltered in the service, and would have left the altar, which would have occasioned his excommunication, if his preceptor, who was standing by, had not stopped him. It was the idea of "standing before God without a mediator," as he had been taught to interpret the act, and other superstitious fears with which Biel's book had filled his head,—it was this that made him pause in terror when he came to the words, "the sacrifice which I offer thee." "From that time forth," says Luther, "I read mass with great fear." Still he became a very zealous and fanatical priest, as the following passages from his writings clearly show. We now find him going from village to village "begging cheese" and "saying mass" for the peasants, and sometimes "with difficulty refraining from laughter" at the blunders of the awkward country organists, who, as he says, would introduce the wrong piece in the midst of the service. How false the principles were upon which he then acted he himself afterwards strongly testifies, "I was an unblushing Pharisee. When I had read mass and said my prayers I put my trust and rested therein, I did not behold the sinner that lay hidden under that cloak, in my not trusting in the righteousness of God but in my own, in not giving God thanks for the sacrament, but in thinking he must be thankful and well pleased that I offered up his Son to him, that is, reproached and blasphemed him. When we were about to hold mass, we were wont to say, "Now I will go and be god-father to the Virgin." Did we not know that the worst of abuses can be practised without remorse, when false principles in religion are adopted, we could scarcely believe that such representations as the following could be made in sober earnest by Luther. "Some had mass in order to become rich, and to be prosperous in their worldly business. Some, because they thought if they heard mass in the morning, then would they be secure through all the day against every suffering and peril. Some, by reason of sickness, and some for yet more foolish and sinful causes; and they could find abject priests, who, for money, would let them have their way. Furthermore, they have put a difference in the

mass, making one better for this, another better for that occasion, by inventing the seven gulden mass. The mass of the holy cross has a different virtue from the mass of the virgin. And everybody keeps still and lets the people go on, on account of the accursed gain, flowing abundantly through the mass which has so many names and virtues." "Here, you yourselves know, my dear sirs," says Luther to his opponents in 1520, "what a disgraceful traffic and marketing you have made with your sacrament. This has been the regular and every-day business of you all, buying and selling throughout all the world so many thousands of masses for money, some for a groschen (three cents), some for eight pfennigs (two cents), and some for six. There is no excusing nor denying it." "I also, when I was a monk, was wont daily to confess, to fast, to read, to pray, and to offer sacrifice, to the end that, from the vigils, mass and other works, I could impart and sell something (merit) to the laity. The monks bartered their merits away for corn and wine, as well as for money, and gave formal receipts, as is shown by many copies still extant, which ran thus: 'In consideration of one bushel of wheat, we by this writing and contract make over to you the benefit of our fastings, watchings, mortifications, mass-services and such like.' I, an arrant papist, and much fiercer mass-monger than all the rest, could not distinguish between the mass and the sacrament any more than the common people. To me the mass and the sacrament upon the altar were one and the same thing, as they were to all of us at that time. . . . I have lain sick in the infirmary, and viewed Christ in no other light than that of a severe judge, whom I must appease with my monastic works. . . . Therefore, my way and custom was, when I had finished my prayers or mass, always to conclude with such words as these: 'My dear Jesus, I come to thee and entreat thee to be pleased with whatsoever I do and suffer in my order, and to accept it as a composition for my sins? Twenty years ago, if any one desired mass, he should have come and purchased it of me, I cleaved to it with all my heart and worshipped it. . . . I held mass every day and knew not but that I was going straight to heaven. . . . I chose for myself twenty-one saints, read mass every day, calling on three of them each day, so as to complete the circuit every week. Especially did I invoke the holy virgin, as her womanly heart was more easily touched, that she might appease her son." Again he says, "I thought that by invoking three saints daily and by letting my body waste away with fastings and watchings, I should satisfy the law, and shield my conscience against the goad of the driver. But it all availed me nothing. The further I went on in this way, the more

was I terrified, so that I should have given over in despair, had not Christ graciously regarded me, and enlightened me with the light of his gospel."

Need we any further proof that a long period intervened between his first conversations with Staupitz and the time that the true light of the gospel broke in upon his soul? Here he represents himself as in the grossest darkness and in the most wretched condition, long after he had entered upon the duties of the priesthood; and yet he was not ordained till May 2, 1507. So much is certain; Staupitz was only occasionally at Erfurt, probably not more than twice or three times during Luther's residence in the cloister there. His first visit brought him in contact with Luther, but had not the effect to extricate the latter from the scholastic errors in which he was completely entangled. It was at a later period, and probably after the second visit of Staupitz at Erfurt, that Luther wrote to him frequently on the subject of his wretchedness. "When I was a monk," said Luther once to his friends, "I wrote oftentimes to Dr. Staupitz; and once I wrote to him, exclaiming, 'Oh, my sins, my sins!' Then Staupitz gave me this reply: "You would be without sin, and yet you have no proper sins. Christ forgives very sins, such as parricide, blasphemy, contempt of God, adultery, and such like. These are sins indeed. You must have a register, in which stand veritable sins, if Christ is to help you." This paradoxical language is explained in a letter of Luther to Spalatin, written in 1544. "Staupitz once comforted me in my sorrow, on this wise. You would be a painted sinner and have a painted Christ as a Saviour. You must make up your mind that Christ is a very Saviour, and you a very sinner." The importance of these words to Luther, and their influence upon the character of Luther's subsequent religious views, as seen in all his writings, it will not be easy for the casual reader to apprehend. Luther was in serious error, and had great and incessant anguish on two points. He looked upon unintentional negligence or forgetfulness of the arbitrary rules of his Order, which were as countless as they were foolish, as being the heinous sin against God; and then he supposed great sinfulness was a bar to forgiveness. On the former point, Staupitz used a little raillery; and on the latter, he furnished Luther the cardinal doctrine of the Reformation, that forgiveness did not depend at all upon the number or magnitude of one's sins, but simply and solely on penitence for them. This is what Luther means, where, hundreds of times in his sermons and other writings, he says that the papists did not preach the gospel, which is the forgiveness of sins; but the law, which is only the knowledge of sin, without a Saviour. We might fill the remainder of this

article with passages from his works, which do nothing but re-echo the sentiment which he learned first from the lips of his spiritual counsellor, and then by an uncommonly deep and protracted experience. We must, therefore, not fail to notice, that in these very suggestions of Staupitz lie the true seeds of the Reformation. In proof of the above assertion, we will adduce but one passage. We will take it from the same letter to Spalatin just mentioned. "You have thus far been but a slender sinner; you reproach yourself with very trifling sins. Come and join yourself to us, real, great, and daring sinners, that you may not make Christ of no account to us, who is a deliverer not from pretended and trifling sins, but from true, great, nay the greatest of sins. Let me put you in mind of my own case, when I was tempted and tried like as you now are, albeit I am now strong in Christ. Believe the Scripture, that Christ is come to destroy the works of the devil, of which this despondency is one." This joyful and confident view of the infinite fulness of a Saviour's love, instead of that terrifying conception of him as a merciless judge and executioner, which he had hitherto entertained, constitutes the radical difference between the Catholic and the Protestant religion as a matter of experience. In the one, good works are sought as a recommendation to Christ, and these, though imperfect, are graciously accepted and rewarded, so that faith itself is nothing but a work of righteousness, beginning in the intellect and the outward act, and gradually becoming spiritual; in the other, Christ meets the sinner as a sinner, and takes the load himself, shows his adaptedness to just such cases; gives, of his own accord, a penitent and believing heart, and forgives gratuitously, and unites the soul to himself by faith, which is justifying only by virtue of this union.

It was a long time before Luther's mind was clear on this subject. The theory of the scholastic divines and the practice of the church had grown up with him. The new tendency, which began to make its appearance, was suppressed and hemmed in on every side. No expression in the Bible was more terrific to him than that of "the righteousness of God." The fathers had explained it as that attribute of justice by which God executes judgment. "This interpretation," says Luther, "caused me distress and terror when I was a young theologian. For when I heard God called righteous, I ran back in my thoughts to that interpretation which had become fixed and rooted in me by long habit. . . . So powerful and pestilent a thing is false and corrupt doctrine, when the heart has been polluted with it from youth up." Staupitz and an aged confessor, whose name is not given, taught him that "the righteousness of God," in Paul's epistles, had a very different meaning, namely, that righteousness which becomes the sinner's

the moment he believes in Christ. Referring to this new explanation, he said : " Then I came to understand the matter, and learned to distinguish between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of the gospel." " When I began," says he again, " to meditate more diligently upon the words ' righteous,' and ' righteousness of God,' which once made me fear when I heard them, and when I considered the passage in the second chapter of Habakkuk, ' The just shall live by faith,' and began to learn that the righteousness which is acceptable to God is revealed without the deeds of the law, from that very time how my feelings were changed ! and I said to myself, If we are made righteous by faith, if the righteousness which avails before God, is saving to all who believe in it, then such declarations ought not to alarm the poor sinner and his timid conscience, but rather be to them a consolation." In another place he says, " I had the greatest longing to understand rightly the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, but was always stopped by the word ' righteousness,' in the 1st chapter and 19th verse, where Paul says, ' the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel.' I felt very angry at the term, ' the righteousness of God ;' for, after the manner of all the teachers, I was taught to understand it, in a philosophic sense, of that righteousness by which God is just and punishes the guilty. Though I was a man without reproach, I felt myself a great sinner before God, and was of a very quick conscience, and had not confidence in a reconciliation with God, to be produced by any work of satisfaction or merit of my own. For this cause I had in me no love of a righteous and angry God, but secretly hated him, and said to myself, Is it not enough that God has condemned us to everlasting death by Adam's sin, and that we must suffer so much trouble and misery in this life ? Over and above the terror and threatening of the law, must he, by the gospel, increase our misery and anguish ; and, by the preaching of the same, thunder against us his justice and fierce wrath ? My confused conscience oftentimes cast me into fits of anger, and I sought, day and night, to make out the meaning of Paul ; and, at last, I came to apprehend it thus : Through the gospel is revealed the righteousness which avails with God, a righteousness by which God, in his mercy and compassion, justifies us, as it is written, ' The just shall live by faith.' Straightway I felt as if I were born anew ; it was as if I had found the door of Paradise thrown wide open. Now I saw the Scriptures in an entirely new light, ran through their whole contents, as far as my memory could reach, and compared them, and found that the righteousness was the more surely that by which he makes us righteous, because everything agreed therewith so well. . . . The expression, ' the righteousness of God,'

which I so much hated before, became now dear and precious, my favorite and most comforting word ; and that passage of Paul was, to me, the true door of Paradise."

This long passage is one of the most interesting to be found in all Luther's writings. Though we are rarely able to positively state the moment of one's conversion, we may confidently affirm that this paragraph refers us distinctly to the time when the scales fell from Luther's eyes, and when he broke through that complicated and strong net-work of papal error which had hitherto held him captive. From this time Luther is a new man. He had a footing of his own, and felt the strength of his foundation. Although he had almost everything to learn in respect to this new land of promise, he knew that he was in it.

Again, we learn to a certainty here, that Luther's own mind labored long and hard upon this point. Nothing can be more erroneous than the impression received by many from the meagre accounts commonly given of this struggle, that a few words, short and simple, of Staupitz speedily set him right. The process was very protracted and complicated, and the fierce contention between two opposite elements was carried on long and extended through all the domain of monasticism, its habits and usages, its Scripture interpretations, its dialectics, and the whole mass of its cumbrous theology. A gigantic effort of intellect was requisite in order that Luther should feel his way out in opposition to all the scholastic and monastic influences, not only without the aid of the original Scriptures, but with a version (the Vulgate) in which the key word to this doctrine of justification was rendered by *justitia*, justice, which, with its false glosses, greatly increased the difficulty.

But we should err, if we were to dilute this great change down to a mere intellectual process. Luther himself viewed it very differently, and always represented it as a spiritual transformation effected by the grace of God. He remarks on this subject, "Staupitz assisted me, or rather God through him. . . . I lay wretchedly entangled in the papal net. . . . I must have perished in the den of murderers, if God had not delivered me. . . . His grace transformed me, and kept me from associating with the enemies of the gospel, and from joining them now in shedding innocent blood." Who can doubt that he spoke from his own experience, when he said, "As soon as you receive the knowledge of Christ with sure faith, all anger, fear and trembling vanish in the twinkling of an eye, and nothing but pure compassion is seen in God! Such knowledge quickens the heart and makes it joyful, and assured that God is not angry with us, but tenderly loves us."

The remainder of the time that Luther spent in Erfurt, that is, the latter part of his third year in the cloister and the little of the fourth that was passed there before going to Wittenberg, was employed in the study of the Christian fathers, and especially the writings of Augustine, in connection with the Scriptures and the doctrine of justification. That it is a mistake to place this study of Augustine and others of the church fathers, except the casual reading of them, at an earlier period, is evident from the account of Melancthon, who says it took place after he had ascertained the doctrine of justification by faith. With the works of Augustine he became very familiar, and afterwards he edited one of his treatises, to be used as a text-book in the university of Wittenberg. In the preface, he remarks, "I can safely affirm from my own experience, that next to the Holy Scriptures there is no writer of the church who can be compared with Augustine in Christian learning." Another favorite author with Luther at this time was Gerson, with whose moral writings he was particularly pleased, "because he alone of all the writers of the church, treated of spiritual trials and temptations."

ARTICLE X.

TRANSLATION OF THE PROPHECY OF NAHUM WITH NOTES.

By Prof. B. B. Edwards.

Introductory Remarks.

FRESH interest has been given to this Prophecy of late by the excavations that have been made, or which are now making, on or near the site of ancient Nineveh. The late Mr. Rich, British resident at Bagdad, and son-in-law of Sir James Mackintosh, was the first who awakened a deep interest in the ruins which line the banks of the Tigris near Mosul. His excavations were, however, confined to a limited space, directly opposite Mosul, and his discoveries, compared with the more recent, are not of special importance. Within a few years, M. Botta, son of the distinguished Italian historian, a gentleman of learning and of great enterprise, has made extensive researches at the village of Khorsabad, on the great plain, about twelve miles