

OF LEARNED MEN

DCCC.

Luther advised all who proposed to study, in what art so-ever, to read some sure and certain books over and over again; for to read many sorts of books produces rather confusion than any distinct result; just as those who dwell everywhere, and remain in no place, dwell nowhere, and have no home. As we use not daily the community of all our friends, but of a select few, even so we ought to accustom ourselves to the best books, and to make them familiar unto us, so as to have them, as we say, at our fingers end. A fine talented student fell into a frenzy; the cause of his disease was, that he laid himself out too much upon books, and was in love with a girl. Luther dealt very mildly and friendly with him, expecting amendment, and said: Love is the cause of his sickness; study brought upon him but little of his disorder. In the beginning of the Gospel it went so with myself.

DCCCI.

Who could be so mad, in these evil times, as to write history and the truth? The brains of the Greeks were subtle and crafty; the Italians were ambitious and proud; the Germans rude and boisterous. Livy described the acts of the Romans, not of the Carthaginians. Blandus and Platina only flatter the popes.

DCCCII.

Anno 1536, Luther wrote upon his tablets the following words: *Res et verba Philippus; verba sine re Erasmus; res sine verbis Lutherus: nec res, nec verba Carolostadius*; that is, what Philip Melancthon writes has hand and feet; the matter is good, and the words are good; Erasmus Roterodamus writes many words, but to no purpose; Luther has good matter, but the words are wanting; Carlstad has neither good words nor good matter. Philip Melancthon coming in at the moment, read these criticisms, and turning with a smile to Dr. Basil, said: Touching Erasmus and Carlstad, 'twas well said, but too much praise is accorded to me, while good words ought to be reckoned among the other merits of Luther, for he speaks exceeding well, and has substantial matter.

DCCCIII.

Luther, reproving Dr. Mayer, for that he was fainthearted and depressed, by reason of his simple kind of preaching, in comparison with other divines, as he conceived, admonished him, and said: Loving brother, when you preach regard not the doctors and learned men, but regard the common people, to teach and instruct them clearly. In the pulpit, we must feed the common people with milk, for each day a new church is growing up, which stands in need of plain and simple instruction. Keep to the catechism, the milk. High and subtle discourse, the strong wine, we will keep for the strong-minded.

DCCCCIV.

No theologian of our time handles and expounds the Holy Scripture so well as Brentius, so much so that I greatly admire his energy, and despair of equalling him. I verily believe none among us can compare with him in the exposition of St John's gospel; though, now and then, he dwells somewhat too much upon his own opinions, yet he keeps to the true and just meaning, and does not set himself up against the plain simplicity of God's Word.

DCCCCV.

The discourse turning among the great differences amongst the learned, Luther said: God has very finely distributed his gifts, so that the learned serve the unlearned, and the unlearned humble themselves before the learned, in what is needful for them. If all people were equal, the world could not go on; nobody would serve another, and there would be no peace. The peacock complained because he had not the nightingale's voice. God, with apparent inequality, has instituted the greatest equality; one man, who has greater gifts than another, is proud and haughty, and seeks to rule and domineer over others, and condemns them. God finely illustrates human society in the members of the body, and shows that one member must assist the other, and that none can be without the other.

DCCCCVI.

Aristotle is altogether an epicurean; he holds that God heeds not human creatures, nor regards how we live, permitting us to do at our pleasure. According to him, God rules the world as a sleepy maid rocks a child. Cicero got much further. He collected together what he found good in the books of all the Greek writers. 'Tis a good argument, and has often moved me much, where he proves there is a God, in that living creatures, beasts, and mankind engender their own likeness. A cow always produces a cow; a horse, a horse, etc. Therefore it follows that some being exists which rules everything. In God we may acknowledge the unchangeable and certain motions of the stars of heaven; the sun each day rises and sets in his place; as certain as time, we have winter and summer, but as this is done regularly, we neither admire nor regard it.