

OF OFFENCES

DCLXXXIII.

When we read that Judas hanged himself, that his belly burst in pieces, and that his bowels fell out, we may take this as a sample how it will go with all Christ's enemies. The Jews ought to have made a mirror of Judas, and have seen therein how they in like manner should be destroyed. An allegory or mystery herein lies hid, for the belly signifies the whole kingdom of the Jews, which shall fall away and be destroyed, so that nothing thereof remain. When we read that the bowels fell out, this shows that the posterity of the Jews, their whole generation, shall be spoiled and go to the ground.

DCLXXXIV.

I may compare the state of a Christian to a goose tied up over a wolf's pit to catch wolves. About the pit stand many ravening wolves, that would willingly devour the goose, but she is preserved alive, while they, leaping at her, fall into the pit, are taken and destroyed. Even so, we that are Christians are preserved by the sweet loving angels, so that the devils, those ravening wolves, the tyrants and persecutors, cannot destroy us,

DCLXXXV.

We little know how good and necessary it is for us to have adversaries, and for heretics to hold up their heads against us. For if Cerinthus had not been, then St John the Evangelist had not written his gospel; but when Cerinthus opposed the godhead in our Lord Christ, John was constrained to write and say: In the beginning was the Word; making the distinction of the three persons so clear, that nothing could be clearer. So when I began to write against indulgences and against the pope, Dr. Eck set upon me, and aroused me out of my drowsiness. I wish from my heart this man might be turned the right way, and be converted; for that I would give one of my fingers; but if he will remain where he is, I wish he were made pope, for he has well deserved it; for hitherto he has had upon him the whole burthen of popedom, in disputing and writing against me. Besides him, they have none that dare fall upon me; he raised my first cogitations against the pope, and brought me so far, or otherwise I never should have gone on.

DCLXXXVI.

A liar is far worse, and does greater mischief, than a murderer on the highway; for a liar and false teacher deceives people, seduces souls, and destroys them under the color of God's

Word; such a liar and murderer was Judas, like his father the devil. It was a marvel how Judas should sit at the table with Christ, and not blush for shame, when Christ said: "One of you shall betray me," etc. The other disciples had not the least thought that Judas should betray Christ; each was rather afraid of himself, thinking Christ meant him: for Christ trusted Judas with the purse, and the whole management of the house-keeping, whence he was held in great repute by the apostles.

DCLXXXVII.

A scorpion thinks when his head lies hid under a leaf, that he cannot be seen; even so the hypocrites and false saints think, when they have hoisted up one or two good works, that all their sins therewith are covered and hid.

DCLXXXVIII.

False Christians that boast of the Gospel, and yet bring no good fruits, are like the clouds without rain, wherewith the whole element is overshadowed, gloomy and dark, and yet no rain falls to fructify the ground; even so, many Christians affect great sanctity and holiness, but they have neither faith nor love towards God, nor love towards their neighbor.

DCLXXXIX.

Job says: "The life of a human creature is a warfare upon earth." A human creature, especially a Christian, must be a soldier, ever striving and fighting with the enemy. And St Paul describes the armor of a Christian, Ephes. vi., thus: -

First - The girdle of truth; that is, the confession of the pure doctrine of the Gospel, an upright, not a hypocritical or feigned faith.

Secondly - The breast-plate of righteousness, by which is not meant the righteousness of a good conscience, although this be also needful: for it is written, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant," etc.; and St Paul: "I know nothing of myself, yet I am not thereby justified," but the righteousness of faith, and of the remission of sins, which Paul means in that place, touching which Moses spake, Gen. xv.: "Abraham believed God, and that was imputed unto him for righteousness."

Thirdly - The shoes wherewith the feet are shod; viz., the works of the vocation, whereby we ought to remain, and not to go further, or to break out beyond the appointed mark.

Fourthly - The shield of faith; similar to this is the fable of Perseus with the head of Gorgon, upon which whoso looked died immediately; as Perseus held and threw Gorgon's head before his enemies, and thereby got the victory, even so a Christian must likewise hold and cast the Son of God, as Gorgon's head, before all the evil instigations and crafts of the devil, and then most certainly he shall prevail and get the victory.

Fifthly - The helmet of salvation; that is the hope of everlasting life. The weapon wherewith a Christian fights the enemy is: "The sword of the spirit," 1 Thess. v., that is, God's Word and prayer; for as the lion is frightened at nothing more than at the crowing of a cock, so the devil can be overcome and vanquished with nothing else than with God's Word and prayer; of this Christ himself has given us an example.

DCXC.

Our life is like the sailing of a ship; as the mariners in the ship have before them a haven towards which they direct their course, and where they will be secure from all danger, even so the promise of everlasting life is made unto us, that we therein, as in a safe haven, may rest calm and secure. But seeing our ship is weak, and the winds and waves beat upon us, as though they would overwhelm us, therefore we have need of a good and experienced pilot, who with his counsel and advice may rule and govern the vessel, that it run not on a rock, or utterly sink and go down. Such a pilot is our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus.

DCXCI.

Ingratitude is a very irksome thing, which no human creature can tolerate; yet our Lord God can endure it. If I had had to do with the Jews, patience would have failed me; I had never been able so long to endure their stubbornness. The prophets were always poor, condemned people; plagued and persecuted not only by outward and open, but also by inward and secret enemies, for the most part of their own people. That which the pope does against us is nothing to compare with that which Jeckel and others do, to our sorrow of heart.

DCXCLL.

We ought diligently to be aware of sophistry, which not only consists in doubtful and uncertain words, that may be construed and turned as one pleases, but also, in each profession, in all high arts, as in religion, covers and cloaks itself with the fair name of Holy Scripture, alleging to be God's Word, and spoken from heaven. Those are unworthy of praise who can pervert everything, screwing, condemning and rejecting the meanings and opinions of others, and, like the philosopher Carneades, disputing *in utraque parte*, and yet conclude nothing certain. These are knavish tricks and sophistical inventions. But a fine understanding, honestly disposed, that seeks after truth, and loves that which is plain and upright, is worthy of all honour and praise.

DCXCIII.

Offences by Christians are far more abominable than those by the heathen. The prophet Jeremiah says: "The punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people, is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom," etc. And Ezekiel: "Thou hast justified Sodom with thine abominations." And Christ: "It will be more tolerable for Sodom at the day of judgment than with thee." But so it must be; "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." Truly this makes the godly altogether faint and out of heart, so that they rather desire death,

for, with sorrow of heart, we find that many of our people offend others. We ought to diligently to pray to God against offences, to the end his name may be hallowed. St Paul says: "Also of our own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Therefore the church has no external esteem or succession; it inherits not.

DCXCIV.

True, much offence proceeds out of my doctrine; but I comfort myself, as St Paul did Titus; whereas this doctrine is revealed for the sake of the faith of God's chosen, for whose sake we also preach, we mean it earnestly. For the sake of others I would not drop one word. I have cracked many hollow nuts, and yet I thought they had been good, but they fouled my mouth, and filled it with dust; Carlstad and Erasmus are mere hollow nuts, and foul the mouth.

DCXCV.

It has been asked: Is an offence, committed in a moment of intoxication, therefore excusable? Most assuredly not; on the contrary, drunkenness aggravates the fault. Hidden sins unveil themselves when a man's self-possession goes from him; that which the sober man keeps in his breast, the drunken man lets out at the lips. Astute people, when they want to ascertain a man's true character, make him drunk. This same drunkenness is a grievous vice among us Germans, and should be heavily chastised by the temporal magistrate, since the fear of God will not suffice to keep the brawling guzzlers in check.

DCXCVI.

A rich Jew, on his death bed, ordered that his remains should be conveyed to Ratisbon. His friends, knowing that even the corpse of a Jew could not travel without paying heavy toll, devised the expedient of packing the carcass in a barrel of wine, which they then forwarded in the ordinary way. The wagoners, not knowing what lay within, tapped the barrel, and swilled away right joyously, till they found out they had been drinking Jew's pickle! How it fared with them you may imagine.

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