

OF SPIRITUAL AND CHURCH LIVINGS

DCCLXXII.

My advice is that the sees of the protestant bishops be permitted to remain, for the profit and use of poor students and schools; and when a bishop, dean, or provost, cannot, or will not preach himself, then he shall, at his own charge, maintain other students and scholars, and permit them to study and preach. But when potentates and princes take spiritual livings to themselves, and will famish poor students and scholars, then the parishes of necessity must be wasted, as is the case already, for we can get neither ministers nor deacons. The pope, although he be our mortal enemy, must maintain us, yet against his will, and for which he has no thanks.

DCCLXXIII.

These times are evil, in that the church is so spoiled and robbed by the princes and potentates; they give nothing, but take and steal. In former times they gave liberally to her, now they rob her. The church is more torn and tattered than a begger's cloak; nothing is added to the stipends of the poor servants of the church. They who bestow them to the right use are persecuted, it going with them as with St Lawrence, who, against the emperor's command, divided the church livings among the poor.

DCCLXXIV.

The benefices under popedom are unworthy that Christian use should be made of them, for they are the wages of strumpets, as the prophet says, and shall return to such again. The pope is fooled, in that he suffers the emperor and other princes to take possession of spiritual livings, he hopes thereby to preserve his authority and power. For this reason he wrote to Henry of England, that he might take possession of spiritual livings; provided he, the pope, were acknowledged, by the king, chief bishop. For the pope thinks: I must now, in these times of trouble and danger, court the beast; I must yield in some things. Ah! how I rejoice that I have lived to see the pope humbled; he is now constrained to suffer his patrons, his protectors, and defenders, to take possession of church livings to preserve his power, but he stands like a tottering wall, about to be overthrown. How will it be with the monasteries and churches that are fallen down and decayed? They shall never be raised up again, and the prophecy will be fulfilled. Popedom has been and will be a prey. Twelve years since, the pope suffered one prince to take possession of divers bishoprics; afterwards, at the imperial diet at Augsburg, the prince was compelled to restore them; now the pope gives him them again: this prince and his retinue may well forsake the gospel, seeing the pope yields so much to him. Its a very strange time, and of which we little thought twenty years past, to see the pope, that grizzly idol, of

whom all people stood in fear, now permitting princes to condemn and scorn him, him whom the emperor dared not, thirty years past, have touched with but one word.

DCCLXXV.

’Tis quite fitting a poor student should have a spiritual living to maintain his study, so that he bind not himself with ungodly and unchristian vows, nor consent to hold communion with the errors of the papists. Ah, that we might have but the seventh part of the treasure of the church, to maintain poor students in the church. I am sorry our princes have such desire for bishoprics; I fear they will be their bane, and that they will lose what is their own.

DCCLXXVI.

Cannons and firearms are cruel and damnable machines. I believe them to have been the direct suggestion of the devil. Against the flying ball no valour avails; the soldier is dead, ere he sees the means of his destruction. If Adam had seen in a vision the horrible instruments his children were to invent, he would have died of grief.

DCCLXXVII.

War is one of the greatest plagues that can afflict humanity; it destroys religion, it destroys states, it destroys families. Any scourge, in fact, is preferable to it. Famine and pestilence become as nothing in comparison with it. Pestilence is the least evil of the three, and it was therefore David chose it, willing rather to fall into the hands of God than into those of pitiless man.

DCCLXXVIII.

Some one asked, what was the difference between Samson the strong man, and Julius Caesar, or any other celebrated general, endowed at once with vigour of body and vigour of mind? Luther answered: Samson's strength was an effect of the Holy Ghost animating him, for the Holy Ghost enables those who serve God with obedience to accomplish great things. The strength and the grandeur of soul of the heathen was also an inspiration and work of God, but not of the kind which sanctifies. I often reflect with admiration upon Samson; mere human strength could never have done what he did.

DCCLXXIX.

How many fine actions of the old time have remained unknown, for want of an historian to record them. The Greeks and Romans alone possessed historians. Even of Livy, we have but a portion left to us; the rest is lost, destroyed. Sabellicus proposed to imitate and continue Livy, but he accomplished nothing.

Victories and good fortune, and ability in war, are given by God, as we find in Hannibal, that famous captain, who hunted the Romans thoroughly, driving them out of Africa, Sicily, Spain, France, and almost out of Italy. I am persuaded he was a surpassing valiant man; if he had but

had a scribe to have written the history of his wars, we should, doubtless have known many great and glorious actions of his.

DCCLXXX.

Great people and champions are special gifts of God, whom he gives and preserves: they do their work, and achieve great actions, not with vain imaginations, or cold and sleepy cogitations, but by motion of God. Even so `t was with the prophets, St Paul, and other excelling people, who accomplished their work by God's special grace. The Book of Judges also shows how God wrought great matters through one single person.

DCCLXXXI.

Every great champion is not fitted to govern; he that is a soldier, looks only after victories, how he may prevail, and keep the field; not after policy, how people and countries may be well governed. Yet Scipio, Hannibal, Alexander, Julius and Augustus Caesars looked also after government, and how good rule might be observed.

DCCLXXXII.

A valiant and brave soldier seeks rather to preserve one citizen than to destroy a thousand enemies, as Scipio the Roman said; therefore an upright soldier begins not a war lightly, or without urgent cause. True soldiers and captains make not many words, but when they speak, the deed is done.

DCCLXXXIII.

They who take to force, give a great blow to the Gospel, and offend many people; they fish before the net, etc. The prophet Isaiah and St Paul say: "I will grind him (antichrist) to powder with the rod of my mouth, and will slay him with the spirit of my lips." With such weapons we must beat the pope. Popedom can neither be destroyed nor preserved by force; for it is built upon lies; it must therefore be turned upside down and destroyed with the word of truth. It is said: "Preach thou, I will give strength."

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