

OF THE PATRIARCHS AND PROPHETS

DXXXIX.

David's fall was very offensive, for the holy man fell into adultery, murder, and despising of God. He was afterwards visited and punished by God in such sort, that the whole nation forsook him. His counsellors - yea, his best beloved son, conspired and made a league against him, who before had such high fortune, and was held in such esteem. On account of these offences, the ungodly, doubtless, boasted, and said: "Where is the king now? where is now his God? what has become of his good fortune and prosperity?" For no doubt there were many kings more powerful than David; as the king of the Moabites, whom Isaiah calls a three-years cow; that is, strong, powerful, and fat.

It has always been so in the world - that it has gone evil with the godly, and well with the ungodly; of this complaint is made in many Psalms. We see at this day, that the popish bishops and ungodly princes live in great honour, wealth, and power, while good and God-fearing people are in poverty, disgrace, and trouble.

The Greek tragedies are not to be compared to the history of David.

DXL.

All kings, princes, rulers, and ministers, sin of necessity, and therefore have special need of the remission of sins. I am persuaded that Ahab was saved, inasmuch as God said to the prophets: "Seest thou not how Ahab boweth himself before sin?" For to whom God affords speech, that is, his word and promise, with him it stands well. Therefore, doubtless, he was saved, notwithstanding the Scriptures witness against him, even to his death. He believed the promise of the Messiah, and so at his death got hold of the forgiveness of sins. In like manner I am persuaded also of all those of whom the Scripture says: "And he slept with is fathers," that they are all in heaven. For this word, slept, shows some good in the Scriptures. But of whom it is written: They were made away and slain by the enemies, or were devoured and torn in pieces by wild beasts, I am persuaded they are lost and damned.

DXLI.

Although God charged David to build the temple, he could not perform it, because he had shed much blood, and had carried the sword; not that he did wrong therein, but that he could not be the figure or type of Christ, who must have a peaceable kingdom, without shedding of blood. But Solomon was to accomplish it, who is called peaceable, through which Christ's kingdom was signified.

DXLII.

It is with us, as it was in the time of Judas Maccabaeus, who defended his people, and yet was not able to suppress the enemies who possessed the government; while his own people were unthankful, and wrought him great mischief; these two oppressions make one weary.

The legends of the patriarchs far excelled the holiness of all the saints; for they went on in simple obedience towards God, in the works of their vocation. They performed such things as came to their hand, according to God's command, without respect; therefore, Sara, Abraham's wife, excels all other women.

DXLIII.

Philip Melancthon demanded of Luther: How it was, that though David was instituted and ordained a king immediately of God, yet he had many tribulations and plagues, as his psalms show? Luther said: David was not acquainted with many good days: he was plagued by the ungodly and false teachers, he saw that his people banded against him, he endured and suffered many insurrections and tumults, which taught him his lesson to pray. When he was without tribulation, he grew giddy-headed and secure, as we see in his adultery, and his murder of Uriah.

Ah, Lord God! how is it thou sufferest such great people to fall? This David had six wives, who doubtless were wise and understanding women; as was the wise Abigail; if they were all such, he was furnished with surpassing wives. Moreover, he had ten concubines; yet, notwithstanding, he was an adulterer.

DXLIV.

Job had many tribulations; he was also plagued of his friends, who fiercely assaulted him. The text says, that his friends fell upon him, and were full of wrath against him; they tormented him thoroughly, but he held his peace, suffered them to talk their talk, as if he should say, you know not what you prate about. Job is an example of God's goodness and mercy; for how upright and holy soever he was, yet he sorely fell into temptation; but he was not forsaken, he was again delivered and redeemed through God's grace and mercy.

DXLV.

Melancthon discoursing with Luther touching the prophets, who continually boast thus: "Thus saith the Lord," asked whether God in person spoke with them or no. Luther replied: They were very holy, spiritual people, who seriously contemplated upon holy and divine things; Therefore God spake with them in their consciences, which the prophets held as sure and certain revelations.

We read in the books of the Jews that Isaiah was slain by king Ahaz, because he said: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne," etc. Doubtless, Ahaz said unto him: Thou wretch! how darest thou presume to say, "Thou hast seen the Lord?" whereas God said to Moses, "Shall a man see me,

and live?" Thou art an insane heretic; thou blasphemest God; thou art worthy of death; take him away. And many think it quite just that Isaiah was slain for this, not enduring that any man should say he had done or seen greater things than Moses.

DXLVI.

The history of Elijah is awful, and almost incredible. It was a fierce anger indeed, that so holy a man should pray it might not rain; but he saw that the teachers were slain, and that good and God-fearing people were hunted down, and persecuted. Therefore he prayed against those upon whom, with words and preaching, he could not prevail.

DXLVII.

The majesty of the prophet Jonah is surpassing. He has but four chapters, and yet he moved therewith the whole kingdom, so that in his weakness, he was justly a figure and a sign of the Lord Christ. Indeed, it is surprising, that Christ should recur to this but in four words. Moses likewise, in few words describes the creation, the history of Abraham, and other great mysteries; but he spends much time in describing the tent, the external sacrifices, the kidneys and so on; the reason is, he saw that the world greatly esteemed outward things, which they beheld with their carnal eyes, but that which was spiritual, they soon forgot.

The history of the prophet Jonah is almost incredible, sounding more strange than any poet's fable; if it were not in the Bible, I should take it for a lie; for consider, how for the space of three days he was in the great belly of the whale, whereas in three hours he might have been digested and changed into the nature, flesh and blood of that monster; may not this be said, to live in the midst of death? In comparison to this miracle, the wonderful passage through the Red Sea was nothing.

But what appears more strange is, that after he was delivered, he began to be angry, and to expostulate with the gracious God, touching a small matter not worth a straw. It is a great mystery. I am ashamed of my exposition upon this prophet, in that I so weakly touch the main point of this wonderful miracle.

DXLVIII.

The harsh and sharp words of the prophets go to the heart, yet when they say: "Jerusalem shall fall and be destroyed," the Jews held such preaching merely heretical, and would not endure it.

Even so say I: the Romish church shall fail, and be destroyed; but the papists will neither believe nor endure it; it is impossible, say they, for it is written in the article: "I believe in the holy Christian church." Many kings are destroyed before Jerusalem, as Sennacherib, etc.; when the prophet Jeremiah said: "Jerusalem shall be destroyed," which he spoke through the Holy Ghost, so it fell out.

If the pope should bring against me only one such argument as the Jews had against Jeremiah and other prophets, it were not possible for me to subsist. But the pope disputes with me, not

according to justice and equity, but with the sword and his power. He uses no written law, but club law. If I had no other argument against the pope than de facto, I would instantly hang myself, but my dispute is just.

DXLIX.

An upright Christian is like unto Jonah, who was cast into the sea, that is, into hell. He beheld the mouth of the monster gaping to devour him, and lay three days in its dark belly, without consuming. This history should be unto us one of the greatest comforts, and a manifest sign of the resurrection from the dead.

In such sort does God humble those that are his. But afterwards, Jonah went too far; he presumed to command God Almighty, and became a great man-slayer and a murderer, for he desired that a great city and many people should be utterly destroyed, though God chose to spare them. This was a strange saint.

DL.

To translate the prophets well from the Hebrew tongue, is a precious, great, and glorious work; no man before me well attained thereunto, and to me it is a hard task; let me be once clear from it, it shall rest.

DLI.

It is easy to be conceived, that David dealt uprightly, and repentantly, in not rejecting Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, but marrying her. Forasmuch as he had shamed her, it was fitting for him to restore her to honour. God was also pleased with that conjunction; yet, for a punishment of the adultery, God caused the son, begotten in it, soon to die.

DLII.

No man, since the apostles time, has rightly understood the legend of Abraham. The apostles themselves did not sufficiently extol or explain Abraham's faith, according to its worth and greatness. I much marvel that Moses so slightly remembers him.

DLIII.

Job at one time lost ten children, and all his cattle; he was punished in body and in goods, yet it was nothing in comparison of David's troubles, for though David had the promise which could neither fail nor deceive - namely, where God says: "Thou shalt be king," God thoroughly powdered and peppered his kingdom for his tooth; no miserable man ever surpassed David.

DLIV.

Adam had more children than the three that are mentioned in the Bible. The reason why particular mention is made of Seth, is the genealogy of our Lord Christ, who was descended

from that patriarch. Adam, doubtless, had many sons and daughters, full two hundred, I am persuaded, for he lived to a great, great age, nine hundred and thirty years. It is likely that Cain was born thirty years after the fall of his parents, as they were then comforted again. I believe they were often comforted by the angels, otherwise it had been impossible for them to enjoy each other's society, by reason they were filled with great sorrows and fears. At the last day, it will be known that Eve exceeded all women in sorrow and misery. Never came into the world a more miserable woman than Eve; she saw that for her sake we were all to die. Some affirm that Cain was conceived before the promise of the seed that should crush the serpent's head. But I am persuaded that the promise was made not half a day after the fall; for they entered into the garden about noon, and having appetites to eat, she took the apple; then, about two of the clock, according to our account, was the fall.

DLV.

The reason that Abraham gave to Agar, his concubine, and Ishmael, his son, only one flagon of wine, was that she might know she had no right to demand anything of the inheritance, but that what was given her proceeded out of good will, not of any obligation or reason of law, yet that, nevertheless, she might repair again to Abraham, and fetch more.

The text in Genesis say: "Isaac and Ishmeal buried Abraham;" hence it appears that Ishmael was not always with is father but was nurtured out of the father's goodness and bounty, which was done to this end, that Abraham, intending to lead Christ through the right line, therefore Ishmale was separated like Esau.

DLVI.

I hold that Jacob was a poor perplexed man; I would willingly, if I could, frame a Laban out of the rich glutton in the gospel of Luke, and a Jacob out of Lazarus who lay before the gate. I am glad that Rachael sat upon the idols, thereby to spite her father Laban.

DLVII.

Neither Cicero, nor Virgil, nor Demosthenes, are to be compared with David, in point of eloquence, as we see in the 119th Psalm, which he divides into two and twenty parts, each composed of eight verses, and yet all having but one thought - thy law is good. He had great gifts, and was highly favoured of God. I hold that God suffered him to fall so horribly, lest he should become too haughty and proud.

DLVIII.

Some are of opinion that David acted not well in that, upon his death-bed, he commanded Solomon his son to punish Shimei, who had cursed and thrown dirt at him, in his flight before Absalom. But I say he did well, for the office of a magistrate is to punish the guilty, and wicked malefactors. He had made a vow, indeed, not to punish him, but that was to hold only so long as he lived.

In so strange and confused a government, where no man knew who was cook or who butler, as we used to say, David was often constrained to look through the fingers at many abuses and wrongs. But afterwards, when in Solomon's time, there was peace, then through Solomon he punished. In tumultuous governments, a ruler dares not proceed as in time of peace, yet, at last, it is fitting that evil be punished; and as David says: *Maledixit mihi maledictionem malam.*

DLIX.

Hezekiah was a very good and pious king, full of faith, yet he fell. God cannot endure that a human creature should trust and depend upon his own works. No man can enter into heaven, without the remission of sins.

DLX.

Elisha dealt uprightly, in permitting the children to be torn in pieces by two bears, for calling him baldpate, since they mocked not him, but his God. And so as to the jeering and mocking of Elijah: "Thou man of God," etc., It was just that fire came down from heaven and devoured the mockers.

DLXI.

Many strange things, according to human sense and reason, are written in the books of the kings; they seem to be slight and simple books, but in the spirit they are of great weight. David endured much; Saul persecuted and plagued him ten whole years; yet David remained constant in faith, and believed that the kingdom pertained unto him. I should have gone my way, and said: Lord! thou hast deceived me; wilt thou make me a king, and sufferest me in this sort to be tormented, persecuted, and plagued? But David was like a strong wall. He was also a good and a godly man; he refused to lay hands on the king when he had fit opportunity; for he had God's Word, and that made him remain so steadfast; he was sure that God's Word and promise never would or could fail him.

Surely Jonathan was an honest man, whom David loved entirely; he marked well that the kingdom belonged to David, therefore he entreated David not to root out him and his. Jonathan also wrought wonders, when he, alone with his armour-bearer, went over the mountain, and slew and destroyed the Philistines; for, doubtless, he said in himself, the Lord that overcomes with many, is able also to overcome with few. His death was a great grief to David. So it often happens, that the good are punished for the sake of the wicked and ungodly. The Son of God himself was not spared.

[HOME](#)

[TABLE TALK INDEX](#)