

OF THE RESURRECTION

DCCLIII.

On Easter Sunday, 1544, Luther made an excellent sermon on the resurrection from the dead, out of the epistle appointed for that day, handling this sentence: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." When Abraham intended to sacrifice his son, he believed that God out of the ashes would raise him again, and make him a father of children. The faith of Adam and of Eve preserved them, because they trusted and believed in the promised seed. For to him that believes everything is possible. The conception and birth of every human creature, proceeding out of a drop of blood, is no less a miracle and wonder-work of God, than that Adam was made out of a clod of earth, and Eve out of a fleshy rib. The world is full of such works of wonder, but we are blind, and cannot see them. The whole world is not able to create one member, no, not so much as a small leaf. The manner of the resurrection consists in these words: "Arise, come, stand up, appear, rejoice ye which dwell in the dust of the earth." I shall arise again and shall speak with you; this finger wherewith I point must come to me again; everything must come again; for it is written: "God will create a new heaven and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell." It will be no arid waste, but a beautiful new earth, where all the just will dwell together. There will be no carnivorous beasts, or venomous creatures, for all such, like ourselves, will be relieved from the curse of sin, and will be to us as friendly as they were to Adam in Paradise. There will be little gods, with golden hair, shining like precious stones. The foliage of the trees, and the verdure of the grass, will have the brilliancy of emeralds; and we ourselves, delivered from our mundane subjection to gross appetites and necessities, shall have the same form as here, but infinitely more perfect. Our eyes will be radiant as the purest silver, and we shall be exempt from all sickness and tribulation. We shall behold the glorious Creator face to face; and then, what ineffable satisfaction will it be to find our relations and friends among the just! If we were all one here, we should have peace among ourselves, but God orders it otherwise, to the end we may yearn and sigh after the future paternal home, and become weary of this troublesome life. Now, if there be joy in the chosen, so must the highest sorrow and despair be in the damned.

DCCLIV.

The 7th of August, 1538, Luther discoursed concerning the life to come, and said: In my late sickness I lay very weak, and committed myself to God, when many things fell into my mind, concerning the everlasting life, what it is, what joys we there shall have, and I was convinced that everything shall be revealed, which through Christ is presented unto us, and is already ours, seeing we believe it. Here on earth we cannot know what the creation of the new world shall be, for we are not able to comprehend or understand the creation of this

temporal world, or of its creatures, which are visible and corporal. The joys that are everlasting are beyond the comprehension of any human creature. As Isaiah says: "*Ye shall be everlastingly joyful in glorious joy.*" But how comes it that we cannot believe God's Word, seeing that all things are accomplished which the Scripture speaks touching the resurrection of the dead? This proves original sin as the cause of it. The ungodly and damned at the last day shall be under the ground, but in some measure shall behold the great joys and glory of the chosen and saved, and thereby shall be so much the more pained and tormented.

Has our Lord God created this evanescent and temporal kingdom, the sky, and earth, and all that is therein, so fair; how much more fair and glorious will he, then, make yonder celestial everlasting kingdom!

DCCLV.

When I lay sucking at my mother's breast, I had no notion how I should afterwards eat, drink, or live. Even so we on earth have no idea what the life to come will be.

DCCLVI.

I hold the gnashing of teeth of the damned to be an external pain following upon an evil conscience, that is, despair, when men see themselves abandoned by God.

DCCLVII.

I wish from my heart Zwinglius could be saved, but I fear the contrary; for Christ has said that those who deny him shall be damned. God's judgment is sure and certain, and we may safely pronounce it against all the ungodly, unless God reserve unto himself a peculiar privilege and dispensation. Even so, David from his heart wished that his son Absalom might be saved, when he said: "Absalom my son, Absalom my son;" yet he certainly believed that he was damned, and bewailed him, not only that he died corporally, but was also lost everlastingly; for he knew that he had died in rebellion, in incest, and that he had hunted his father out of the kingdom.

DCCLVIII.

The Fathers made four sorts of hell. 1. The forefront, wherein they say, the patriarchs were until Christ descended into hell. 2. The feeling of pain, yet only temporal, as purgatory. 3. Where not baptized children are, but feel no pain. 4. Where the damned are, which feel everlasting pain. This is the right hell; the other three are only human imaginings. In Popedom they sang an evil song: "Our sighs called upon thee, our pitiful lamentations sought thee," etc. This was not Christian-like, for the Gospel says: "They are in Abraham's bosom." Isaiah: "They go into their chambers;" and Ecclesiasticus: "The righteous is in the Lord's hand, let him die how he will, yea, although he be overtaken by death." What hell is, we know not; only this we know, that there is such a sure and certain place, as is written of the rich glutton, when Abraham said unto him: "There is a great space between you and us."

DCCLVIX.

Ah! loving God, defer not thy coming. I await impatiently the day when the spring shall return, when day and night shall be of equal length, and when Aurora shall be clear and bright. One day will come a thick black cloud out of which will issue three flashes of lightning, and a clap of thunder will be heard, and in a moment, heaven and earth will be covered with confusion. The Lord be praised, who has taught us to sigh and yearn after that day. In Popedom they are all afraid thereof, as is testified by their hymn, *Dies irae dies illa*. I hope that day is not far off. Christ says: "At that time, ye shall scarcely find faith on the earth." If we make an account, we shall find, that we have the Gospel now only in a corner. Asia and Africa have it not, the Gospel is not preached in Europe, in Greece, Italy, Hungary, Spain, France, England, or in Poland. And this little corner where it is, Saxony, will not hinder the coming of the last day of judgment. The predictions of the apocalypse are accomplished already, as far as the white horse. The world cannot stand long, perhaps a hundred years at the outside.

When the Turk begins to decline, then the last day will be at hand, for then the testimony of the Scripture must be verified. The loving Lord will come, as the Scripture says: "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, yet a little while and I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." At the last there will be great alteration and commotion; and already there are great commotions among men. Never had the men of law so much occupation as now. There are vehement dissensions in our families and discord in the church.

DCCLX.

About the time of Easter in April, when they least of all feared rain, Pharaoh was swallowed up in the Red Sea, and the nation of Israel delivered from Egypt. It was about the same time the world was created; at the same time the year is changed, and at the same time Christ rose again to renew the world. Perchance the last day will come about the same time. I am of the opinion it will be about Easter, when the year is finest and fairest, and early in the morning, at sunrise, as at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The elements will be gloomy with earthquakes and thunderings about an hour or little longer, and the secure people will say: "Pish, thou fool, hast thou never heard it thunder?"

The science of alchemy I like well, and, indeed, 'tis the philosophy of the ancients. I like it not only for the profits it brings in melting metals, in decocting preparing, extracting, and distilling herbs, roots; I like it also for the sake of the allegory and secret signification, which is exceedingly fine, touching the resurrection of the dead at the last day. For, as in a furnace the fire extracts and separates from a substance the other portions, and carries upward the spirit, the life, the sap, the strength, while the unclean matter, the dregs, remain at the bottom, like a dead and worthless carcass; even so God, at the day of judgment, will separate all things through fire, the righteous from the ungodly. The Christians and righteous shall ascend upward into heaven, and there live everlastingly, but the wicked and the ungodly, as the dross and filth, shall remain in hell, and there be damned.

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