

OF GOD'S WORKS

LXIII.

All the works of God are unsearchable and unspeakable, no human sense can find them out; faith only takes hold of them without human power or aid. No mortal creature can comprehend God in his majesty, and therefore did he come before us in the simplest manner, and was made man, ay, sin, death, and weakness. In all things, in the least creatures, and their members, God's almighty power and wonderful works clearly shine. For what man, how powerful, wise, and holy soever, can make out of one fig, a fig-tree, or another fig? or, out of one cherry-stone, a cherry, or a cherry-tree? or what man can know how God creates and preserves all things, and makes them grow.

Neither can we conceive how the eye sees, or how intelligible words are spoken plainly, when only the tongue moves and stirs in the mouth; all which are natural things, daily seen and acted. How then should we be able to comprehend or understand the secret counsels of God's majesty, or search them out with our human sense, reason, or understanding. Should we then admire our own wisdom? I, for my part, admit myself a fool, and yield myself captive.

LXIV.

In the beginning, God made Adam out of a piece of clay, and Eve out of Adam's rib: he blessed them and said: "Be fruitful and increase" - words that will stand and remain powerful to the world's end. Though many people die daily, yet others are ever being born, as David says in his Psalm: "Thou sufferest men to die and go away like a shadow, and sayest, Come again ye children of men." These and other things which he daily creates, the ungodly blind world see not, nor acknowledge for God's wonders, but think all is done by chance or haphazard, whereas, the godly, wheresoever they cast their eyes, beholding heaven and earth, the air and water, see and acknowledge all for God's wonders; and, full of astonishment and delight, laud the Creator, knowing that God is well pleased therewith.

LXV.

For the blind children of the world the articles of faith are too high. That three persons are one only God; that the true Son of God was made man; that in Christ are two natures, divine and human, etc., all this offends them, as fiction and fable. For just as unlikely as it is to say, a man and a stone are one person, so it is unlikely to human sense and reason that God was made man, or that divine and human natures, united in Christ, are one person. St Paul showed his understanding of this matter, though he took not hold of all, in Colossians: "In Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Also: "In him lies hid all treasure of wisdom and knowledge."

LXVI.

If a man ask, Why God permits that men be hardened, and fall into everlasting perdition? let him ask again: Why God did not spare his only Son, but gave him for us all, to die the ignominious death of the cross, a more certain sign of his love towards us poor people, than of his wrath against us. Such questions cannot be better solved and answered than by converse questions. True, the malicious devil deceived and seduced Adam; but we ought to consider that, soon after the fall, Adam received the promise of the woman's seed that should crush the

serpent's head, and should bless the people on earth. Therefore, we must acknowledge that the goodness and mercy of the Father, who sent his Son to be our Saviour, is immeasurably great towards the wicked ungovernable world. Let, therefore, his good will be acceptable unto thee, oh, man, and speculate not with thy devilish queries, thy whys and thy wherefores, touching God's words and works. For God, who is creator of all creatures, and orders all things according to his unsearchable will and wisdom, is not pleased with such questioning.

Why God sometimes, out of his divine counsels, wonderfully wise, unsearchable to human reason and understanding, has mercy on this man, and hardens that, it beseems not us to inquire. We should know, undoubtingly, that he does nothing without certain cause and counsel. Truly, if God were to give an account to every one of his works and actions, he were but a poor, simple God.

Our Saviour said to Peter, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Hereafter, then, we shall know how graciously our loving God and Father has been affected unto us. In the meantime, though misfortune, misery, and trouble be upon us, we must have this sure confidence in him, that he will not suffer us to be destroyed either in body or soul, but will so deal with us, that all things, be they good or evil, shall redound to our advantage.

LXVII.

When one asked, where God was before heaven was created? St Augustine answered: He was in himself. When another asked me the same question, I said: He was building hell for such idle, presumptuous, fluttering and inquisitive spirits as you. After he had created all things, he was everywhere, and yet he was nowhere, for I cannot take hold of him without the Word. But he will be found there where he has engaged to be. The Jews found him at Jerusalem by the throne of grace, (Exod.xxv.) We find him in the Word and faith, in baptism and the sacraments; but in his majesty, he is nowhere to be found.

It was a special grace when God bound himself to a certain place where he would be found, namely, in that place where the tabernacle was, towards which they prayed; as first, in Shilo and Sichem, afterwards at Gibeon, and lastly at Jerusalem, in the temple.

The Greeks and heathens in after times imitated this, and build temples for their idols in certain places, as at Ephesus for Diana, at Delphos for Apollo, etc. For, where God build a church there the devil would also build a chapel. They imitated the Jews also in this, namely, that as the Most Holiest was dark, and had no light, even so and after the same manner, did they make their shrines dark where the devil made answer. Thus is the devil ever God's ape.

LXVIII.

God is upright, faithful, and true, as he has shown, not only in his promises, through Christ, of forgiveness of sins, and deliverance from everlasting death, but also, in that he has laid before us, in the Scriptures, many gracious and comforting examples of great and holy saints who of God were highly enlightened and favored, and who, notwithstanding, fell into great and heavy sins.

Adam, by his disobedience, hereditarily conveyed sin and death upon all his posterity. Aaron brought a great sin upon Israel, insomuch that God would have destroyed her. David also fell very heavily. Job and Jeremiah cursed the day in which they were born. Jonas was sorely vexed because Nineveh was not destroyed. Peter denied, Paul persecuted Christ.

These, and such like innumerable examples, does Holy Writ relate to us; not that we should live securely, and sin, relying upon the mercy of God, but that, when we feel his anger, "which will surely follow upon the sins,"

we should not despair, but remember these comfortable examples, and thence conclude, that, as God was merciful unto them, so likewise he will be gracious unto us, out of his mere goodness and mercy shown in Christ, and will not impute our sins unto us.

We may also see by such examples of great holy men falling so grievously, what a wicked, crafty, and envious spirit the devil is, a very prince and good of the world.

These high, divine people, who committed such heavy sins, fell, through God's counsel and permission, to the end they should not be proud or boast themselves of their gifts and qualities, but should rather fear. For, when David had slain Uriah, had taken from him his wife, and thereby given cause to God's enemies to blaspheme, he could not boast he had governed well, or shown goodness; but he said: "I have sinned against the Lord," and with tears prayed for mercy. Job also acknowledgingly says: "I have spoken foolishly, and therefore do I accuse myself, and repent."

LXIX.

When God contemplates some great work, he begins it by the hand of some poor, weak, human creature, to whom he afterwards gives aid, so that the enemies who seek to obstruct it, are overcome. As when he delivered the children of Israel out of the long, wearisome, and heavy captivity in Egypt, and led them into the land of promise, he called Moses, to whom he afterwards gave his brother Aaron as an assistant. And though Pharaoh at first set himself hard against them, and plagued the people worse than before, yet he was forced in the end to let Israel go. And when he hunted after them with all his host, the Lord drowned Pharaoh with all his power in the Red Sea, and so delivered his people.

Again, in the time of Eli the priest, when matters stood very evil in Israel, the Philistines pressing hard upon them, and taking away the Ark of God into their land, and when Eli, in great sorrow of heart, fell backwards from his chair and broke his neck, and it seemed as if Israel were utterly undone, God raised up Samuel the prophet, and through him restored Israel, and the Philistines were overthrown.

Afterwards, when Saul was sore pressed by the Philistines, so that for anguish of heart he despaired and thrust himself through, three of his sons and many people dying with him, every man thought that now there was an end of Israel. But shortly after, when David was chosen king over all Israel, then came the golden time. For David, the chosen of God, not only saved Israel out of the enemies hands, but also forced to obedience all kings and people that set themselves against him, and helped the kingdom up again in such manner, that in his and Solomon's time it was in full flourish, power, and glory.

Even so, when Judah was carried captive to Babylon, then God selected the prophets Ezekiel, Haggai, and Zachariah, who comforted men in their distress and captivity; making not only promise of their return into the land of Judah, but also that Christ should come in his due time.

Hence we may see that God never forsakes his people, nor even the wicked; though, by reason of their sins, he suffer them a long time to be severely punished and plagued. As also, in this our time, he has graciously delivered us from the long, wearisome, heavy, and horrible captivity of the wicked pope. God of his mercy grant we may thankfully acknowledge this.

LXX.

God could be rich readily enough, if he were more provident, and denied us the use of his creatures; let him, for ever so short a while, keep back the sun, so that it shine not, or lock up air, water, or fire, ah! how willingly would we give all our wealth to have the use of these creatures again.

But seeing God so liberally heaps his gifts upon us, we claim them as of right; let him deny them if he dare. The unspeakable multitude of his benefits obscures the faith of believers, and much more so, that of the ungodly.

LXXI.

When God wills to punish a people or a kingdom, he takes away from it the good and godly teachers and preachers, and bereaves it of wise, godly, and honest rulers and counsellors, and of brave, upright and experienced soldiers, and of other good men. Then are the common people secure and merry; they go on in all willfulness, they care no longer for the truth and for the divine doctrine; nay, they despise it, and fall into blindness; they have no fear or honesty; they give way to all manner of shameful sins, whence arises a wild, dissolute, and devilish kind of living, as that we now, alas! see and are too well cognizant of, and which cannot long endure. I fear the axe is laid to the root of the tree, soon to cut it down. God of his infinite mercy take us graciously away, that we may not be present at such calamities.

LXXII.

God gives us sun and moon and stars, fire and water, air and earth, all creatures, body and soul, all manner of maintenance, fruits, grain, corn, wine, whatever is good for the preservation and comfort of this temporal life; moreover he gives unto us his all-saving Word, yea, himself.

Yet what gets he thereby? Truly, nothing, but that he is wickedly blasphemed, and that his only Son is condemned and crucified, his servants plagued, banished, persecuted, and slain. Such a godly child is the world; woe be to it.

LXXIII.

God very wonderfully entrusts his highest office to preachers that are themselves poor sinners who, while teaching it, very weakly follow it. Thus goes it ever with God's power in our weakness; for when he is weakest in us, then is he strongest.

LXXIV.

How should God deal with us? Good days we cannot bear, evil we cannot endure. Gives he riches unto us? then are we proud, so that no man can live by us in peace; nay, we will be carried upon heads and shoulders, and will be adored as gods. Gives he poverty unto us? then are we dismayed, impatient, and murmur against him. Therefore, nothing were better for us, than forthwith to be covered over with the shovel.

LXXV.

"Since God," said some one, "knew that man would not continue in the state of innocence, why did he create him at all?" Dr. Luther laughed, and replied: The Lord, all-powerful and magnificent, saw that he should need in his house, sewers and cesspools; be assured he knows quite well what he is about. Let us keep clear of these abstract questions, and consider the will of God such as it has been revealed unto us.

LXXVI.

Dr. Henning asked: "Is reason to hold no authority at all with Christians, since it is to be set aside in matters of faith?" The Doctor replied: Before faith and the knowledge of God, reason is mere darkness; but in the hands of those who believe, 'tis an excellent instrument. All facilities and gifts are pernicious, exercised by the impious; but most salutary when possessed by godly persons.

LXXVII.

God deals strangely with his saints, contrary to all human wisdom and understanding, to the end, that those who fear God and are good Christians, may learn to depend on invisible things, and through mortification may be made alive again; for God's Word is a light that shines in a dark place, as all examples of faith show. Esau was accursed, yet it went well with him; he was lord in the land, and priest in the church; but Jacob had to fly, and dwell in poverty, in another country.

God deals with godly Christians much as with the ungodly, yea, and sometimes far worse. He deals with them even as a house-father with a son and a servant; he whips and beats the son much more and oftener than the servant, yet, nevertheless, he gathers for the son a treasure to inherit, while a stubborn and a disobedient servant he beats not with the rod, but thrusts out of doors, and gives him nothing of the inheritance.

LXXVIII.

God is a good and gracious Lord; he will be held for God only and alone, according to the first commandment: "Thou shalt have none other Gods but me." He desires nothing of us, no taxes, subsidies, money, or goods; he only requires that he may be our God and Father, and therefore he bestows upon us, richly, with an overflowing cup, all manner of spiritual and temporal gifts; but we look not so much as once towards him, nor will have him to be our God.

LXXIX.

God is not an angry God; if he were so, we were all utterly lost and undone. God does not willingly strike mankind, except, as a just God, he be constrained thereunto; but, having no pleasure in unrighteousness and ungodliness, he must therefore suffer the punishment to go on. As I sometimes look through the fingers, when the tutor whips my son John, so it is with God; when we are unthankful and disobedient to his Word, and commandments, he suffers us, through the devil, to be soundly lashed with pestilence, famine, and such like whips; not that he is our enemy, and to destroy us, but that through such scourgings, he may call us to repentance and amendment, and so allure us to seek him, run to him, and call upon him for help. Of this we have a fine example in the book of Judges, where the angel, in God's person, speaks thus: "I have stricken you so often, and ye are nothing the better for it;" and the people of Israel said: "Save thou us but now; we have sinned and done amiss: punish thou us, O Lord and do with us what thou wilt, only save us now," etc. Whereupon he struck not all the people to death. In like manner did David, when he had sinned (in causing the people to be numbered, for which God punished the people with pestilence, so that 70,000 died), humble himself, saying: "Beloved, Lord, I have sinned, I have done this misdeed, and have deserved this punishment: What have these sheep done? Let thy hand be upon me, and upon my father's house," etc. Then the Lord "repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough, stay thy hand."

He that can humble himself earnestly before God in Christ, has already won; otherwise, the Lord God would lose his deity, whose own work it is, that he have mercy on the poor and sorrowful, and spare them that humble themselves before him. Were it not so, no human creature would come unto him, or call upon him; no man would be heard, no man saved, nor thank him: "For in hell no man praiseth thee," says the Psalm. The devil can affright, murder, and steal; but God revives and comforts.

This little word, God, is, in the Scripture, a word with manifold significations, and is oftentimes understood of a thing after the nature of its operation and essence: as the devil is called a god; namely, a god of sin, of death, of despair, and damnation.

We must make due difference between this god and the upright and true God, who is a God of life, comfort, salvation, justification, and all goodness; for there are many words that bear no certain meanings, and

equivocation is always the mother of error.

LXXX.

The wicked and ungodly enjoy the most part of God's creatures; the tyrants have the greatest power, lands, and people; the usurers the money; the farmers eggs, butter, corn, barley, oats, apples, pears, etc.; while godly Christians must suffer, be persecuted, sit in dungeons, where they can see neither sun nor moon, be thrust out into poverty, be banished, plagued, etc. But things will be better one day; they cannot always remain as now; let us have patience, and steadfastly remain by the pure doctrine, and not fall away from it, notwithstanding all this misery.

LXXXI.

Our Lord God and the devil have two modes of policy which agree not together, but are quite opposite the one to the other. God at the first affrights, and afterwards lifts up and comforts again; so that the flesh and the old man should be killed, and the spirit, or new man, live. Whereas the devil makes, at first, people secure and bold, that they, void of all fear, may commit sin and wickedness, and not only remain in sin, but take delight and pleasure therein, and think they have done all well; but at last, when Mr. Stretch-leg comes, then he affrights and scares them without measure, so that they either die of great grief, or else, in the end, are left without all comfort, and despair of God's grace and mercy.

LXXXII.

God only, and not wealth, maintains the world; riches merely make people proud and lazy. At Venice, where the richest people are, a horrible dearth fell among them in our time, so that they were driven to call upon the Turks for help, who sent twenty-four galleys laden with corn; - all of which, well nigh in port, sunk before their eyes. Great wealth and money cannot still hunger, but rather occasion more dearth; for where rich people are, there things are always dear. Moreover, money makes no man right merry, but much rather pensive and full of sorrow; for riches, says Christ, are thorns that prick people. Yet is the world so mad that it sets therein all its joys and felicity.

LXXXIII.

There is no greater anger than when God is silent, and talks not with us, but suffers us to go on in our sinful works, and to do all things according to our own passions and pleasure; as it has been with the Jews for the last fifteen hundred years.

Ah, God, punish, we pray thee, with pestilence and famine, and with what evil and sickness may be else on earth; but be not silent, Lord, towards us. God said to the Jews: "I have stretched forth my hand, and have cried, come hither and hear," etc. "But ye said, We will not hear."

Even so likewise do we now; we are weary of God's Word; we will not have upright, good, and godly preachers and teachers that threaten us, and bring God's Word pure and unfalsified before us, and condemn false doctrine, and truly warn us. No, such cannot we endure; we will not hear them, nay, we persecute and banish them; Therefore will God also punish us. Thus it goes with wicked and lost children, that will not hearken to their parents, nor be obedient unto them; they will afterwards be rejected of them again.

LXXXIV.

Nothing displeases Almighty God more than when we defend and cloak our sins, and will not acknowledge that we have done wrong as did Saul; for the sins that be not acknowledged, are against the first table of the Ten

Commandments. Saul sinned against the first table, David against the second. Those are sinners against the second table, that look on the sermon of Repentance, suffer themselves to be threatened and reprov'd, acknowledge their sins, and better themselves. Those that sin against the first table, as idolaters, unbelievers, condemners, and blasphemers of God, falsifiers of God's Word, etc., attribute to themselves wisdom and power; they will be wise and mighty, both which qualities God reserves to himself as peculiarly his own.

LXXXV.

'Tis inexpressible how ungodly and wicked the world is. We may easily perceive it from this, that God has not only suffered punishments to increase, but also has appointed so many executioners and hangmen to punish his subjects; as evil spirits, tyrants, disobedient children, knaves, and wicked women, wild beasts, vermin, sickness, etc.; yet all this can make us neither bend nor bow.

Better it were that God should be angry with us, than that we be angry with God, for he can soon be at an union with us again, because he is merciful; but when we are angry with him, then the case is not to be helped.

LXXXVI.

God could be exceedingly rich in temporal wealth, if he so pleased, but he will not. If he would but come to the pope, the emperor, a king, a prince, a bishop, a rich merchant, a citizen, a farmer, and say: Unless you give me a hundred thousand crowns, you shall die on the spot; every one would say: I will give it, with all my heart, if I may but live. But now we are such unthankful slovens, that we give him not so much as a Deo gratias, though we receive of him, to rich overflowing, such great benefits, merely out of his goodness and mercy. Is not this a shame? Yet, notwithstanding such unthankfulness, our Lord God and merciful Father suffers not himself to be scared away, but continually shows us all manner of goodness. If in his gifts and benefits he were more sparing and close-handed, we should learn to be thankful. If he caused every human creature to be born with but one leg or foot, and seven years afterwards gave him the other; or in the fourteenth year gave one hand, and afterwards, in the twentieth year, the other, then we should better acknowledge God's gifts and benefits, and value them at a higher rate, and be thankful. He has given unto us a whole sea-full of his Word, all manner of languages, and liberal arts. We buy at this time, cheaply, all manner of good books. He gives us learned people, that teach well and regularly, so that a youth, if he be not altogether a dunce, may learn more in one year now, than formerly in many years. Arts are now so cheap, that almost they go about begging for bread; woe be to us that we are so lazy, improvident, negligent, and unthankful.

LXXXVII.

We are nothing worth with all our gifts and qualities, how great soever they be, unless God continually hold his hand over us: if he forsake us, then are our wisdom, art, sense, and understanding futile. If he do not constantly aid us, then our highest knowledge and experience in divinity, or what else we attain unto, will nothing serve; for when the hour of temptation and trial comes, we shall be dispatched in a moment, the devil, thought his craft and subtlety, tearing away from us even those texts in Holy Scripture wherewith we should comfort ourselves, and setting before our eyes, instead, only sentences of fearful threatening.

Wherefore, let no man proudly boast and brag of his own righteousness, wisdom, or other gifts and qualities, but humble himself and pray with the holy apostles, and say: "Ah, Lord! strengthen and increase the faith in us!"

LXXXVIII.

The greater God's gifts and works, the less are they regarded. The highest and most precious treasure we receive of God is, that we can speak, hear, see, etc.; but how few acknowledge these as God's special gifts, much less give God thanks for them. The world highly esteems riches, honor, power, and other things of less value, which

soon vanish away, but a blind man, if in his right wits, would willingly exchange all these for sight. The reason why the corporal gifts of God are so much undervalued is, that they are so common, that God bestows them also upon brute beasts, which as well as we, and better, hear and see. Nay, when Christ made the blind to see, drove out devils, raised the dead, etc., he was upbraided by the ungodly hypocrites, who gave themselves out for God's people, and was told that he was a Samaritan, and had a devil. Ah! the world is the devil's, whether it goes or stands still; how, then, can men acknowledge God's gifts and benefits? It is with us as with young children, who regard not so much their daily bread, as an apple, a pear, or other toys. Look at the cattle going into the fields to pasture, and behold in them our preachers, our milk-bearers, butter-bearers, cheese and wool bearers, which daily preach unto us faith in God, and that we should trust in him, as in our loving Father, who cares for us, and will maintain and nourish us.

LXXXIX.

No man can estimate the great charge God is at only in maintaining birds and such creatures, comparatively nothing worth. I am persuaded that it costs him, yearly, more to maintain only the sparrows, than the revenue of the French king amounts to. What then, shall we say of all the rest of his creatures?

XC.

God delights in our temptations, and yet hates them; he delights in them when they drive us to prayer; he hates them when they drive us to despair. The Psalm says: "An humble and contrite heart is an acceptable sacrifice to God," etc. Therefore, when it goes well with you, sing and praise God with a hymn: goes it evil, that is, does temptation come, then pray: "For the Lord has pleasure in those that fear him;" and that which follows is better: "and in them that hope in his goodness," for God helps the lowly and humble, seeing he says: "Thinkest thou my hand is shortened that I cannot help?" He that feels himself weak in faith, let him always have a desire to be strong therein, for that is a nourishment which God relishes in us.

XCI.

God, in this world, has scarce the tenth part of the people; the smallest number only will be saved. The world is exceeding ungodly and wicked; who would believe our people should be so unthankful toward the gospel?

XCII.

`Tis wonderful how God has put such excellent physic in mere muck; we know by experience that swine's dung stints the blood; horse's serves for the pleurisy; man's heals wounds and black blotches; asses' is used for the bloody flux, and cow's with preserved roses, for epilepsy, or for convulsions of children.

XCIII.

God seems as though he had dealt inconsiderately in commanding the world to be governed by the Word of Truth, especially since he has clothed and hooded it with a poor, weak, and condemned Word of the Cross. For, the world will not have the truth, but lies: neither willingly do they aught that is upright and good, unless compelled thereto by main force. The world has a loathing of the cross, and will rather follow the pleasures of the devil, and have pleasant days, than carry the cross of our blessed Saviour Christ Jesus. He that best governs the world, as most worthy of it, is Satan, by his lieutenant the pope; he can please the world well, and knows how to make it give ear unto him; for his kingdom has a mighty show and repute, which is acceptable to the world, and befits it. Like unto like.

XCIV.

Pythagoras, the heathen philosopher, said, that the motion of the stars creates a very sweet harmony and celestial concord; but that people, through continual custom, have become cloyed therewith. Even so it is with us, we have surpassing fair creatures to our use, but by reason they are too common, we regard them not.

XCV.

Scarcely a small proportion of the earth bears corn, and yet we are all maintained and nourished. I verily believe that there grow not as many sheaves of corn as there people in the world, and yet we are all fed; yea, and there remains a good surplus of corn at the year's end. This is a wonderful thing, which should make us see and perceive God's blessing.

XCVI.

The apparent cause why God passed so sharp a sentence upon Adam, was, that he had eaten of the forbidden tree, and was disobedient unto God, wherefore, for his sake, the earth was cursed, and mankind made subject to all manner of miseries, fears, wants, sicknesses, plagues, and death. The reason of the worldly-wise, regarding only the biting of the apple, holds that for so slight and trivial a thing it was too cruel and hard a proceeding upon poor Adam, and takes snuff in the nose, and says, or at least thinks: O, is it then so heinous a matter and sin for one to eat an apple? As people say of many sins that God expressly in his Word has forbidden, such as drunkenness, etc.: What harm for one to be merry, and take a cup with good fellows? - concluding, according to their blindness, that God is too sharp and exacting.

Again, these worldlings are offended that Christ, as they think, rejects, good, honest, and holy people; that he will not know them, is harsh to them, sends them away from him, and calls them malefactors, though some in his name have prophesied, cast out devils, done miracles, etc., while, on the other hand, he receives public sinners, as strumpets, knaves, publicans, murderers, whom, if they hear his Word, and believe in him, he forgives, be their sins ever so great and many, yea, makes them righteous and holy, God's children, and heirs of everlasting life and salvation, out of mere grace and mercy, without any deserts, good works, and worthiness of theirs. This they conceive to be altogether unjust.

Who can be here an arbitrator, the two things being as contrary to each other as fire and water. Herein man's wisdom, his sense, reason, understanding, is made a fool. The Scripture says: "Except ye be converted, and become like little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of God." They who would investigate these things with human wit and wisdom, give themselves much futile labor and disquiet; they will never learn how God is inclined towards them. In those, also, who so vainly trouble themselves, whether they be predestinated or fore-chosen, there goes up a fire in the heart, which they cannot quench; so that their consciences are never at peace, but in the end they must despair. He, therefore, that will shun this enduring evil must hold fast the Word, where he will find that our gracious God has laid a sure and strong foundation, on which we may with certainty take footing - namely, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom only we must enter into the kingdom of heaven; for he, and no other, "is the way, the truth, and the life."

We can understand the heavy temptations of that everlasting predestination, which terrifies many people, nowhere better than from the wounds of our Saviour, Christ Jesus, of whom the Father commanded, saying: "Him shall ye hear." But the wise of the world, the mighty, the high-learned, and the great, by no means heed these things, so that God remains unknown to them, notwithstanding they have much learning, and dispute and talk much of God; for it is a short conclusion. Without Christ, God will not be found, known, or comprehended.

If now thou wilt know, why so few are saved, and so infinitely many damned, this is the cause: the world will not hear Christ; they care nothing for him, yea, condemn that which the Father testifies of him: "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Whereas all people that seek and labor to come to God, through any other means than only through Christ (as Jews, Turks, Papists, false saints, heretics, etc.), walk in horrible darkness and error; and it helps them nothing that they lead an honest, sober kind of life, affect great devotion, suffer much, love and honor God, as they boast, etc. For seeing they will not hear Christ, or believe in him (without whom no man knows God, no man obtains forgiveness of sins, no man comes to the Father), they remain always in doubt and unbelief, know not how they stand with God, and so at last must die, and be lost in their sins. For, "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father," (1 John ii.), "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains upon him," (John iii.)

XCVII.

It is often asked: Why desperate wretches have such good days, and live a long time in jollity and pleasure, to their heart's desire, with health of body, fine children, etc., while God allows the godly to remain in calamity, danger, anguish and want all their lives; yea, and some to die also in misery, as St John the Baptist did, who was the greatest saint on earth, to say nothing of our only Saviour Jesus Christ.

The prophets have all written much hereof, and shown how the godly should overcome such doubts, and comfort themselves against them. Jeremiah says, "Why goeth it so well with the ungodly, and wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?" But further on, "Thou sufferest them to go at liberty like sheep that are to be slain, and thou preparest them for the day of slaughter." Read also Psalms xxxvii., xlix., lxxiii.

God is not therefore angry with his children, though he scourge and punish them; but he is angry with the ungodly that do not acknowledge Christ to be the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, but blaspheme and condemn the Word; such are to expect no grace and help of him. And, indeed, he does not himself scourge and beat his small and poor flock that depend on Christ; but suffers them to be chastened and beaten, when they become ever secure and unthankful unto him for his unspeakable graces and benefits shown unto them in Christ, and are disobedient to his Word; then permits he that the devil bruise our heels, and send pestilence and other plagues unto us; and that tyrants persecute us, and this for our good, that thereby we may be moved, and in a manner forced to turn ourselves unto him, to call upon him, to seek help and comfort from him, through Christ.

XCVIII.

"God is a God of the living, and not of the dead." This text shows the resurrection; for if there were no hope of the resurrection, or of another and better world, after this short and miserable life, wherefore should God offer himself to be our God, and say he will give us all that is necessary and healthful for us, and, in the end, deliver us out of all trouble, both temporal and spiritual? To what purpose should we hear his Word, and believe in him? What were we the better when we cry and sigh to him in our anguish and need, that we wait with patience upon his comfort and salvation, upon his grace and benefits, shown in Christ? Why praise and thank him for them? Why be daily in danger, and suffer ourselves to be persecuted and slain for the sake of Christ's Word?

Forasmuch as the everlasting, merciful God, through his Word and Sacraments, talks, and deals with us, all other creatures excluded, not of temporal things which pertain to this vanishing life, and which in the beginning he provided richly for us, but as to where we shall go when we depart hence, and gives unto us his Son for a Saviour, delivering us from sin and death, and purchasing for us everlasting righteousness, life, and salvation, therefore it is most certain, that we do not die away like the beasts that have no understanding; but so many of us as sleep in Christ, shall through him be raised again to life everlasting at the last day, and the ungodly to everlasting destruction. (John, v., Dan. xii.)

XCIX.

The most acceptable service we can do and show unto God, and which alone he desires of us, is, that he be

praised of us; but he is not praised, unless he be first loved; he is not loved, unless he be first bountiful and does well; he does well when he is gracious; gracious he is when he forgives sins. Now who are those that love him? They are that small flock of the faithful, who acknowledge such graces, and know that through Christ they have forgiveness of their sins. But the children of this world do not trouble themselves herewith; they serve their idol, that wicked and cursed Mammon: in the end he will reward them.

C.

Our loving Lord God wills that we eat, drink, and be merry, making use of his creatures, for therefore he created them. He will not that we complain, as if he had not given sufficient, or that he could not maintain our poor carcasses; he asks only that we acknowledge him for our God, and thank him for his gifts.

CI.

He that has not God, let him have else what he will, is more miserable than Lazarus, who lay at the rich man's gate, and was starved to death. It will go with such, as it went with the glutton, that they must everlastingly hunger and want, and shall not have in their power so much as one drop of water.

CII.

Of Abraham came Isaac and Ishmael; of the patriarchs and holy fathers, came the Jews that crucified Christ; of the apostles came Judas the traitor; of the city Alexandria (where a fair, illustrious, and famous school was, and whence proceeded many upright and godly learned men) came Arius and Origen; of the Roman church, that yielded many holy martyrs, came the blasphemous Antichrist, the pope of Rome; of the holy men in Arabia, came Mohammed; of Constantinople, where many excellent emperors were, comes the Turk; of married women come adulteresses; of virgins, strumpets; of brethren, sons, and friends, come the cruelest enemies; of angels come devils; of kings come tyrants; of the gospel and godly truth come horrible lies; of the true church come heretics; of Luther come fanatics, rebels, and enthusiasts. What wonder is it then that evil is among us, comes from us, and goes out of us; they must, indeed, be very evil things that cannot stay by such goodness; and they must also be very good, that can endure such evil things.

CIII.

Though by reason of original sin many wild beasts hurt mankind, as lions, wolves, bears, snakes, adders, etc., yet the merciful God has in such manner mitigated our well-deserved punishments, that there are many more beasts that serve us for our good and profit, than of those which do us hurt: many more sheep than wolves, oxen than lions, cows than bears, deer than foxes, lobsters than scorpions, ducks, geese, and hens, than ravens and kites, etc.: in all creatures more good than evil, more benefits than hurts and hindrances.

CIV.

God will have his servants to be repenting sinners, standing in fear of his anger, of the devil, death and hell, and believing in Christ. David says, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and helpeth them that be of an humble spirit." And Isaiah "Where shall my Spirit rest, and where shall I dwell? By them that are of humble spirit, and that stand in fear of my Word." So with the poor sinner on the cross. So with St Peter, when he had denied Christ; with Mary Magdalene; with Paul the persecutor, etc. All these were sorrowful for their sins, and such shall have forgiveness of their sins, and be God's servants.

The great prelates, the puffed up saints, the rich usurers, the ox drovers that seek unconscionable gain, etc., these are not God's servants, neither were it good they should be; for then no poor people could have access to God for them; neither were it for God's honor that such should be his servants, for they would ascribe the honor and

praise to themselves.

In the Old Testament, all the first-born were consecrated to God, both of mankind and of beasts. The first-born son had an advantage over his brethren; he was their Lord, as the chief in offerings and riches, that is, in spiritual and temporal government; for he had a right to the priesthood and dominion, etc. But there are many examples in Holy Scriptures, where God rejected the first-born, and chose the younger brethren, as Cain, Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, etc., who were first-born; from them God took their right, and gave it to their younger brethren, as to Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, David, etc. And for this cause: That they were haughty, proud, and presuming on their first-birth, and despised their brethren, that were more goodly and godly than they; this God could not endure, and therefore they were bereaved of their honors, so that they could not boast themselves of their prior birth, although they were highly esteemed in the world, and were possessed of lands and people.

CV.

The Scriptures show two manner of sacrifices acceptable to God. The first is called a sacrifice of thanks or praise, and is when we teach and preach God's Word purely, when we hear and receive it with faith, when we acknowledge it, and do everything that tends to the spreading of it abroad, and thank God from our hearts for the unspeakable benefits which through it are laid before us, and bestowed upon us in Christ, when we praise and glorify him, etc. "Offer unto God thanksgiving." "He that offereth thanks praiseth me." "Thank the Lord, for he is gracious, because his mercy endureth for ever." "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." - Psalms.

Secondly, when a sorrowful and troubled heart in all manner of temptations has his refuge in God, calls upon him in a true and upright faith, seeks help of him, and waits patiently upon him. Hereof the Psalms, "In my trouble I called upon the Lord, and he heard me at large." "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart, and will save such as be of an humble spirit." "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise." And again: "Call upon me in the time of need, so will I deliver thee, and thou shalt praise me."

CVI.

If Adam had remained in his innocence, and had not transgressed God's command, yet had begotten children, he should not have lived and remained continually in that state in Paradise, but would have been taken into the everlasting glory of heaven, not through death, but through being translated into another life.

CVII.

God scorns and mocks the devil, in setting under his very nose a poor, weak, human creature, mere dust and ashes, yet endowed with the first-fruits of the Spirit, against whom the devil can do nothing, though he is so proud, subtle, and powerful a spirit. We read in histories that a powerful king of Persia, besieging the city of Edessa, the bishop, seeing that all human aid was ineffectual, and that the city could not of itself hold out, ascending to the ramparts and prayed to God, making, at the same time, the sign of the cross, whereupon there was a wonderful host sent from God of great flies and gnats, which filled the horses eyes, and dispersed the whole army. Even so God takes pleasure to triumph and overcome, not through power, but by weakness.

CVIII.

False teachers and sectaries are punishments for evil times, God's greatest anger and displeasure; while godly teachers are glorious witnesses, God's graces and mercies. Hence St Paul names apostles, evangelists, prophets, shepherds, teachers, etc., gifts and presents of our Saviour Christ, sitting at the right hand of the Father. And the prophet Micah compares teachers of the gospel to a fruitful rain.

CIX.

Melancthon asked Luther if this word, hardened, "hardeneth whom he will," were to be understood directly as it sounded, or in a figurative sense? Luther answered: We must understand it specially and not operatively: for God works no evil. Through his almighty power he works all in all; and as he finds a man, so he works in him, as he did in Pharaoh, who was evil by nature, which was not God's, but his own fault; he continually went on in his wickedness, doing evil; he was hardened, because God with his spirit and grace hindered not his ungodly proceedings, but suffered him to go on, and to have his way. Why God did not hinder or restrain him, we ought not to inquire.

CX.

God styles himself, in all the Holy Scriptures, a God of life, of peace, of comfort, and joy, for the sake of Christ. I hate myself, that I cannot believe it so constantly and surely as I should; but no human creature can rightly know how mercifully God is inclined toward those that steadfastly believe in Christ.

CXI.

The second Psalm is one of the best Psalms. I love that Psalm with my heart. It strikes and flashes valiantly amongst kings, princes, counsellors, judges, etc. If what this Psalm says be true, then are the allegations and aims of the papists stark lies and folly. If I were as our Lord God, and had committed the government to my son, as he to his Son, and these vile people were as disobedient as they now be, I would knock the world in pieces.

CXII.

If a man serve not God only, then surely he serves the devil; because no man can serve God, unless he have his Word and command. Therefore, if his Word and command be not in thy heart, thou servest not God, but thine own will; for that is upright serving of God, when a man does that which in his Word God has commanded to be done, every one in his vocation, not that which he thinks good of his own judgment.

CXIII.

It troubles the hearts of people not a little, that God seems as though he were mutable or fickle-minded; for he gave to Adam the promises and ceremonies, which afterwards he altered with the rainbow and the ark of Noah. He gave to Abraham the circumcision, to Moses he gave miraculous signs, to his people, the law. But to Christ, and through Christ, he gave the Gospel; which amounts to the abolition of all the former. Hence the Turks take advantage of these proceedings of God, saying: The laws of the Christians may be established, and endure for a time, but at last they will be altered.

CXIV.

I was once sharply reprimanded by a popish priest, because, with such passion and vehemence, I reprov'd the people. I answered him: Our Lord God must first send a sharp, pouring shower, with thunder and lightning, and afterwards cause it mildly to rain, as then it wets finely through. I can easily cut a willow or a hazel wand with my trencher knife, but for a hard oak, a man must use the axe; and little enough, to fell and cleave it.

CXV.

Plato, the heathen, said of God: God is nothing and yet everything; him followed Eck and the sophists, who understood nothing thereof, as their words show. But we must understand and spake of it in this manner: God is incomprehensible and invisible; that, therefore, which may be seen and comprehended, is not God. And thus, in

another manner, God is visible and invisible: visible in his Word and works; and where his Word and works are not, there a man should not desire to have him; or he will, instead of God, take hold of the devil. Let us not flutter too high, but remain by the manger and the swaddling clothes of Christ, "in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." There a man cannot fail of God, but finds him most certainly. Human comfort and divine comfort are of different natures: human comfort consists in external, visible help, which a man may see, hold, and feel; divine comfort only in words and promises, where there is neither seeing, hearing, nor feeling.

CXVI.

When we see no way or means, by advice or aid, through which we may be helped in our miseries, we at once conclude, according to our human reason: now our condition is desperate; but when we believe trustingly in God, our deliverance begins. The physician says: Where philosophy ends, physic begins; so we say: Where human help is at an end, God's help begins, or faith in God's Word. Trials and temptations appear before deliverance, after deliverance comes joy. To be suppressed and troubled, is to arise, to grow and to increase.

CXVII.

The devil, too, has his amusement and pleasure, which consists in suppressing God's work, and tormenting those that love God's Word, and hold fast thereby; so the true Christians, being God's kingdom, must be tormented and oppressed.

A true Christian must have evil days, and suffer much; our Adam's flesh and blood must have good and easy days, and suffer nothing. How may these agree together? Our flesh is given over to death and hell: if our flesh is to be delivered from death, hell and the devil, it must keep and hold to God's commandments - i.e., must believe in Christ Jesus, that he is the Son of God and our Redeemer, and must cleave fast to his Word, believing that he will not suffer us to be plagued everlastingly, but will deliver and remove us out of this life into life eternal; giving us at the same time, patience under the cross, and to bear with the weakness of another, who is also under the cross, and holds with Christ.

Therefore, he that will boast himself to be Christ's disciple, a true Christian, and saved, must not expect good days; but all his faith, hope, and love must be directed to God, and to his neighbor, that so his whole life be nothing else than the cross, persecution, adversity, and tribulation.

CXVIII.

What is it we poor wretched people aim at? We who cannot, as yet, comprehend with our faith the merest sparks of God's promises, the bare glimmering of his commandments and works, - both of which, notwithstanding he himself has confirmed with words and miracles, - weak, impure, corrupt as we are, - presumptuously seek to understand the incomprehensible light of God's wonders.

We must know that he dwells in a light to which human creatures cannot come, and yet we go on, and essay to reach it. We know it. We know that his judgments are incomprehensible, and his ways past finding out, (Rom. xi.) yet we undertake to find them out. We look, with blind eyes like a mole, on the majesty of God, and after that light which is shown neither in words nor miracles, but is only signified; out of curiosity and willfulness we would behold the highest and greatest light of the celestial sun ere we see the morning star. Let the morning star, as St Peter says, go first up in our hearts, and we shall then see the sun in his noon-tide splendor.

True, we must teach, as we may, of God's incomprehensible and unsearchable will; but to aim at its perfect comprehension is dangerous work, wherein we stumble, fall, and break our necks. I bridle myself with these words of our Saviour Christ to St Peter: "Follow thou me: what is it to thee?" etc., for Peter busied himself also

about God's works; namely, how he would do with another, how he would do with John? And as he answered Philip, that said, "Show us the Father" - "What," said Christ; "believest thou not that the Father is in me, and I in the Father? He that seeth me, seeth the Father also," etc. For Philip would also willingly have seen the majesty and fellowship of the Father. Solomon, the wise king, says: "What is too high for thee, thereafter inquire thou not." And even did we know all the secret judgments of God, what good and profit would it bring unto us, more than God's promises and commandments?

Let us abstain from such cogitations, seeing we know for certain that they are incomprehensible. Let us not permit ourselves to be so plagued by the devil with that which is impossible. A man might as well busy himself how the kingdom of the earth shall endure upon the waters, and go not down beneath them. Above all things, let us exercise the faith of God's promises, and the works of his commandments; when we have done this, we may well consider whether it is expedient to trouble oneself about impossible things, though it is a very difficult thing to expel such thoughts, so fiercely drives the devil. A man must as vehemently strive against such cogitations as against unbelief, despair, heresies, and such like temptations. For most of us are deceived herewith, not believing they proceed from the devil, who yet himself fell through those very cogitations, assuming to be equal with the Most Highest, and to know all that God knows, and scorning to know what he ought to know, and what was needful for him.

CXIX.

High mysteries in the Scriptures being hard to be understood, confound unlearned and light spirits so as to produce many errors and heresies, to their own and others condemnation. `Twas therefore Moses described the creation so briefly, whereas he spends a whole chapter in narrating the purchase of the field and cave over against Hebron, that Abraham bought of Ephron the Hittite, for a sepulchre to bury Sara in. He describes, likewise, through many chapters, divers sorts of sacrifices, and other customs and ceremonies, for he well knew that such like produce no heresies. Many things were written and described ere Moses was born. Doubtless, Adam briefly noted the history of the creation, of his fall, of the promised seed, etc. The other patriarchs afterwards, no doubt, each set down what was done in his time, especially Noah. Afterwards Moses, as I conceive, took and brought all into a right method and order, diminishing therefrom, and adding thereunto, such things as God commanded: as, especially, touching the seed that should crush the serpent's head, the history of the creation, etc.; all which, doubtless, he had out of the sermons of the patriarchs, that always one inherited from another. For I verily believe, that the sermon of the woman's seed promised to Adam and Eve, after which they had so hearty a longing and yearning, was preached more powerfully before the deluge, than now in these dangerous times the sermons of Christ are preached with us.

CXX.

I would give a world to have the acts and legends of the patriarchs who lived before the deluge; for therein a man might see how they lived, preached, and what they suffered. But it pleased our Lord God to overwhelm all their acts and legends in the deluge, because he knew that those which should come after, would not regard, much less understand them; therefore God would keep and preserve them until they met again together in the life to come. But then, I am sure, the loving patriarchs who lived after the deluge, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.; the prophets, the apostles, their posterity, and other holy people, whom in this life the devil would not leave untempted, will yield unto the patriarchs, that lived before the deluge, and give to them pre-eminence in divine and spiritual honor, saying: Ye loving and most venerable patriarchs! I preached but a few years, spreading God's Word abroad, and therefore suffered the cross; but what is that in comparison with the great, tedious, intolerable labor and pains, anguish, torments, and plagues, which ye, holy fathers, endured before the deluge, some of you, seven hundred, some eight hundred years, some longer, of the devil and the wicked world.

CXXI.

As lately I lay very sick, so sick that I thought I should have left this world, many cogitations and musings had I in my weakness. Ah! thought I, what may eternity be? What joys may it have? However, I know for certain, that this eternity is ours; through Christ it is given and prepared for us, if we can but believe. There it shall be opened and revealed; here we shall not know when a second creation of the world will be, seeing we understand not the first. If I had been with God almighty before he created the world, I could not have advised him how out of nothing to make this globe, the firmament, and that glorious sun, which in its swift course gives light to the whole earth; how, in such manner, to create man and woman, etc., all which he did for us, without our counsel. Therefore ought we justly to give him the honor, and leave to his divine power and goodness the new creation of the life to come, and not presume to speculate thereon.

CXXII.

I hold that the name Paradise applies to the whole world. Moses describes more particularly what fell within Adam's sight before his fall, - a sweet and pleasant place, water by four rivers. After he had sinned, he directed his steps towards Syria, and the earth lost its fertility. Samaria and Judaea were once fruitful lands, worthy to be Paradise, but they are now arid sands, for God has cursed them.

Even so, in our time, has God cursed fruitful lands, and caused them to be barren and unfruitful by reason of our sins; for where God gives not his blessing, there grows nothing that is good and profitable, but where he blesses, there all things grow plentifully, and are fruitful.

CXXIII.

Dr. Jonas, inviting Luther to dinner, caused a bunch of ripe cherries to be hung over the table where they dined, in remembrance of the creation, and as a suggestion to his guests to praise God for creating such fruits. But Luther said: Why not rather remember this in one's children, that are the fruit of one's body? For these are far more excelling creatures of God than all the fruits of trees. In them we see God's power, wisdom and art, who made them all out of nothing, gave them life and limbs, exquisitely constructed, and will maintain and preserve them. Yet how little do we regard this. When people have children, all the effect is to make them grasping - raking together all they are to leave behind them. They do not know, that before a child comes into the world, it has its lot assigned already, and that it is ordained and determined what and how much it shall have. In the married state we find that the conception of children depends not on our will and pleasure; we never know whether we will be fruitful or no, or whether God will give us a son or a daughter. All this goes on without our counsel. My father and mother did not imagine they should have brought a spiritual overseer into the world. 'Tis God's work only, and this we cannot enter into. I believe that, in the life to come, we shall have nothing to do, but to meditate on and marvel at our Creator and his creatures.

CXXIV.

A comet is a star that runs, not being fixed like a planet, but a bastard among planets. It is a haughty and proud star, engrossing the whole element, and carrying itself as if it were there alone. 'Tis of the nature of heretics who also will be singular and alone, bragging and boasting above others and thinking they are the only people endued with understanding.

CXXV.

Whereto serve or profit such superfluity, such show, such ostentation, such extraordinary luxurious kind of life as is now come upon us. If Adam were to return to earth, and see our mode of living, our food, drink and dress, how would he marvel. He would say: Surely, this is not the world I was in; it was, doubtless, another Adam than I, who appeared among men heretofore. For Adam drank water, ate fruit from the trees, and if he had any house at all, 'twas a hut, supported by four wooden forks; he had no knife, or iron; and he wore simply a coat of skin.

Now we spend immense sums in eating and drinking; now we raise sumptuous palaces, and decorate them with a luxury beyond all comparison. The ancient Israelites lived in great moderation and quiet; Boaz says: "Dip thy bread in vinegar, and refresh thyself therewith." Judaea was full of people, as we read in the book of Joshua; and a great multitude of people gives a lesson to live sparingly.

CXXVI.

Adam, our father, was, doubtless, a most miserable, plagued man. 'Twas a mighty solitariness for him to be alone in so wide and vast a world; but when he, with Eve, his only companion and loving consort, obtained Cain their son, then there was great joy; and so, when Abel was born: but soon after followed great trouble, misery, and sorrow of heart, when one brother slew another, and Adam thereby lost one son, and the other was banished and proscribed from his sight. This surely was a great cross and sorrow, so that the murder caused him more grief than his own fall; but he, with his loving Eve, were reduced again to a solitary kind of life. Afterwards, when he was one hundred and thirty years old, he had Seth. Miserable and lamentable was his fall, for during nine hundred years he saw God's anger in the death of every human creature. Ah! no human creature can conceive his perplexities: our sufferings, in comparison with his, are altogether children's toys; but he was afterwards comforted and refreshed again with the promise, through faith, of the woman's seed.

CXXVII.

All wild beasts are beasts of the law, for they live in fear and quaking; they have all swarthy and black flesh, by reason of their fear, but tame beasts have white flesh, for they are beasts of grace; they live securely with mankind.

CXXVIII.

After Adam had lost the righteousness in which God had created him, he was, without doubt, much decayed in bodily strength, by reason of his anguish and sorrow of heart. I believe that before the fall he could have seen objects a hundred miles off better than we can see them at half a mile, and so in proportion with all the other senses. No doubt, after the fall, he said: "Ah, God! what has befallen me? I am both blind and deaf." It was a horrible fall; for, before, all creatures were obedient unto him, so that he could play even with the serpent.

CXXIX.

Twenty years is but a short time, yet in that short time the world were empty, if there was no marrying and production of children. God assembles unto himself a Christian Church out of little children. For I believe, when a little child dies of one years old, that always one, yea, two thousand die with it, of that age or younger; but when I, Luther, die, that am sixty-three, I believe that not three-score, or one hundred at the most, will die with me of that age, or older; for people now grow not old; not many people live to my years. Mankind is nothing else but a sheep-shambles, where we are slain and slaughtered by the devil. How many sorts of deaths are in our bodies? Nothing is therein but death.

CXXX.

It is in the father's power to disinherit a disobedient child; God commanded, by Moses, that disobedient children should be stoned to death, so that a father may clearly disinherit a son, yet with this proviso, that, upon bettering and amendment, he reinstate him.

CXXXI.

What need had our early ancestors of other food than fruits and herbs, seeing these tasted so well and gave such

strength? The pomegranates and oranges, without doubt yielded such a sweet and pleasant smell, that one might have been satisfied with the scent thereof; and I am sure Adam, before his fall, never wanted to eat a partridge; but the deluge spoiled all. It follows not, that because God created all things, we must eat of all things. Fruits were created chiefly as food for people and for beasts; the latter were created to the end we should laud and praise God. Whereunto serve the stars, but only to praise their Creator? Whereunto serve the raven and crows, but to call upon the Lord who nourishes them.

CXXXII.

There's no doubt that all created things have degenerated by reason of original sin. The serpent was at first a lofty, noble animal, eating without fear from Eve's hand, but after it was cursed, it lost its feet, and was fain to crawl and eat on the ground. It was precisely because the serpent, at that time, was the most beautiful of creatures, that Satan selected it for his work, for the devil likes beauty, knowing that beauty attracts men unto evil. A fool serves not as a provocative to heresy, nor a deformed maid-servant to libertinism, nor water to drunkenness, nor rags to vanity. Consider the bodies of children, how much sweeter and purer and more beautiful they are than those of grown persons; 'tis because childhood approaches nearer to the state of innocence wherein Adam lived before his fall. In our sad condition, our only consolation is the expectation of another life. Here below all is incomprehensible.

CXXXIII.

Dr. Luther, holding a rose in his hand, said: 'Tis a magnificent work of God: could a man make but one such rose as this, he would be thought worthy of all honor, but the gifts of God lose their value in our eyes, from their very infinity. How wonderful is the resemblance between children and their parents. A man shall have a half-dozen sons, all like him as so many peas are like another, and these sons again their sons, with equal exactness of resemblance, and so it goes on. The heathen noticed these likenesses. Dido says to Aeneas:

"Si mihi parvulus Aeneas luderet in aula, Qui te tantum ore referret."

'Twas a form of malediction among the Greeks, for a man to wish that his enemy's son might be unlike him in face.

CXXXIV.

'Tis wonderful how completely the earth is fertilized by currents of water running in all directions and constantly replenished by snow, rain, and dew.

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