

OF ASTRONOMY AND ASTROLOGY

DCCXCVII.

Astronomy is the most ancient of all sciences, and has been the introducer of vast knowledge; it was familiarly known to the Hebrews, for they diligently noted the course of the heavens, as God said to Abraham: "Behold the heavens; canst thou number the stars?" etc. Heaven's motions are threefold; the first is, that the whole firmament moves swiftly around, every moment thousands of leagues, which, doubtless, is done by some angel. Its wonderful so great a vault should go about in so short a time. If the sun and stars were composed of iron, steel, silver, or gold, they must needs suddenly melt in so swift a course, for one star is greater than the whole earth, and yet they are innumerable. The second motion is, of the planets, which have their particular and proper motions. The third is, a quaking or a trembling motion, lately discovered, but uncertain. I like astronomy and mathematics, which rely upon demonstrations and sure proofs. As to astrology, its nothing.

DCCXCVIII.

Astronomy deals with the matter, and with what is general, not with manner of form. God himself will be alone the Master and Creator, Lord and Governor, though he has ordained the stars for signs. And so long as astronomy remains in her circle, whereunto God has ordained her, so is she a fair gift of God; but when she will step out of her bounds - that is, when she will prophecy and speak of future things, how it will go with one, or what fortune or misfortune another shall have, then she is not to be justified. Chiromancy we should utterly reject. In the stars is neither strength nor operation; they are but signs, and have, therefore, just cause to complain of the astrologers, who attribute unto them what they have not. The astrologers commonly ascribe that to the stars, which they ought to attribute to the planets, that announce only evil events, except that star which appeared to the wise men in the east, and which showed that the revelation of the Gospel was at the door.

In the year 1538, the Seigneur Von Minckwitz made a public oration in honour of astrology, wherein he sought to prove that the sentence in Jeremiah, chap. x: "Be not dismayed at the signs of heaven," applied not to astrology, but to the images of the Gentiles. Luther said hereupon: These passages may be quibbled with, but not overthrown. Jeremiah speaks as Moses did of all the signs of heaven, earth, and sea; the heathen were not so silly as to be afraid of the sun or moon, but they feared and adored prodigies and miraculous signs. Astrology is no art; it has no principle, no demonstration, whereupon we may take sure footing; 'tis all haphazard work; Philip Melancthon, against his will, admits unto me, that though, as he says, the art is extant, there are none that understand it rightly. They set forth, in their almanacs, that we shall have no snow in summer time, nor thunder in winter; and this the country clowns know as well as the astrologers. Philip Melancthon says: That such people as

are born in ascendant Libra, in the ascension of Liber towards the south, are unfortunate people. Whereupon I said: The astrologers are silly creatures, to dream that their crosses and mishaps proceed not from God, but from the stars; its hence, they are not patient in their troubles and adversities. Astrology is uncertain; and as the *predicamenta* are feigned words in *Dialectica*, even so astronomy has feigned astrology; as the ancient and true divines knew nothing of the fantasies and divinity of the school teachers, so the ancient astronomers knew nothing of astrology. The nativities of Cicero and of others were shown me. I said: I hold nothing thereof, nor attribute anything unto them. I would gladly have the astrologers answer me this: Esau and Jacob were born together, of one father and one mother, at one time, and under equal planets, yet they were wholly of contrary natures, kinds, and minds. What is done by God, ought not to be ascribed to the stars. The upright and true Christian religion opposes and confutes all such fables. The way of casting nativities is like the proceedings in popedom, whose outward ceremonies and pompous ordinances are pleasing to human wit and wisdom, as the consecrated water, torches, organs, cymbals, singing, ringing, but withal there's no certain knowledge. An astrologer, or horoscope monger, is like one that sells dice, and bawls: Behold, here I have dice that always come up twelve. If once or twice their conjectures tell, they cannot sufficiently extol the art; but as to the infinite cases where they fail, they are altogether silent. Astronomy, on the contrary, I like; it pleases me by reason of her manifold benefits. General prophecies and declarations, which declare generally what in future shall happen accord not upon individuals and particular things. When at one time many are slain together in a battle, no man can affirm they were all born under one planet, yet they die altogether in one hour, yea, in one moment.

DCCXCIX.

God has appointed a certain and sure end for all things, otherwise Babylon might have said: I will remain and continue; and Rome: To me is the government and rule given without ceasing. To Alexander and others were given empires and kingdoms, yet astrology taught not that such great kingdoms were to be raised, nor how long they were to last.

Astrology is framed by the devil, to the end people may be scared from entering into the state of matrimony, and from every divine and human office and calling; for the star-peepers presage nothing that is good out of the planets; they affright people's consciences, in regard of misfortunes to come, which all stand in God's hand, and through such mischievous and unprofitable cogitations vex and torment the whole life.

Great wrong is done to God's creatures by the star-expounders. God has created and placed the stars in the firmament, to the end they might give light to the kingdoms of the earth, make people glad and joyful in the Lord, and be good signs of years and seasons. But the star-peepers feign that those creatures, of God created, darken and trouble the earth, and are hurtful; whereas all creatures of God are good, and by God created only for good, though mankind makes them evil, by abusing them. Eclipses, indeed, are monsters, and like to strange and untimely births. Lastly, to believe in the stars, or to trust thereon, or to be affrighted thereat, is idolatry, and against the first commandment.