

# OLAUS MAGNUS

A Description of the  
Northern Peoples

1555

VOLUME III

Edited by P. G. FOOTE

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VOLUME III

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OLAUS MAGNUS

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Romæ 1555

*Description of the Northern Peoples*

Rome 1555

VOLUME III

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# BOOK SIXTEEN OF OLAUS MAGNUS THE GOTH, ARCHBISHOP OF UPPSALA, ON THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE CHURCH

## PREFACE

I have written above about the various activities of the northern peoples, looking at their violent struggles in war, their buildings, their social intercourse, and also the cheerful processions that entertain this race, who live under the influence of the harsher planets,<sup>1</sup> and how they celebrate their feast days in the regular yearly course, as other nations do. Now I shall have to add something more remarkable, on the way the Church conducts itself and how those Northerners, when they accepted baptism six hundred years ago,<sup>2</sup> were from their childhood most carefully instructed in an excellent mode of living and in good reading and writing. In accordance with these precepts they lived commendably from tender youth until the last stage of their lives when, leaving behind them the renown of a virtuous name and holy works, they were entombed with a Catholic burial.<sup>3</sup> The learned teachers, sent from heaven to aid that uncultivated generation, strove to remove the superstitious errors of the pagans, plant little by little the seeds of the virtues, and convert severity into gentleness in order to combat all their vicious passions, or at least moderate them in their evil ways. Through their zeal these men were observed to have made such great progress that those people of the North, preserving the unity of the Church and their obedience to it, did nothing by land or sea, nor transacted any business, without the blessing of their priests, as I shall also describe below in discussing the undying glory of good princes and the everlasting ignominy and disgrace of the sacrilegious, who, unless they were cleansed by penitence, made themselves and their heirs obnoxious and contemptible to God and man through their cruelty.<sup>4</sup>

Northerners baptized

Catholic burial Teachers sent from heaven

Unity and obedience welcome Blessing was cherished by all

Sacrilegious were infamous

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## CHAPTER ONE

### On schools and the education of the young

**T**HE great concern of ancient teachers, especially Plato, for the careful and reliable education of children and young people is proved with very clear evidence in many books of their laws. Whoever perused these, or heard them read, would not be able to admire them sufficiently, and certainly could not imitate them. Plato himself, a man endued with such eminent wisdom, is anxious to guide young folk of that age, whose propensities, as the wise Solomon confirms, are very difficult to fathom. He maintains also that such people as have been educated in good morals in their youth are given office in the state.<sup>1</sup>

The inhabitants of the North, who observed this long ago, brought their young men to be instructed in the skills of the Greeks at their colleges, for an agreeable friendship and reciprocal services existed between them.<sup>2</sup> None the less the Goths had instructors of their own, some for educating their boys and some for governing the state, very learned men who were quite equal to the Greeks in displaying all their knowledge in private or in public: such were Zeuta, Diceneus, and Zalmoxis the Pythagorean.<sup>3</sup> They also had the Zarobi, Terei, and Pileati,<sup>4</sup> from whom kings and priests were chosen, for example, Ethespanta, Hanala, Fritigern, etc., of whom something has been said in earlier books.<sup>5</sup> So from these men the first Goths imbibed the best teaching and, as the ages passed and one

generation followed another, they eagerly handed it on to the close attention of their descendants, for they thought that ignorance and malice could be dispelled from mankind if true philosophers exercised rule or preached their philosophy as a divine calling.

The duty of these individuals is to be acquainted with heavenly matters and guide the affairs of men, first by contemplative and then by practical philosophy. Such a person also seeks two things: to make out what man's nature is and then the means by which it may be guided towards virtue and diverted from evil. This comes about through forethought, by whose direction a man's disposition restrains itself, so *that it may easily steer* towards the good which wisdom has discovered and to which prudence has guided him. Nevertheless, some have gained experience more through action than discussion.

Concern of ancients that young should be well taught

Ways of young people inscrutable

State office for such

Gothic instructors of the young

Names of Gothic instructors

True philosophers dispel folly

Duty of philosophers

Men become more experienced through action

---

## CHAPTER TWO

### On the same subject

**I**N his work on the *Laws*, Plato thinks that of all animals a child is the least manageable creature,<sup>1</sup> since for many reasons he is lower than a brute beast unless through divine wisdom and affinity with God he has accepted holy worship and religion. Therefore, as the same author says, nothing will require more sincere concern than the good training of children and young people. You should watch over children far more carefully even than you water medicinal herbs, in case their noble qualities are marred by word or deed. In fact he affirms that there is nothing more godlike for a man than to seek after the education of his sons. He wants them to be given noble names and to be frequently asked whether they want to be such persons, that is to say, wise men. So they answer by the prompting of Nature that they do so wish. Then they must be questioned about other arts and crafts, and employments of different sorts such as agriculture, seafaring, medicine, and soldiering, until some proper decision is reached, and then they are to be encouraged in it by means of typical examples and introductions.<sup>2</sup>

However, the purpose of putting these lads to school is that, with the full accompaniment of God's help, they may be enlisted in the army of the priesthood; and in the North, masters or trainers,<sup>3</sup> that is, directors of study, are appointed by the bishop or the city authorities. These men, either themselves or through their deputies, instruct two, even three hundred boys and young men of varying ages, even if they are the sons of princes, in the different rudiments of good learning, and, if they do not consent to be well behaved, they are punished by application of the birch and rod, just as animals are given the whip and horses are made to increase their pace by the spur. In this way the boys have instilled into them a craving for the virtues and a desire to persist in them.<sup>4</sup> Any person who wantonly teaches boys to practise knavery will have to mourn for them when they must be punished as thieves with the noose. There is greater safety and hope, however, if we assign those to be taught in schools who from their boyhood have proved to have outstanding natural talents, exceptional ability, and a character inclined towards knowledge of the

liberal arts.

They should also have a mind to study other tongues, for the more accurate translation of foreign writings, in case they might otherwise miss the invaluable significance and profit of good books through their inadequacy and irremediable inexperience, so that they lay themselves open to the loss of neglected examples and sound advice. Such pupils apply themselves very earnestly to the skills of music, astronomy, and arithmetic, and to the art of geometry.<sup>5</sup> They hear also from their elders that there was inscribed in the forecourt of Plato's Academy: 'Let no one enter here who is ignorant of geometry.'<sup>6</sup> He wished this to be understood as referring to a required measure not only in learning but also in the emotions.

Man is guided by divine wisdom

Young people to be brought up most attentively

Noble names Boys to be often asked

Trainers

Sons of princes under the rod

These youths are better behaved

Vicious are hanged

Loss from neglected books

Young people apply themselves to these arts

Measure of emotions

---

## CHAPTER THREE

### On a father's blessing of his children

**Y**OU can see in the picture above an elderly man instructing small children on their knees before him.<sup>1</sup> The sympathetic reader should take this to signify what has been customary in northern lands from very early times between laymen and their offspring, that is, that boys and girls, when they are about to go to bed and sleep, would in order of age repeat the Lord's Prayer and Ave Maria and receive the blessing of their father, and to this day they retain that holy custom brought in by ancient piety after the faith had been accepted.<sup>2</sup> For parents are extremely concerned to restrain their children from evil company and prevent them becoming incurably corrupted. Faithful friends, no less than parents themselves, take responsibility for seeing that they are brought up, in and outside the home, to cultivate good habits and learning.

The form of this blessing, or some similar wording, laymen learn from their priests, rectors, or curates, when they preach,<sup>3</sup> following the Book of Numbers, Ch. 6, where it is written: 'On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel: and I will bless them."' <sup>4</sup> They are surely not mistaken in this sacred observance if the children remain so obedient to their parents that no one sees them transgress their father's injunctions either by word, deed, or gesture. I know men who, even at my age, have been denied parental blessing by their own fathers because of some notable insult and defiance they have offered them, and at once have had to undergo every kind of misfortune, want, disaster, and disgrace.

Fatherly blessing

Manner of blessing children and preserving them from evil company

Faithful friends

Form of blessing

Blessing of God

Obedient children

Withdrawal of father's blessing dreadful

---

## CHAPTER FOUR

### On the salary, or fee, of teachers

**I**N the northern schools teachers' salaries are not paid from the public treasury as in the distinguished academies of other countries, such as Italy, Spain, France, and Germany, but from church tithes and the bishop's revenue, and from a share in the will of departing rectors or curates who, with the permission of bishop and chapter, have at their death bequeathed three or four silver marks, either more or less, or property of equivalent value, to the students' coffer.<sup>1</sup> This share is looked on as a debt and takes precedence over the allotments given to the blood relations and heirs who succeed him.

It is a pleasure to insert here the noble letter, or some parts of it, from Athalaric, king of the Goths, to the Senate of the city of Rome, written down by Cassiodorus in Bk IX: 'We are aware of having legally given over to the persons of fathers the causes of their sons, so that it is precisely those who are anxious for the advancement of learned Roman studies who have to give thought to the young people's progress. We may not believe that you can be less concerned about something from which distinction grows for your offspring, and through diligent reading good counsel is produced for your assembly. Indeed, in accordance with our assiduous care for you, we have lately learnt from the whispering of certain men that the teachers of Roman oratory are not receiving the salaries that are laid down for their work, and that, by the commercial dealings of some individuals, the full amount allotted to schoolmasters is apparently being encroached upon. Therefore, since it is evident that this fee fosters the arts, we have judged it criminal to take anything away from the instructors of young men; better that they should be stimulated to their praiseworthy studies by increases in their wages. The first school training, that of language, is the elegant foundation of letters, the splendid mother of Eloquence, who knows how to think commendably and speak without fault. In the course of an oration she recognizes incongruous error, just as good habits loathe crime in others.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup>If a father has realized that his son is teachable and outstanding in intellectual power, no meanness should make him want to cheat his son of

the high praise due to him. Let him as soon as he can invite the best instructors, so that his child may be trained in the liberal arts and disciplines, for which Nature herself has borne him and made him fit. Nothing should be more desirable for parents than to have sons who are learned, by whom they should not only endure with composure being surpassed and overcome in every kind of commendation, but consider their sons' renown a victor's palm for themselves. Cicero speaks to his son time and time again in such a way that you see he desires nothing more than that he should outstrip his father, if it were possible, in the art of letters. It is a supremely bad notion among certain people of our own time, who say that they wish in no way to be overtaken in wisdom by their sons. On the other hand, how hateful it is to come across parents' excessive indulgence towards their sons, thereby causing them to be sluggish, cowardly, and womanish; Plato himself in the *Gorgias* curses this habit at great length.<sup>3</sup> Without any doubt it is a frightful scourge that the subjects have to bear, whenever they are offered and must accept a prince who has been brought up in wanton, effeminate ways. What justice will he ever furnish to the wronged, what pity for the distressed, in short, what model of goodness to everyone else, if he has assumed power improperly before he was able or willing to know how steep the path of virtue is by which princely rank must be acquired and then maintained with all moderation?<sup>4</sup>

Where teachers' salaries come from Will of rectors

Letter of Athalaric, king of Goths, on the education of boys

Fee fosters the arts

Language

Good habits

Let there be no meanness in educating sons

A wise son delights his father

Excellent words of Cicero

Very bad notion

Too great indulgence ruinous Frightful scourge

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### On the similarity of the arts

1. **N**OW just as a musician produces the sweetest singing from harmonious choirs, so a writer, by arranging words so that their stresses fit together, knows how to compose and recite a metrical poem. Literature is the mistress of words, the adornment of the human race, and through the practice of reading the beauties of the ancients, she clearly aids us by their counsels. Barbarian kings make no use of her; she is perceived as abiding solely with her legitimate masters. Other nations have arms besides ourselves, but it is Eloquence alone who shows obedience to the lords of the Romans. With her help the battle trumpet sounds in that war of orators, the civil law. With her help discourse of the highest nobility graces all our aristocracy.

For this reason let it be your concern, members of the Senate, that instructors in a school, in both literature and rhetoric, to say nothing of the exponents of civil law, receive remuneration for their services in full, and so that no uncertainty remains, as soon as six months have gone, let those masters obtain half of the agreed sum. The remaining seasons of the year should then be brought to a close by rendering them their due salary. In this way they will not be compelled to depend upon another's whim, which to have been forced to devote themselves to, even for one moment of their waking hours, is a penance for them, etc. If for the people's enjoyment we bestow our wealth freely upon play-actors, who are inessential, how much more promptly should these men be paid, through whom good habits are brought about and articulate talents are fostered to serve our court? Now as to these masters of letters under discussion, we order your respected assembly to give them this announcement: just as they realize that we are anxious about their remuneration, so they should know that they must strenuously require good progress from our young men.'<sup>1</sup> Then, as King Theodoric sets down in Bk II of the *Letters*, their pupils, endowed with good sense, can at some point put their wisdom to use in the public law-courts and on embassies. 'There is great skill,' he says, 'in being able to speak against masters in the art, and having the power to say or do something in the presence of men who think they can

foresee everything.’<sup>2</sup> Other better and more modern remarks about the usefulness of schools may be duly observed and appreciated in the work of the well-known Master Brunus, *On Heretics*, Bk VI, Ch. 5.<sup>3</sup>

Literature

Barbarian kings do not practise literature

Eloquence of the Romans

Period of six months for paying masters

Sufferings of instructors

Comedies are here disparaged

Articulate talents

A great art to speak against masters

---



## CHAPTER SIX

### Concerning the ceremony which takes place on the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin

**A** GAIN, among other aids for the good education of the young, the following was also discovered by the religious piety of our ancestors, and has been retained in the northern kingdoms. Just as in heathen superstition a fire was kept perpetually burning in their shrines in honour of spirits and demons, so the people, when they were converted from paganism to Christianity six hundred years ago and rid themselves of that hateful delusion, adopted and retained the pious ceremony of bearing lighted wax candles, blessed by the prayers of priests on the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin; thus they made a reverential procession through churches and churchyards in pious devotion and humility. This praiseworthy custom still exists to this day and will stand henceforth as an imperishable rite for ever and ever.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the rash, reckless misconception of certain innovators, with their murky path, life, and sight, thinks the ruddy splendour of this light offensive, and that the shining of faith and tokens of good works should not remain in the burning lamps and almsgiving hands of Christians.<sup>2</sup> But not everywhere have they succeeded with their unholy intentions, for Christ, who is a light to lighten the Gentiles,<sup>3</sup> preserves good ordinances, and ensures that this ceremony remains unshaken in the Catholic Church. This consecration is performed, too, by all women who have borne a child

when, after a space of forty days, carrying lights, they must go to be purified before a priest at the church doorway.<sup>4</sup> Because this long-observed custom has helped to maintain a peaceful way of living which is in no way harmful to anyone, that person must certainly be thought hard-hearted who scorns conformity to a tradition so honourable and sacred. For the men of old searched out every good usage, just as they would seek for a good possession or temperament, to make certain they did not embrace fading shadows instead of solid matter or offer mere wisps of smoke to those who were about to accept the life of Christians. Yet it was by examples and resemblances that they did their best to instruct untutored men and women in obedience to the faith, so that they might lay hold on virtue and be wary of their own danger without hazard to anyone else.

An aid for educating the young

Fire kept burning

Candles blessed

Lutherans

Christ maintains good ordinances

Women after childbirth

Ancients concerned for a good possession

Good examples are beneficial

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### On the distribution of candles or wax tapers that have been blessed

ONCE the solemn procession has passed through the church or churchyard, the blessed candle is laid at the altar, to be divided into small pieces and allotted to every family when the service is ended. After taking these, each person returns home and on the following day all the children assemble, fasting. They kneel and, with the candles lit, the father bestows a blessing on them in the form I have mentioned, from the Book of Numbers, Ch. 6. He sings the tips of the hairs of his children's heads in the shape of a cross and then extinguishes the candle after each one has been blessed.<sup>1</sup> If the smoke ascends, like that of the righteous Abel, the father claims it as a token of good obedience and caresses the youth or girl, encouraging that child to live virtuously, because the rising of the smoke means that a long, good life is in store. When they have seen this the young people become more eager to persist and advance in excellent habits and obedience. But if the smoke twists towards the ground, the youngster is shocked by fear into improving his ways and always avoiding bad company. By this means countless young people are restrained from vices and a great many are strengthened in good living. By praise they are led towards religion, and by mild threats they set aside stubborn impudence and shrug off rebelliousness.<sup>2</sup> If however anyone should speak against this good custom, with more prating than wisdom, he is avoided, not only because of his fault in dishonouring religion but also for fear he will stir up riot. He is treated like a heathen in the company of his fellows, particularly at a table gathering, and in these circumstances such a man will do well to show diffidence and make his escape.<sup>3</sup>

Churches and churchyards are places of refuge

*Father* blesses his children

What rising smoke means

Twisting smoke

Ways of recalling children from an evil life He who speaks against religion is driven away

\_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### On the use of blessed candles

**A**LTHOUGH great use is made of candles in northern lands and large numbers of them are lit, chiefly at worship in churches, during pilgrimages to the saints, and at the taking of the sacraments, yet candles blessed by the hand and mouth of the bishop, whose particular emblem this is, are held in especially deep reverence among those peoples. For the strong virtue of his holy words uttered over them is believed to have the power to ward off thunderbolts and flashes of lightning if they are then lit with this end in view. Moreover, when folk perceive the air tainted, to prevent it causing havoc in time of plague or tempest, they bear these candles in their hands, with the addition of good prayers or in processions ordained by the Church, so that the elements may give way to the efficacy of the blessing shed upon them; otherwise they would do severe mischief.

Do not think these rituals ridiculous, since in the histories of the heathen you find very similar ones devised and put into use for the propitiation of demons by certain sacrifices, as Livy states in Bk X of his fourth Decade. He writes that by a decree of the Roman Senate a festival and processions lasting three days were instituted throughout the whole of Italy to combat a plague which had emptied the cities.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, he tells of a similar attempt to deal with the same or some other rigour of the elements, after they had seen armoured horsemen struck by lightning during battles, fields flattened by storms, and flocks and herds battered. They soon turned to the Sibylline books, as if to seek a remedy from Aesculapius.<sup>2</sup> It is recorded that such a measure was also taken among the peoples of the North before the Catholic faith was accepted,<sup>3</sup> until, illuminated by the splendour of the true light, they averted with blessed candles the disasters that were harassing them and eventually put those same candles to use when they were about to breathe their last.<sup>4</sup>

Candle the emblem of bishops

Quality of blessed candles

Practices of the heathen

T. Livius on the heathens' three-day processions

Sibylline books

Splendour of the true light

---



## CHAPTER NINE

### Concerning the blessings bestowed on all things by Birger, archbishop of Uppsala<sup>1</sup>

**T**HOSE nations hold it beautiful, sacred, and indeed requisite, to dispense a blessing, invoked by either a priest or themselves, upon all things that are to be devoted to use by human beings, for they feel that when the name of God has been invoked an abundance of everything is everywhere at hand, or soon will be. For they hear cited by their preachers from Ch. 28 of Deuteronomy the great blessings bestowed on those who keep the commandments of God, and again how unfortunate and accursed are those who turn aside from them.<sup>2</sup> Public ceremonies are held, however, for the blessing of seeds, crops, and foods at Eastertime, and in the middle of August, on the day dedicated to the most Holy Virgin, they pray that fruits of every kind may be blessed.<sup>3</sup>

If any of these which are intended for domestic use, chiefly beer and other kinds of drink, seem to have been contaminated by poisonous and unclean animals that have fallen into them, they are soon restored by the administration of a priestly benediction in the following form of words: ‘God, to whose immeasurable compassion it belongs to wipe away filth, to restore what has been spoiled to its former cleanliness, and by blessing to hallow it, we humbly entreat Thee to rid this liquor of whatever filth, impurity, or harm lies in it; and with Thy wonted pity to purge by sanctification and to sanctify by purgation the means of support which Thou hast deigned to grant Thy servants for their use; so that this liquor, cleansed of all pollution, may be sanctified by Thy divine blessing, and may be undefiled for all who taste thereof.’<sup>4</sup>

There is also another form of blessing, this time of the corn, on St Stephen’s day: ‘Almighty, everlasting God, creator and sanctifier of all the elements, who art trinity and unity, we pray Thee, O Lord, our most merciful Father, that this corn may be blessed through Thy compassion, and by our invocation of Thy most holy name grant that the beasts which shall taste of it may receive restoration, health, and strength; that they, whom Thou hast created for our use, may by Thy grace live to be of

assistance to us. Through Our Lord.'<sup>5</sup>

Blessings on all things

They who keep the commandments are blessed

Form of blessing over drink

Prayer for the corn

---

## CHAPTER TEN

### More on the blessings of pilgrims by the same Archbishop Birger

**I** beg that every pious reader who thinks fit to read these words of mine without distaste may be willing to remember that the life of man is a campaign and a pilgrimage upon earth,<sup>1</sup> and may consider that there is a way to heaven even from the North, from which every evil spreads,<sup>2</sup> provided there has been amendment of life. Those who wish, either from devotion or because of a vow, to travel from here into foreign lands, to Jerusalem or Compostela or the bountiful City<sup>3</sup> or to other places, as many most illustrious kings and ladies have done in the past, are blessed by a bishop or priest standing over them, together with their scrip and staff, in the following manner: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, founder and redeemer of the world, who didst command Thy blessed apostles to take only staves when they went travelling abroad,<sup>4</sup> we beg with suppliant devotion that Thou wilt deign to bless these scrips and staffs, or sticks, with the purpose that those who are about to accept them as a token of their pilgrimage and in support of their bodies may receive abundance of Thy heavenly grace, and may be able to find in them the protection of Thy blessing; just as the rod of Aaron blossomed in the tabernacle of the Lord<sup>5</sup> and divided his progeny from the number of rebellious Jews, so mayest Thou absolve these, who are decked with the seal of St Peter, from all their sins, that on the day of judgment they may be separated from the ungodly and be set upon Thy right hand. Through Our Lord.’<sup>6</sup> Versicle: ‘There have come to us the days of penitence, for the redemption of sins and for the salvation of souls. Let us commit ourselves in great patience, through the weapons of God’s just power.’<sup>7</sup>

Then he who delivers the wallet says: ‘In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, take the scrip, or wallet, as the garb of thy pilgrimage, that thou mayest deserve to come through in sound health to the dwellings of the saints, whither thou desirest to proceed, and be found worthy to come safe back to us with rejoicing and exultation.’<sup>8</sup> Then, giving the staff, he says:

‘In the name of Jesus Christ receive thou also this staff to support thee on thy journey and in thy toil, that thou mayest be strong to vanquish all enemy hordes and come through to the dwellings of the saints, whither thou desirest to make thy pilgrimage; that, when thou shalt have completed the path of obedience, thou too mayest return to us safe and sound with rejoicing.’<sup>9</sup> Versicle: ‘Make safe Thy servants, etc. Send them help from the sanctuary, and out of Zion, etc.’<sup>10</sup> Almighty, everlasting God, maker and restorer of mankind, who didst command Abraham, Thy son, to go out of the land of his birth and to come into the land of the covenant which Thou hadst promised that Thou wouldst give to him; and didst with many marvellous signs make also the people of Israel come to worship Thee in the wilderness, we beg that Thou wilt pluck this man, who is proceeding to the dwellings of the saints, out of all dangers and set him free from the bonds of sin; and do Thou, who art the true way, order well their journey for those who trust in Thee that, among all the troubles of this life, this man may be protected by Thy assistance. Send to him Thy holy Angel whom Thou didst give as a companion to Tobias, Thy servant, that, wheresoever he shall stay, he may be for him a protector against the assaults of all enemies, visible and invisible, until he may be able to return to us again, joyful and unharmed.<sup>11</sup> Through Our Lord.’<sup>12</sup>

Life of man is a campaign on earth

Kings and queens have made pilgrimages

Form of blessing over pilgrims

Blessing of scrips and staffs

Rod of Aaron a token of obedience

Form of delivering the scrip

Form of delivering the staff

Prayer

The angel Raphael

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## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### On the blessings of alms of this same archbishop, for the living and the dead

**P**UT away thy bounty in the bosom of the poor and let it pray for you to the Lord; for, just as water will quench fire, so alms quench sin.’ Versicle: ‘Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of thine increase give unto the poor; for blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy. Out of the depths,’ as far as the end. ‘Lord have mercy. Christ have mercy. Lord have mercy. Our Father. And lead us not. Save Thy servants and Thy handmaids, O God, that trust in Thee. Send them help and from Zion protect them. Be to them, O Lord, a strong tower from the enemy. From the gate of hell, O Lord, deliver their souls. I believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. May he rest in peace. Lord, hear our prayer. The Lord be with you, and with thy spirit.<sup>1</sup> Creator and preserver of the human race, giver of spiritual grace, bestower of everlasting salvation, send Thy spirit upon these alms for the souls of Thy manservants and maidservants, that, armed with the power of heavenly protection, they may profit the bodies and souls of all those who taste of them, for their eternal safety and prosperity.’ Then he continues: ‘Repay in Thy kingdom, Lord, those who give these holy alms, Thou who art the recompenser of all good things, our blessed God for ever and ever.’<sup>2</sup>

It was also brought about by the ordinance of this most holy Birger, archbishop of Uppsala, and with the agreement of his suffragan bishops, that under the supervision of each parish church, dispersed as they are far and wide throughout the realm, houses of refuge to feed the needy should be set up by means of the collected alms of the parishioners.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, episcopal tithes should be given to hospitals for lepers and the infirm and, in addition to these, generous alms from the inhabitants living at a distance or nearby, gathered under certain stipulations and through the diligence of collectors. Provision was also made for the better maintenance of such places from the large donations and favours of princes.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, because of the wretchedness of the needy and the groaning of the poor, the Lord will one day arise to take vengeance on the heretics, who are

destroying all piety with their insatiable avarice.<sup>5</sup>

Alms quench sin

Form of blessing of alms

Prayer

Ordinance of archbishop of Uppsala concerning houses of needy

Episcopal tithes

Poor are cherished by allowances from Church and favours of princes

Vengeance on the heretics

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