

Watchwords for the Warfare of Life, Part 1 Words for the Battle-Field, V. The Enemy



Continued from [IV. The Armies of Heaven](#)

The Devil.

THE serpent denies the good-will of God to us, and endeavors to persuade that God does not mean us well.

THE devil tempted Eve to all sin when he tempted her to resist the will of God.

The Devil the only Enemy to be hated.

“BLESS THOSE THAT CURSE You.” How can ye do this? In no way better than by turning your eyes from the men who do you wrong, and fixing them on the wicked being who possesses them and urges them; on seeing how you can avenge yourselves, and cool your courage on him. He has not flesh and bones. He is a spirit. Therefore, as saith St. Paul, it is not against flesh and blood that ye have to fight, but against that spiritual villain above in the air, against the ruler of this dark, blind world.

WHEN it was once said to him, “I would fain know what the devil is like in character,” Dr. Martin said, “If you see the true likeness of the devil, and know what his character is, give good heed to all the commandments of God, one after another, and represent to yourself a suspicious, shameful, lying, despairing, abandoned, godless, calumnious man, whose mind and thoughts are all set on opposing God in every possible way, and working woe and harm to others. Thus you may see the character of the devil.”

FIRSTLY, in him is no fear, love, faith, and trust in God, that He is just, faithful, and true; but utter hatred, unbelief, despair, and blasphemy.

This is the devil’s head set against the first commandment of the First Table.

Secondly, a faithful Christian uses the name of God to good uses, spreads His

Word, calls on Him from the heart in need, praises Him, confesses Him.

But this wicked man does exactly the contrary; treats God's Word as a fable, blasphemes Him, curses men. There is the devil's mouth and speech.

Thirdly, a Christian holds the office of the preacher dear, hears and learns God's Word with earnestness and diligence, receives the Holy Sacrament according to Christ's order. The other does the contrary, despises the preacher's office, hears God's Word not at all or carelessly. This is the devil's way of hearing.

Then for the Second Table.

A true Christian honors and obeys, for God's sake, parents, magistrates, those who have the care of souls, masters and teachers. The other obeys not parents, serves and helps them not, nay, dishonors, despises, and troubles them, forsakes them in their need, is ashamed of them when they are poor, despises them when they are old, infirm, and childish; obeys not authorities. Again, a man of true heart envies not his neighbor, bears no ill-will against him, desires not revenge, has compassion when he is hurt, helps and protects him as much as he can. The other hates, envies, rejoices in his neighbor's troubles. There is the devil's grim, angry, and murderous heart.

A God-fearing man lives temperately and chastely; the other the contrary, in thought, word, and act.

A good man maintains himself by labor, trade, etc., lends, helps, and gives to the needy. The other takes every advantage. These are the devil's sharp claws.

Again, a good man speaks evil of no man—yea, even if he knows that his neighbor is guilty, he covers his sin with love. The other backbites, detracts, misinterprets, betrays. There is the devil's wicked will.

As our Lord God is *thesis decalogi*, (the thesis of the decalogue) so is the devil *antithesis decalogi*.

THE devil can indeed frighten, overwhelm, and kill; God alone can comfort and make alive. And that is His own prerogative and work. Therefore we do not know God at all unless we know Him as a Comforter of the wretched, troubled, and distressed, a Helper in need, who makes living and joyful. The true knowledge of God is to know that God is not a devil, i.e, an accuser, an enemy, but only, entirely, and simply God, that is, only a Saviour.

WE have more cause to rejoice than to mourn; for our hope is in God, who says; "*I live, and ye shall live also.*" But melancholy is born with us; so the spirit of melancholy, the devil comes and stimulates it; but the Lord our God lifts us up.

WHEN one is on the battle-field with the devil, and is fighting against him, it is not enough to say, "That is God's Word." For this is one of the devil's master-strokes, to snatch the weapon from our hands, especially when he takes us by surprise. This he has often tried on me. He knows that my heart is

always praying the Lord's Prayer, and yet he vexes me with the temptation that I have ceased to pray.

Let no one encounter him unless he prays the Lord's Prayer first. The devil is skillful, and we do not know the seven-hundredth part of what he knows. He has assailed Adam, Abraham, David, and others, and tormented them in manifold ways, and he knows where to attack us, where we are weak and he may give us a wound.

The Apostle Judas who betrayed Christ was throughout his life little assailed by the devil; but when the hour was come, he went securely forth on the devil's errand, and knew not whither.

HIS highest art is to make a law out of the Gospel; to represent the Lord Christ as a Judge and Accuser, and not as a Saviour, Mediator, High Priest, and Throne of Grace.

THE devil has a great advantage against us, inasmuch as he has a strong bastion and bulwark against us in our own flesh and blood.

THIS envious, poisonous, cunning spirit seeks to misinterpret and slander the good and godly works which a true Christian does through the grace of God, working and help of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he is called *diabolus*, that is, accuser and slanderer.

AT night, when I wake, the devil is there, and wants to dispute with me. The evil one would dispute with me *de justitia*; (of justice) and he is himself a villain, and would cast God out of heaven, and has crucified His Son.

THE devil has not indeed a doctor's degree, but he is highly educated and deeply experienced, and has moreover been practicing, trying, and exercising his art and craft now well nigh six thousand years. No one avails against him but Christ alone.

NO one can understand how to contend with him, unless he first pray with great earnestness. He is skilled in a thousand arts, and is far too strong and mighty for us, for he is the prince and god of this world.

THE devil seeks high things, looks to that which is great and high; scorns what is lowly. But the eternal merciful God reverses this, and looks on what is lowly. "I look on him who is poor and of a broken heart." But what is lifted up He lets go, for it is an abomination to Him.

THE devil, that lost spirit, cannot endure sacred songs of joy. Our passions and temptations, our complainings and our cryings, our Alas! and our Woe is me! please him well, but our songs and psalms vex him and grieve him sorely.

THE devil is a proud spirit. He cannot endure contempt. There is no better way to be quit of his temptations than by despising them (as Geroon says), just as when a traveller is attacked by a dog who would bite him; if the traveller goes quietly by, lets the dog howl and bark, and takes no heed of him, the dog does not bite him, and soon ceases to bark.

SATAN will not desist; he will contest every article of the faith in our hearts ere we depart this life, so bitterly opposed is he to the faith, which he well knows is the power and victory wherewith we overcome the world.

WE have the great devils who are doctors of theology (enemies of the First Table of the Decalogue), The Turks and Papists have little, insignificant devils to contend with, which are not theological but only juristical devils.

THE devil gives heaven before sin, and after we have sinned drives us to dismay of conscience, and to despair.

Christ does the contrary. He gives heaven after we have sinned, and peace to the troubled conscience.

ONE single devil is stronger and more cunning than all men, for they know us within and without, and compared with him we are only to be reckoned alphabet-scholars, poor and weak sinners, as we learn from experience.

FOR think only, if the devil in the beginning of the world was a bad creature, how cunning and skilful he must have become through such long practice, during which he has been assailing, and with all his power, without ever ceasing, has been tormenting Adam, Methuselah, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, the prophets, the Apostles, yea, the Lord Christ Himself, and all believers.

THE devil has vowed our death. I hope, however, when he kills me, he will bite a deaf nut (i.e., the kernel will be gone).

I SHOULD be so joyful that joy would bring me perfect health, and I could not be sick for mere joy. But the devil prowls incessantly about, makes me sad and careful, and when he cannot do it directly, does it through means; as for instance, through vexatious men.

THIS white devil, which urges men to commit spiritual sins, to sell them for righteousness, is far more dangerous than the black devil, which only tempts them to commit fleshly sins, which the world acknowledges to be sins.

SATAN'S power is greater than that of twelve Turkish Emperors; his knowledge greater than that of all men; his wickedness than that of the worst men; a powerful, able, subtle spirit.

THE kingdom of this world, or the devil's kingdom, is the kingdom of iniquity, ignorance, error, sin, death, blasphemy, desperation, and everlasting damnation. On the other side, the kingdom of Christ is the kingdom of equity, grace, light, remission of sins, peace, consolation, saving health, and everlasting life.

IT is strange that it should be commanded us, such weak flesh and blood as we are, to strive and fight with such a powerful spirit as the devil is, and that no other weapons should be placed in our hands, save only God's Word. This must irritate and vex such a great and mighty foe. But in such combats the hard thing is to recognize the devil as the devil.

God has ordered it thus, that when this mighty spirit is overcome simply by the faith of a good man, he may be all the more vexed and put to shame. That the "strong man armed" should be vanquished by one so weak, vexes him to the heart.

Warfare against all kinds of Evil—Warfare against the Devil.

"I HOLD," he said, "that Satan sends epidemics and sicknesses amongst men, for he is a prince of death. Therefore St. Peter saith, 'Christ healed all who were held captive by the devil'" To this end the devil uses natural means, poisonous air, &c., as a murderer uses a sword. So also God uses natural means to preserve man's health and life, as sleep and food.

A physician mends and repairs for our Lord God; he helps bodily, as we theologians spiritually, to make good what the devil has spoiled.

Once a burgomaster (mayor) asked me if it was contrary to God to use medicine. (Doctor Carlstadt having publicly preached that in sickness we should use no medicine, but pray that God's will be done.) I asked him if he ate when he was hungry. "Yes," said he. Then I said to him, "Surely then medicine, which is you may use as much God's creature as food and drink, and all which we use to preserve this life."

Luther's own Experience in such Conflicts.

"LAST night," he said, "when I awoke, the devil came and wanted to dispute with me, and cast it up at me that I was a sinner. Then I said: Say something new, devil. That I know well already. I have committed real, actual sins. But God has forgiven me for His dear Son's sake."

THE devil often casts up against me that great offenses have sprung from my doctrine. Sometimes he makes me heavy and sad with such thoughts. And when I answer that much good has also sprung thence, by a masterstroke, he can turn that against me. He is a swift, acute, cunning rhetorician.

How Luther met what he believed to be an Assault of the Devil.

ONCE, in the year 1521, when I had journeyed from Worms, and was imprisoned near Eisenach, in the castle of the Wartburg (in Patmos), I was far from any one, in a chamber to which no one was allowed to come save two young boys of the nobility, who twice a day brought me food and drink. Once they had brought me a bag of hazel-nuts, of which from time to time I ate, and had locked it up in a chest. At night when I went to bed, I put out the light. Then the hazel-nuts began to rattle against each other. But I did not heed. However, when I had been a little while asleep, such a clatter was made on the stairs, as if a score of platters had been thrown down from step to step, although I knew the staircase was guarded with chains and bolts, so that no one could come up. I rose and went to the head of the staircase and saw that all was closed. Then I said, "Oh, if it is only you, it does not matter." And committed myself to the Lord Christ, of whom it is written, "Thou hast put all things under His feet," and lay quietly down in the bed again.

THANK God, the devil has never been able altogether to vanquish me. He has

burnt himself out on the Lord Christ.

Sin.

SIN is essentially a departure from God.

THE first freedom is freedom from sin.

To Melanchthon, from Cobourg, during the Diet of Augsburg.

WHAT can the devil do worse than to kill us? I conjure thee, who art in all other things a good soldier, fight also against thyself, thy greatest enemy, who turnest Satan's arms against thyself.

WE have against us one-half of ourselves. The flesh striveth against the spirit.

THE recognition of sin is the beginning of salvation.

HELL is primarily forgetfulness, or hatred of God, for there reign a disordered, desolate, chaotic carefulness and self-love, unable to see the goodness and mercy of God; ever seeking escape and refuge from God.

ORIGINAL sin is the perversion of original righteousness.

WHERE sin is not acknowledged, there is no help nor remedy; for he who thinks himself whole when he is sick seeks no physician.

SIN is not forgiven that it may be no more felt, but that it may not be imputed.

UNKNOWN, hidden sins are the most dangerous. Therefore the prophet says, "Cleanse me from my secret faults."

THE sin against the Holy Ghost must be such a hidden, unacknowledged sin, not a coarse, worldly sin; but a deep spiritual sin. It must be a hardening in evil, or a contending against what is known to be truth, persevered in, without repentance until the end.

Especial Sins.

IT is a godless opinion and a vain dream to say that all sins are alike. St. Paul's sins were very different from Nero's.

Injustice.

TO THE ELECTOR FREDERICK, PLEADING FOR A POOR MAN HE DEEMED UNJUSTLY USED.

I KNOW well that no prince is so good but that he may deal too hastily with

some, through his officials.

David was the kernel of all princes ever on the earth; yet he did wrong to poor Mephibosheth, at the demand of Ziba; thinking, however, that he had done him no wrong.

A prince may be sure his rule will be marred by injustice; well for him who does the least. Therefore are mercy and beneficence the more necessary.

Give, and it shall be given unto you. Where *Date* (He gives) is rich, there *Dadbitur* (It will be given) will be the richer.

Your Electoral Highness may be sure that I will not abandon this poor man thus. I will rather, myself, go begging for him. And if that did not answer, I would rob and steal whatever lay next me, especially from the Elector of Saxony. For your Electoral Grace is bound to maintain him.

To the Count Albert of Mansfeld

(Luther's native Prince), warning him against oppressing his subjects.

PEACE and grace in the Lord, and my poor Pater Noster.

Your Grace will graciously listen to my poor sighs, if, on account of the speaking and crying which I hear daily concerning my poor countrymen, I cannot begin my letter to your Grace cheerfully; for it is no fault of mine, and the child's heart in me is wounded. Your Grace must surely feel how cold you have become, and given over to Mammon, thinking only how to grow very rich; also (as the complaints go), bearing altogether too hard and sharply on your subjects, taking them from their fathers' inheritance, and their goods, and intending to make them mere bondmen.

Which God will not suffer, or if He suffer it, He will also suffer the whole country to be impoverished to utter ruin; for all things are His gifts, which He can easily withdraw again; and He is not bound to give account, as Haggai saith, "Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes."

These things I write unto your Grace, as think for the last time; for the grave is nearer me now, perhaps, than people think, and I entreat that your Grace will deal more softly and graciously with your subjects, and let them abide; so shall your Grace also abide, through God's blessing, here and yonder. Otherwise you will lose both together, and be like him of whom Aesop's fable speaks, who killed the goose which every day laid him a golden egg, and thereby lost at once the golden egg, with the goose, and all the egg stock;—be like the dog in Aesop, who lost the piece of flesh in the water while he was snapping at the shadow. For certainly it is true, that he who will have too much gains less; whereof Solomon in the Proverbs writes much.

In brief, I have to do with your Grace's soul, which I cannot bear to have cast out of my care and prayer; for this is to me sure: to be cast out of the Church is to be cast out of heaven. And hereto constrains me not only the

command of Christian love, but also the heavy threat wherewith God has laden us preachers (Ezekiel 3d): "If thou warn not the sinner of his sin, and he die, I will require his soul at thine hands; for therefore have I set thee to be a watchman of souls."

Therefore, may your Grace take this needful warning in good part; for I cannot on your Grace's account suffer myself to be damned; but seek much rather to save you with myself, if it is by any means possible. But before God, am hereby free from guilt concerning this. Herewith I commend you to Him in all His grace and mercy. Amen.

Falsehood.

A LIE is like a snow-ball. The longer it is rolled, the larger it is.

Covetousness.

MAMMON has two virtues; the first, that he makes us secure when things go well, so that we live without the fear of God.

The second, that in adversity, when things go ill, he teaches us to tempt and fly from God, and to seek a false god.

IT was with good reason that God commanded through Moses that the vineyard and harvest were not to be gleaned to the last grape or grain; but something to be left for the poor. For covetousness is never to be satisfied; the more it has, the more it wants. Such insatiable ones injure themselves, and transform God's blessings into evil.

RICHES are the pettiest and least worthy gifts which God can give a man. What are they to God's Word? Yea, to bodily gifts, such as beauty and health; or to the gifts of the mind, such as understanding, skill, wisdom? Yet men toil for them day and night, and take no rest. Therefore our Lord God commonly gives riches to foolish people to whom He gives nothing else.

JEROBOAM'S calves remain in the world forever until the Last Day; for whatever a man places his confidence and trust in, setting God aside, that is to him like Jeroboam's calves, which he worships and invokes instead of the only true, living, eternal God, who alone can and will give counsel and help in all need.

All are worshiping these calves who trust to their own skill, wisdom, strength, holiness, riches, honor, power, or to any league, defense, or fortress, or in brief to anything, be it called what it may, on which the world builds and trusts. For such trust in transitory creatures is the real idolatry.

LIES drowned and overwhelmed in the sea of covetousness, deeper than the mountains under the flood; these lay only fifteen ells deep in the water, but she lies fifteen miles deep under the waves of avarice.

THE Jews suffered themselves to dream, and thought that the kingdom of Christ would be a worldly kingdom; as also the Apostles in John 14: "*Lord, how is it*

that thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" "We thought the whole world should see Thy glory; that Thou shouldst, be Caesar, and we twelve kings, amongst whom the kingdoms should be divided; that each of us should have had six disciples for princes, counts, and nobles; these would be the seventy-two disciples—for that was the number." Thus had the dear Apostles already beautifully parceled out the land, according to Platonic dreams and human reason.

But Christ describes His kingdom far otherwise: "He who loveth Me, and keepeth my Word, Shall be loved of my Father; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

IT is a terrible evil, that we see daily before our eyes, how eager a thirsty man is to drink, and a hungry man to eat, although a drink of water and a piece of bread can only keep off thirst or hunger an hour or two; whilst on the contrary no one, or scarcely any one, is eager for this most precious Physician, although He tenderly allures all to Him, saying, *"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink,"* and gives food and drink which are imperishable, and endure to eternal life.

WE know, thank God, that Christ has overcome the world, with her prince the devil; that sin may no more have dominion over us, nor death swallow us up. At which we should, in reason, be far more joyful than the children of the world over temporal prosperity, riches, honor, power. For these, be they as much as they may be compared with the eternal riches which Christ gives, are indeed mere trifling, contemptible fragments and crumbs.

IF we have Him, the dear Lord, we are indeed rich and happy enough, and ask not for their pomp, glory, and wealth. Too often, indeed, we lose Him, and consider not that He is ours, and we are His; especially when, in time of need, He seems to hide His face for a moment. But He says, *"I am with you alway to the end of the world."* This is our best treasure.

WHERE the Gospel is, there is poverty. In olden times men could richly endow whole convents; now they will give nothing. Superstition, false doctrine, and hypocrisy give money enough. Truth goes begging.

Carefulness.

"THEY SOW NOT, NEITHER DO THEY REAP, NOR GATHER INTO BARNES."

Let the Lord build the house, and be the householder. He who filleth heaven and earth can surely fill one house.

If thou dost not look to Him who should fill the house, every corner of it must indeed be empty to thee. But if thou art looking to Him, thou perceivest not if there be an empty corner. To thee all seems full, and indeed all is full. If not, it is the defect of thy vision, as with the blind, who see not the sun.

Not that labor is forbidden, but that God gives success. For if thou wert to plough a hundred years, thou couldst not bring one stalk out of the earth. But God, without work of thine, whilst thou art asleep, creates out of the

little grain a stalk, and on the stalk many ears, as many as He wills.

The animals do not work in order to earn their food; yet each has its work. The bird flies and sings, and hatches its eggs; that is its work. Horses carry men on the road, and to the battle; sheep give us wool, milk, and cheese; that is their work; yet that feeds them not. The earth freely brings forth grass and feeds them, through God's blessing. Thus Christ tells us to behold the fowls of the air; they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet God feedeth them. That is, they do their appointed work, but not thereby are they fed.

So also must man work. But let him know, it is Another that feeds him, namely, God blessing his work.

This is the signification of it all. God commanded Adam to eat bread in the sweat of his brow, and wills that men shall work, and without work will give them nothing. On the other hand, by our work, in itself, He gives us nothing, but only of His free goodness and blessing; that labor may be our discipline in this life, to overcome the flesh.

You say, Who places the silver and gold in the mountains, that men may find them? Who places in the field those great hidden treasures which spring out of it in corn, wine, and all manner of fruits, whereby all creatures live? Does man's labor create these? Man's labor indeed finds them; but God has laid the treasures there, and He bestows them.

Thus the ruler must indeed watch over the city, close the gates, guard tower and wall, put on armor, lay up stores, as if there were no God. And the householder must work as if his work in itself were to nourish the household. But he who believes in God is not careful for the morrow, but labors joyfully and with a great heart.

"For He giveth His beloved, as in sleep." They must work and watch, yet never be careful or anxious, but commit all to Him, and live in serene tranquility; with a quiet heart, as one who sleeps safely and quietly.

(The last letter to her but one.)

To the holy, care-laden lady, Katharin Lutherin, my gracious, dear Wife.

WE thank you very heartily for the great care for us, which has prevented your sleeping; for since the time that you have taken this care on you, the fire all but consumed us in our inn, breaking out outside our chamber door, and yesterday (no doubt in consequence of these cares of yours), a stone all but fell on our head and crushed us, as in a mouse-trap; for in our room, two days since, the lime and plaster crumbled away. For this also we should have had to thank your saintly cares, if the dear holy angels had not hindered. I am anxious lest, if thou dost not give up thy anxieties, the earth itself may swallow us up, and all the elements turn against us.

Dost thou learn the Catechism, and the Creed? Do thou pray, and leave God to care. It is said, "Cast your care on Him, for He careth for you."

Temptation, and Depression of Spirit.

For one heavy in Heart.

FIRST of all, let her not look at herself, nor judge herself by her own feelings, but grasp the Word, and hang upon it, and plant herself on it, in defiance of all, and direct all her feelings, and all the thoughts of her heart towards it.

Let her also lift up her voice in praise. A strong medicine lies therein. For the evil spirit of heaviness is not to be chased away by sad words and complainings, but by the praise of God, whereby the heart is made glad.

YOUR distress is, that God Almighty knows from eternity who will be saved. Which is true; for he knows all things, the drops in the sea, the stars in heaven, the roots, branches, twigs, and leaves of every tree. He has numbered the hairs of our heads. From this you conclude that do what you will, good or bad, God knows already whether you will be saved or not. And further, you think more of damnation than of salvation, and therefore you despair, and know not how God is minded toward you.

Wherefore I, as a servant of my dear Lord Jesus Christ, write you this, that you may know how God the Almighty is minded toward you.

God, the Almighty, does know all things; so that all works and thoughts in all creatures must happen according to His will. But His earnest will, and mind, and decree, ordered from eternity, is *"that all men shall be saved,"* and shall become partakers of eternal joy. *"God willeth not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live."*

If, therefore, He wills that sinners, wherever they live and wander under the broad, high heavens, should be saved, will you, by a foolish thought suggested by the devil, sunder yourself from all these, and from the grace of God?

God the Father Himself, with His own finger, points out to you how He is minded toward you, when with loud clear voice He cries, *"This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him."*

And even if you were ever so hard and deaf, and as a despairing man turned to stone, could not look up to heaven, nor hear God the Father calling to you on those heights, yet can you not fail to hear the Son, who stands in the highway by which every one must pass, and as with a mighty trumpet calls, *"Vesete!" "Come, come!"*

But who are those who are to come? *"Ye that are weary and heavy-laden."* What kind of a company is that? *"Heavy-laden;"* as if He knew it all well, and would take our burdens and loads on His shoulder, and not only help us, but altogether rid us of them.

To Hieronymus Weller.

IN AN ATTACK OF DEPRESSION.

THEREFORE, before all things, thou shalt firmly hold, that those and evil thoughts are not from God, but from the devil; because God is not the God of sadness, but the God of consolation and gladness, as Christ Himself says, "*He is not the God of the dead but of the living.*" But what is to live save to be glad in the Lord?

WHEREFORE use thyself at once to repel such thoughts, saying, "*The Lord hath not sent thee.*" Hard is the fight at the beginning; but use makes it easier. It is not thou alone who endureth such thoughts, but all the saints; yet they have fought and conquered. So also thou, yield not to evil, but go forth bravely. **The highest valor in this fight is not to look at these thoughts nor to investigate them, but to disperse them like a flock of geese, and to pass by.** (Emphasis mine.) He who has learnt this has conquered; he who has not learnt it will be conquered. For to gaze at them, and dispute with them until they cease, or freely yield, is but to irritate and to strengthen them.

Let Israel be an example to thee, who overcame the fiery serpents, not by gazing or by struggling, but by averting their gaze, and looking at the brazen serpent. This is the true and certain victory in this combat. Therefore take heed, my Jerome, that thou suffer them not to linger in thy heart. Thus a certain wise man replied to one so tempted, who said "Such and such sad thoughts have come into my mind," by saying, "Then let them go again." And another, as a wise oracle said, "Thou canst not prevent the birds from flying above thy head; but thou canst prevent their building their nests in thy hair."

To Barbara Lischnerinn.-1530.

VIRTUOUS dear Lady:—Your dear brother, Hieronymus, Weller has told me how you are troubled with temptations about the eternal foreseeing of God. That is truly grievous to me. Christ, our Lord, will redeem you from this. Amen.

For I know this sickness well, and have lain sick to eternal death in that hospital.

First, you must grasp firmly in your own heart that such thoughts come from the devil and are his fiery darts.

Secondly, when such thoughts come, you should ask yourself "In what commandment is it written that I should think of these things; Thou, O devil, wouldst have me care for myself, but I must cast my care on God, for He careth for me."

Among all the commands of God, this is the highest that we should picture to ourselves His dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is to our hearts the daily and most excellent mirror wherein we see how dear God holds us.

Here we learn God's Providence, by believing in Christ. If you believe, you are called; if you are called, you are also predestined. Let none tear

Christ, this mirror and throne of grace, from your heart.

TO the heavy temptations concerning eternal election which so deeply distress many, nowhere is such a solution to be found as in the Wounds of Christ. "This is My beloved Son; hear Him. In Him you will find Who and what I am, and what I will; and nowhere else in heaven or on earth."

The Father has fixed a sure and firm foundation on which we can firmly rest—Jesus Christ our Lord, through Whom we must enter the Kingdom of Heaven. For He, and none else, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

To Valentine Hausmann.—1532.

I HAVE heard of your heaviness through inward terrors; but you must not distress yourself much on this account; for God is wonderful in His way toward us, so that things seem to us often bad and hurtful which are really most useful to us, although we understand not how. Who knows what worse might have come to you, if God had not thus taken you under His discipline, and kept you in His fear? Therefore you must not be impatient although your faith be not strong. For St. Paul says the weak in faith are not to be rejected. God is not a Father who casts out sick and diseased children. If He were, He would keep none. Therefore you should say to Him, "Dear Father, if it pleases Thee thus to chastise me, I will be content to have it so. Thy will be done; only give me patience."

For the rest, I know not how you are meeting this; for you should be calling on God and praying; especially when you feel the terror is coming, fall on your knees and cry to heaven; and although the prayer seem to you in vain, and too cold, do not for that give over. Strike a firm stroke, and pray so much the more earnestly, the more it seems to you in vain.

For you must learn to fight and not to keep still and gaze, or suffer whatever this temptation inflicts, until it ceases of itself. For that way will only gain strength. You must pray mightily, and call aloud, and with ringing words cry out the Our Father.

And before all things you have to grasp in your heart the conviction that this is from the devil, whom God will have us resist.

But if, indeed, you cannot pray, let something be read to you from the Psalms or the New Testament, with a clear voice; and listen to it. For you must use yourself, at such times, not to wrestle with the anguish in your own thoughts, without God's Word; you should hear the voice of prayer and God's Word together.

For without God's Word the foe is too strong for us. But prayer and the Word of God he cannot endure.

To Jonas von Stockhausen—1532.

IT has been shown me by good friends how the malignant enemy is assailing you sorely with weariness of life, and longing for death.

You know we must be obedient to God, and diligently guard ourselves against disobedience to His will. Now you are sure God has given you life, and has not yet willed you to be dead. Therefore you can have no doubt that such disobedient thoughts come from the devil; and that with all your might you must tear them out.

Life was sour and bitter to our Lord Christ; yet He would not die except by the Father's will, and fled from death and held to life whilst He could, and said, "*My hour is not yet come.*"

Elias, indeed, and Jonas, and other prophets, called and cried for death, from great anguish and impatience of life; cursed even the day of their birth. Yet they had to live and bear this weariness with all their strength, until their hour was come.

Such words and examples as the Holy Ghost's words and warnings you must faithfully follow, and the thoughts which drive you thence you must cast out and spit upon. And although this may be sour and bitter to do, you should but think of yourself as one bound and held captive with chains, out of which you must twist and writhe yourself, with sweat of anguish. For the devil's darts, when they pierce so deep, are not to be torn out with laughter, or without labor. They must be wrenched out by main force. You must gnash your teeth against these thoughts, and set your face as a flint to do God's will, harder than iron or anvil.

Yet the best counsel of all is that you should scorn these temptations, and make as if you did not feel them, and think of something else, and say to the devil, "Come, then, devil! let me alone! I cannot listen to thy thoughts. I have to travel, eat, drink, ride, or do this or that."

Herewith I commend you to our dear Lord, the only Saviour and true Conqueror, Jesus Christ.

To the Lady von Stockhausen.

THE devil is an enemy to both you and your husband, because you hold Christ, his enemy, dear.

See that you do not leave your husband a moment alone. Solitude is pure poison for him. It would do no harm to read to him histories, news, and all kinds of strange things, even if they were gloomy or false tidings and tales, about the Turks, Tartars, and the like, if he could be made to laugh and jest about it. And thereon soon follow with comforting words of the Scriptures.

Whatever you do, do not let him be alone or dull, so that he sink into thought. Never mind if he is angry at this. Pretend that you are suffering, and complain about it.

Christ, who is the cause of the devil's enmity and your heart-trouble, will help you. Only hold fast to this, that you are the apple of His eye. Who touches you touches Him.

To Johann Schlaginhausen.— 1533.

I HEAR with pain that you are sometimes troubled in mind, although, indeed, Christ is as near to you as yourself, and will surely do you no harm, since He has shed His blood for you. Dear friend, give honor to this good, faithful Man, and believe that He holds you dearer, and has more favor to you than Doctor Luther, and all Christians.

What you trust us to be, trust Him to be far more.

For what we do, we do at His bidding. But He who bids us do it, Himself does all unbidden, from His own spontaneous goodness and kindness.

To Joachim, Prince of Anhalt.—1534.

WE know not what we should pray for as we ought, but He, as a faithful Father, knows and sees well how we should pray, and does according to what He knows, not according to how we pray.

Thus indeed a father must deal with his child, not giving what the child asks, but what he knows the child should ask. Although the child weeps for it, that does not hurt him; nor is the child's request less dear to the father because he does not give in the way the child desires.

So also, often, the physician must not do what the patient wishes, and yet he holds the sick man none the less dear for his sick longings and for the request he cannot grant.

* * * *

I counsel you also (as a remedy against this depression) to ride, hunt, and occupy yourself as a young man should, in good company, who can be merry with you in a godly and honorable way.

To Johann Mantel.

SERVANT OF THE CHURCH AT WITTENBERG.

AS to what you write about temptation and sadness on account of death, you know how in our faith we express and confess that the Son of God suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified and died to this end, that He might, for all who believe in Him, take away the power from death, yea altogether and utterly abolish it. Dear friend, what great matter is it that we shall die, when we really think that He, the dear Lord has died, and has died for us? His death is the true, only death which should so possess and fill our hearts, senses and thoughts, that it should henceforth be to us no otherwise than as if now nothing was living any more, not even the dear sun, but that all died with the dear Lord; yet died in such a way that all with Him shall rise again at that blessed day.

In this His death and life, our death and life should sink and be swallowed up, as those who shall live with Him forever.

And truly from the beginning of the world He has been before us with His death; and to even the end of the world. He waits for us when we shall depart out of this brief, poor life, and He shall welcome us and receive us into His eternal kingdom.

To a Pastor.

ALAS, we live in the kingdom of the devil, *ab extra*, therefore we cannot hear or see any good, *ab extra*. But we live in the blessed Kingdom of Christ *ab intra*. There we see, though as in a glass darkly, the exceeding unutterable riches of the grace and glory of God.

Therefore, in the name of the Lord, let us break through, press forward, and fight our way through praise and blame, through evil report and good report, through hatred and love, until we come into the blessed kingdom of our dear Father, which Christ the Lord has prepared for us before the beginning of the world. There only shall we find joy. Amen.

GOD forbid that the offense of the Cross should be taken away; which thing would come to pass if we would preach that which the prince of this world and his members would gladly hear. Then we should have a gentle devil, a gracious pope, and merciful princes. But because we set forth the benefits and the glory of Christ, they persecute us and spoil us both of our goods and lives.

I DID not learn my theology all at once; but I have had to search ever deeper and deeper into it. To this many conflicts have brought me, for no one can understand the Holy Scriptures without exercise and conflict. Fanatics and pretenders, each the true adversary, namely the devil, who with his buffetings drove me to study the Holy Scriptures. If we have no such devil, we are only speculative theologians, who rove about in their own thoughts, speculating that thus and thus it must be.

Yet no good art or handicraft is to be learned without exercise. What kind of a physician would he be who perpetually did nothing but roam about the schools? He must bring his art into practice, and the more he has to do with nature, the more he sees and experiences how imperfect his art is.

It is a great grace of God to be able to say of one text in the Bible, "That I know for certain to be true."

I know, old and learned Doctor that I am (or ought to be), that I have not yet mastered the Lord's Prayer. Without exercise and experience no one can become truly learned.

THIS will not be thy greatest nor thy last temptation. The wisdom of God is, as it were, playing with thee and training thee, if thou livest, for real war.

IT is a hard thing to say always, I am God's child; and to be comforted and refreshed by the great grace and mercy of the heavenly Father. To do this from the heart is not what every one can do, Therefore, without exercise and experience, no one can learn the faith in true purity.

THE Holy Spirit cheers us, and teaches us to despise death and all dangers. He says (in us), "If God wills not that I should live, then I will die; if He wills not that I should be rich, I will be poor." But the evil spirit saddens and terrifies, at the last, after making secure and self-satisfied. Joyfulness comes from God, depression from the devil.

CONFLICT makes us live in the fear of God, walk circumspectly, pray without ceasing, grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and learn to understand the power of the Word.

Therefore be not faint-hearted, nor dismayed; but take such conflicts for a sure sign that thou hast a gracious God, since thou art being fashioned into the likeness of His Son; and doubt not that thou belongest to the great and glorious brotherhood of all the Saints, of whom St. Peter says, "Resist the devil, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren which are in the world."

THE essence of temptation is that we forget the present, and covet the future, like Eve in Paradise.

ALL do not suffer the same temptations. Indeed they could not. Some must be knuckles and bones which can sustain and keep together the flesh. Just as in the body of man, if all were flesh it would fall into a shapeless mass. The knuckles and nerves hold the flesh together. So, in the Christian Church, there must be some who can sustain good buffetings from the devil; such as we three, Philip Melanchthon, Doctor Pommer, and I. But all could not bear it. Therefore, in the Church we pray one for another. Prayer does all things.

DOCTOR MARTIN said to Schlainhaeffen, "Fear not, neither be dismayed. All will turn to the best for you; your trial will work for God's glory, and for the profit and health of us all.

"It is impossible that man's heart can know God truly and keep Him in mind without the cross and temptation. Believe me, if you had not such a good stone in God the Father's house, you would not have these conflicts."

ONLY believe firmly God will make an end of this trial. For He calls that which is not, that it may be. As I have myself experienced in sore temptations, which so exhausted and tortured my body that I could scarcely breathe, went about like a shadow, like a corpse, withered, parched up, and no man could comfort me. All to whom I spoke, said "I know not." No confessor could understand anything of it, so that I said, "Am I, then, alone? Is it I only who must be thus sorrowful in spirit and thus assailed?"

Dr. Staupitz said to me at table, seeing me so sad and smitten down, "Why are you so sad, brother Martin?" Then I said, "Whither shall I flee?" He answered, "Ah! know you not that such temptation is good for you? Otherwise no good could come of you."

Ten years ago, when I was alone, God comforted me through His dear angels, with my own striving and writing.

Therefore fear not; you are not alone.

BISHOP ALBERT of Mainz used to say that "the human heart is like a mill-stone in a mill. If you place corn on it, it spins round, grinds, and crushes, and makes it into meal. If there is no corn it still spins round, and grinds itself, so that it becomes thinner and smaller. So the human heart must have work to do; if it has not the work of its calling to fulfill, the devil comes with temptation, heaviness, and sadness, till the heart devours itself with sorrow."

In his own Sickness.

"AH, how gladly would I now die. For I am now weary and worn out, and have a peaceful and joyful conscience and heart. But know, as soon as I recover, care, toil, and temptation will not keep outside. For through much tribulation we must enter into the Kingdom of God."

IN the year 1538, on the night of the 2nd of August, Doctor Martin Luther had a severe pain in his arm, as if it were being torn. Then he said, "Thank God! That we can say, for it is an easier thing to yield up our money, or our skin. But when spiritual temptations come, that we could say, 'Cursed be the day wherein I was born!' that does give pain! In such trial was Christ, in the Garden: '*Father take this cup from Me!*' There was the will against the will."

DOCTOR MARTIN once said to a very desponding man, "Oh, friend, what art thou doing? Canst thou do nothing but look at thy sins, thy death, and damnation? Turn thine eyes quite the opposite way, and look at Him who is called Christ. Of Him it is written that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died, and was buried, descended into hell, on the third day rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven. Why, dost thou think, did all this happen? That thou mightest be comforted against death, and sin. Therefore cease to fear and to be dismayed. Verily thou hast no cause. If Christ were not there, and had not done all this for thee, then indeed thou mightest fear."

SEE what a life the Lord Christ led whilst He went about on earth. He was not much alone; there was ever a noise and stir of much people around Him. He was never alone, save when He was praying. So He has promised, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

KING DAVID, when he was alone and idle, and went not forth to the war, fell into temptation. God created man for society, and not for solitude.

DR. LUTHER said that often when he was tempted, a word from a good friend had comforted him: "For when, in the year 1535, I was much troubled about something, and cast down, Doctor Pommer said to me, 'Our Lord God doubtless thinks in heaven, "What shall I do more with this man? I have given him so many great and noble gifts, and still he will despair of my goodness."'"

"These words were a glorious, great comfort to me, and took fast hold of my heart, as if an angel from heaven had spoken them to me, although Dr. Pommer thought not to comfort me with them."

IN the year 1541 Doctor Luther was recalling his spiritual temptation in his sickness, when for fourteen days he neither ate, drank, nor slept. "At that time I disputed with our Lord God in wild impatience, and reproached Him with His promises, Then God taught me to understand the Holy Scriptures aright; for when all goes according to our will we do not know much of God's Word. Now God will not have us be too impatient; therefore in His Holy Scriptures He requires us frequently to hope and wait on Him, as in the Psalm, 'I wait on the Lord from one morning watch to another. For if God does not help speedily, yet He gives grace to sustain temptation. So Job says, '*Though He slay me I will trust in Him,*' just as if he said, 'Though it seems as if Thou hadst turned away Thy face from me, yet I will never believe Thou art my enemy.'"

A NUN, who was sorely tempted, and had no other weapons wherewith to drive away the devil, said, "I am a Christian; that word contains everything in itself."

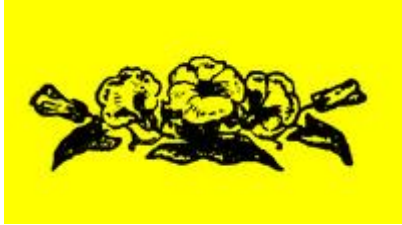
GOD has set a firm ground for us to tread on, and thereby to ascend into heaven, even Jesus Christ. He only is the way and door by which we come to the Father. But we want to begin our building with the roof; we despise the foundation, and therefore we must fall.

AH, if that great man, Paul, were living now, how glad I should be to learn from him what his thorn in the flesh was. It was not a beloved Thekla, as the legends say. Oh no! It was not a sin. I know not what it was.

The Book of Job is full of such temptations. His friends and comforters were sensible, prudent, wise, just, and pious people; yet they did not touch the point. For around this turns the whole debate in the book. "I am just and innocent," says Job. They say, on the contrary, "Ah! that is of the devil, to say that thou art good and just. Then God must be unjust!" Round this question revolves the whole controversy. I hold that the Book of Job is a history, afterward worked into a poem, concerning things which were actually experienced by someone; although not uttered in the words in which it is described.

It is a good book, and therein we have a choice picture and example of an assaulted and troubled Christian. For this book was not written with reference to Job, or any individual, but is a mirror for all suffering Christians. We see in it what kind of a process God is carrying on through the trials of the Saints. For when it is only the devil and the Chaldeans, Job can be patient, and says, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." But when it is a question of God's anger, he can no longer bear it, and falls into perplexity and disputing about the happiness of the ungodly.

But he worked his way out of this perplexity again and said, "I know that Thou art good." Although it is hard to say it. In brief, all men have flesh and blood in them which murmurs and sets itself against God; for it is hard to believe, when we are in trial, that God is gracious to us.



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