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MARTIN LUTHER'S CONCEPT OF THE DEVIL

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Lester Zeitler
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Approved by:



Advisor



Reader

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CHAPTER I.

THE INTRODUCTION

The Problem

One aspect of the faith and life of Dr. Martin Luther which is often neglected is his belief in a personal devil. His belief in good and evil spirits plays a greater part in Luther's teaching than present day theology cares to emphasize.¹ The belief in the devil has now been abandoned by most "enlightened men." They leave the belief in the devil to what they call the backward blind masses. The fact of the matter is that the denial of the devil is the most successful snare Satan ever laid for our souls.² Disbelief in the devil cannot be reconciled with faith in God. To deny the devil is to discount the Deity. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, well realized the need of the belief in the devil and issued to his followers the famous cry: "No devil, no God."³ The fact is that the whole Christian plan of salvation is based on the belief in the devil. The entire body of Christian doctrine is imperiled by the denial of the personal devil.⁴

¹H. H. Kraus, The Theology of Luther (London: James Clark and Co., 1947), p. 41.

²Maximilian Rudwin, The Devil in Legend and Literature (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, c.1931), p. 105.

³Ibid.; p. 106.

⁴Ewald Plass, This is Luther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1948), p. 109.

A clear understanding of the nature and work of the devil makes a materialistic and socialistic concept of religion impossible because it stresses faith as its chief factor. It is the opinion of the writer that much of the so-called American Protestant preaching of today, which stresses the social and material gospel, is due in no small measure to its de-emphasis of the belief in the personal devil. Although Lutheran pulpits have in general upheld the tradition of the Reformation, in this age of science and psychology, they, nevertheless, are in constant danger of realizing evil not as the embodiment of Satan, but as a mere cosmic principle. When this happens, the Biblical meaning of sin and the wrath of God is destroyed; and if that is not meaningful, neither is the grace of God and the redemption of Christ.

The Purpose and Scope

In view of the dangers mentioned above, the writer thought it beneficial to investigate as thoroughly as possible the concept of the devil. The devil has played a tremendous role in legend and literature. But in order to limit the investigation and to keep it on a theological level and in line with Lutheran tradition, Luther's concept of the devil was chosen as the topic for the thesis. Luther, the man of God after whom our church body was named, perhaps experienced more personal contacts with the devil than any other man in history outside of Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul. Possibly the devil was more noticeably active in the days of

Luther because he sensed how much was at stake, even as it is evident from the Gospels that he exerted himself particularly also in the days of Christ, when the Gospel was being established.⁵

It must be kept in mind that this thesis does not propose to relate and discuss in great detail every minute phase of Luther's concept of the devil. Such a study would take several years, for thoughts concerning the devil permeated nearly every area of Luther's writings. The St. Louis edition of Luther's Works devotes nearly twenty-two columns to an index registering Luther's comments on the devil.⁶ This thesis then may be more properly called a general overview of Luther's demonology.

Essentially, the thesis divides itself into two parts, although the chapter headings would seem to indicate four. In Chapter Two the writer discusses the factors which influenced Luther's thinking on the devil. It cannot be denied that Luther's belief in the devil had its outgrowth in the Bible, in his own character and personal faith, and in the popular beliefs of the time. In Chapters Three, Four, and Five, the writer attempts to relate Luther's teaching about the devil to the remainder of Christian doctrine. At the

⁵Ibid.

⁶Saemmtliche Schriften, edited by J. G. Walch, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), XXIII B, Cols. 1781-1802.

same time, it is also an attempt to systematize Luther's concept of the devil, although Luther himself never did this. He wrote a sermon on angels, but he did not write one systematizing the nature and work of the devil. However, his exposition of Ephesians 6 comes very close to a general systematic presentation.⁷ In this second part of the thesis the writer discusses Luther's concept of the devil's person and activity. It should be noted here that Luther considers the devil a very powerful active spirit, but one who is always in God's control. This concerns Chapters Three and Four. In the final chapter the "sola Scriptura, sola gratia, and sola fide" of Luther are brought to light in his concept of God's victory over the devil.

The Method

Very little has been written in the English language on the subject here involved. Although nearly every English volume on Luther's theology has a paragraph or two on the subject, this is not enough to investigate ably a topic of this nature. Charles Hay's translation of Koestlin's Luther's Theology was rather helpful in the preparation of the thesis, even though his presentation of the problem is scattered under many different aspects of doctrine. In the main it

⁷Ibid., IX, Cols. 839-843.

is treated with the doctrine of "Creation and Providence."⁸ On the other hand, Theodosius Harnack, in his Luther's Theologie, discusses Luther's concept of the devil quite extensively in the section on God's wrath.⁹ Thoughts concerning the devil are also found in other sections of his two-volume work. One of the most helpful volumes on the subject was Der Teufel Bei Martin Luther by Hermannus Obendiek. It is, to the knowledge of the writer, the only systematic presentation of Luther's concept of the devil. Obendiek works with acute skill, quoting at times from Harnack and Koestlin, and portraying some insights into Luther's demonology about which they are silent.

The main research for the thesis, however, was done with primary source material. The indices of the Weimar and St. Louis editions of Luther's Works served as the starting posts from which all other exploration took place. Wherever possible and whenever time permitted, the references were checked with the Weimar edition of Luther's Works. The writer took special note of the exposition of the Bible passages which concerned the nature and work of the devil.¹⁰

⁸ Julius Koestlin, The Theology of Luther, translated from the second German edition by Rev. Charles Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1897), II, 321-337.

⁹ Theodosius Harnack, Luther's Theologie (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927), I, 251-262.

¹⁰ 1 John 3:8; 2 Pet. 2:4; Eph. 6:12; 1 Pet. 5:8-9; 1 Pet. 3:19; Gen. 3:1-5; Matt. 4:1-11; et al.

In the thesis itself, however, the passages are not treated individually, but are assumed into the general content.

Summarizing, then, the thesis is to cover the general area of Luther's demonology. The purpose of the study is to re-emphasize the necessity of a belief in the personal devil on the part of modern man and especially the modern preacher in the light of Luther's theology, faith, and life. The writer also includes himself. This must be done so that the power of the "sola Scriptura, sola gratia, and sola fide" is preserved for Christianity.

CHAPTER II

THE FACTORS OF INFLUENCE

Dr. Martin Luther's concept of the devil was influenced by three factors: (1) Luther's keen insight into Holy Scripture; (2) Luther's personal faith and character; and (3) the popular beliefs of the time. Scholars are pretty well agreed that all of these factors played some part in Luther's demonology, but they are not agreed as to which factor was the most influential. For example, the pro-Lutheran scholar Hermannus Obendiek¹ considers Luther's insight into Holy Scripture and his personal faith the most influential, while the Roman Catholic scholar Hartmann Grisar² definitely emphasizes Luther's character and the popular beliefs of the time. The answer to the problem, however, lies in all three factors, each playing its part to make the whole Luther.

The Holy Scripture

The Word of God, in whatever form, whether a simple promise, or a promise embodied in a sacrament, or a series of revelations made by God's Spirit to the soul of man, as

¹Hermannus Obendiek, Der Teufel Bei Martin Luther (Furche-Verlag G.m.b.H.: Berlin NW 7, 1931), p. 33.

²Hartmann Grisar, Martin Luther, adapted from the Second German Edition by Frank J. Eble, edited by Arthur Preuss (St. Louis: Herder Book Co., c.1930), pp. 485-490.

recorded in the Bible, is the grand reality which in Luther's view dwarfed all other realities on earth.³ The statement of Occam concerning Scripture may also be applied to Luther: "What is not contained in the Scriptures, or cannot with necessary and obvious consistency be deduced from the contents of the same, no Christian needs to believe."⁴ Luther was very well at home in the Bible. His voluminous writings bear this out. It is said that Luther could nearly recite the 1513 Latin translation of the Bible from memory.⁵ This is all the more reason to believe that Luther garnered his Christian doctrine from the clear word of Scripture.

Luther's faith in the existence of the personal devil is no exception. His belief in a personal devil is proved to have been based on grim facts by dozens of Bible passages.⁶ In this connection Ewald Plass comments:

To call this "superstition" is unworthy of a theologian and a Christian. If no such being as a devil actually exists, what are we to make of Christ's testimony? Did He not know better? Then He is an unsafe Guide. Did He consciously deceive people?⁷

It is also interesting to note that German folklore approached the devil with a ghastly, nearly unconquerable fear, whereas

³Ewald Plass, This Is Luther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1948), p. 52.

⁴Ibid., p. 53.

⁵Obendiek, op. cit., p. 112.

⁶Plass, op. cit., p. 109.

⁷Ibid.

Luther's approach to the devil was one of serious determination. This serious determination on the part of Luther is evidence of the fact that his concept of the devil was founded on the Bible.⁸ Edgar Carlson, propounding the views of the Swedish theologians, maintains also that "Luther's interest in the devil is derived from his interest in the Gospel."⁹

On the other hand, the Roman Catholic scholar Grisar asserts that Luther's "dreadful" concept of the devil was a result of his departure from the Scripture and the Church.¹⁰ This position is certainly not tenable. In the first place, Luther did not depart from Scripture, but he went to Scripture. Secondly, the devil was just as active in the members of the Roman Church as he was in Luther. However, Luther combated him with determination through the Word and sacraments, faith, and prayer, whereas the Romanists tackled him rather fearfully through the Virgin Mary, the saints, and other devices. The following words capture some of this spirit: "Relics, rosaries, proven amulets, holy water, the sign of the cross, and canonical adjurations, reduced him to a state of impotence, wherein he was fain to vent his

⁸Obendiek, op. cit., p. 244.

⁹Edgar Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1948), p. 50.

¹⁰Grisar, op. cit., p. 490.

displeasure by sulphurous fumes as he fled."¹¹ Thus Luther's concept of the devil was influenced not by a departure from the Scripture and the Church, but by his recognition of Scripture as the "sola Scriptura" presenting to man the perfect revelation of God, man, and devil.

Personal Faith and Character

A careful analysis of Luther's work and way through life makes it very evident that his personal experience of the faith is indeed the decisive factor which has been the source of his influence upon succeeding generations. In his case the man and his work become as one. It can be stated without exaggeration that no other occidental thinker has been quite so sensitive to the intensely personal element in human experience as Luther.¹² It is thus that the activity of Luther must be viewed as that of a "Seelsorger."¹³

Keeping such seriousness of purpose in mind, it is no wonder that Luther sees nothing as atheistic or diabolistic. There is no such thing as chance or accident, but every event originates and is caused by either of the two great powers, God or devil.¹⁴ He attributed all his sufferings, as well

¹¹Wm. Menzius Alexander, Demonic Possession in the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902), p. 234.

¹²Hans Lilje, Luther Now, translated by Carl J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1952), p. 12.

¹³Obendiek, op. cit., p. 51

¹⁴Dr. Martin Luther's Werke (Weimar: Boehlinghaus Nachfolger, 1883-1939), XX, 608.

as all the misfortunes of the Church or people, to the direct interposition of Satan: and it is quite true when Preserved Smith states: "His fury resembled a personal hatred more than a philosophical detestation of an abstract principle."¹⁵

Luther's view of life in all of its ramifications was basically theocentric. He based his faith and life on God, and specifically Jesus Christ. God is not only the first, but also the last word in Luther's faith. Obendiek calls this theocentric and Christocentric faith the "Pulsschlag seiner Froemigkeit."¹⁶

Faith in God and Christ also meant for Luther a belief in the devil. To the devil Luther traces his own agonizing spiritual experiences, connected as they frequently were with bodily suffering to which he often referred in his letters with so much earnestness. He declares that he often feels within himself the devil's fury. He relates that the devil has sometimes at night disputed with him in regard to his own Christian character and his teaching until the sweat rolled off his body and his heart trembled.¹⁷ Luther himself comments in his Table Talk: "His anger against me is

¹⁵Preserved Smith, The Life and Letters of Martin Luther (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, c.1911), p. 339.

¹⁶Obendiek, op. cit., p. 82.

¹⁷Julius Koestlin, The Theology of Luther translated from the second German edition by Rev. Charles Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1897), II, 333.

eternal and unceasing; I know that perfectly well. He lies with me, nearer even than my Catherine, and gives me more pain than she gives me pleasure."¹⁸ Luther's conflicts with the devil were very personal. He comments:

When I go to bed the Devil is always waiting for me. When he begins to plague me, I give him this answer: "Devil, I must sleep. That's God's command, Work by day. Sleep by night. So go away." If that doesn't work and he brings out a catalog of sins, I say, "Yes, old fellow, I know all about it. And I know some more you have overlooked. Here are a few extra, put them down." If he still won't quit and presses me hard and accuses me as a sinner, I scorn him and say, "St. Satan, pray for me. Of course, you have never done anything wrong in your life, You alone are holy. Go to God and get grace for yourself. If you want to get me all straightened out, I say, Physician, heal thyself."¹⁹

What then was Luther's answer to the conflict between the devil and man? His answer was not scientific but religious. It was religious because of his theocentric and Christocentric faith. Luther did not dissipate the demons by turning on an electric light, because for him they had long ago been routed when the veil of the temple was rent and the earth quaked and darkness descended upon the face of the land. Christ in his utter anguish had fused the wrath and mercy of God and put to flight all the legions of Satan.²⁰

¹⁸M. Michelet, Life of Luther, translated by William Hazlitt (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), p. 328.

¹⁹Roland Bainton, Here I Stand (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1950), p. 362.

²⁰Ibid., p. 66.

Because Luther so emphasized theocentric religion, the presence of the devil was always a reality. It is difficult to know whether or not Luther actually saw the devil in person. The possibility surely could exist, even though the throwing of the inkwell in the Wartburg cannot be proven as an historical fact. Since there is no reference to the throwing of the inkwell in any of Luther's works, not even in his Table Talk, E. G. Schwiebert assumes that this story was invented by an ambitious Luther biographer.²¹ Plass does not enter into the problem but merely states that "it is quite unnecessary to determine the historicity of the inkwell throwing. If Luther did not throw it, he would very likely have done so, had the opportunity been offered."²² In other cases where Luther precisely states in his writings that he saw the devil, there should be no reason to doubt his sincerity in light of the Scriptural facts that the devil is able to assume visible forms.²³

On the other hand, it is most interesting to note that Grisar discusses Luther's belief in the devil under the chapter heading, "Abnormal Psychological Traits." He begins

²¹E. G. Schwiebert, Luther and His Times (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 518-519.

²²Plass, op. cit., p. 154.

²³Cf. Gen. 3:1-5; Matt. 4:1-11; et al.

the chapter with these words: "The first of the abnormal traits of Luther's psychology was his fear of the devil."²⁴ He states that Luther's physical encounters with the devil were purely psychological, pure hallucinations, as a result of his excited mental condition.²⁵ Psychologically, Grisar explains Luther's peculiar character traits like this:

His permanent heart trouble, as is known, often resulted in precordial distress; and his overwrought nerves exacted their tribute in the form of mental suffering. Thus, in connection with other bodily infirmities, an intolerable psychological condition developed, namely, a tormenting sense of fear, which restlessly sought and found an object in the unrest of his conscience.²⁶

Grisar admits that in his later years Luther was less frequently assailed by storms of conscience than in the earlier. But in meeting this problem he asserts that this was not due to his increase in knowledge and faith, but to the exhaustion which finally overpowered him in his total abnormal state of soul.²⁷ How simple such a psychological explanation of Luther's concept of the devil seems to be! But in its simplicity, as Obendiek comments, one observes a "petitio principii ad maiorem gloriam ecclesiae."²⁸

In short, when we consider Luther's firm faith in God and his intense concern for the personality of man, coupled

²⁴Grisar, op. cit., p. 490.

²⁵Ibid., p. 492.

²⁶Ibid., p. 489.

²⁷Ibid., p. 490.

²⁸Obendiek, op. cit., p. 32.

with his dynamic character, we can readily see why Luther wrote and spoke about the devil as he did, with objective certainty.

Popular Beliefs of the Time

Luther's peasant environment supplied him with a rich and varied demon world.²⁹ In fact, the preceding medieval period may well be considered the heyday of the devil's reign over the minds and wills of men.³⁰ The devil, as he had come down to Luther from the Middle Ages, is a melange of various elements. He is at once, as it has been said, of Jewish, Christian, heathen, elfish, gigantic, and spectral stock.³¹ The devil and his legions, whose power is greatest during the hours of darkness, are responsible for the ills of the flesh, of the mentality, and of the spiritual life. They cause disease of mind, aberration towards the gods; they control the atmosphere and bring storms; by their mastery of the waters they bring floods and destruction; they enter the bodies of human beings, are especially dangerous to women and children. So great was the fear of

²⁹Carlson, op. cit., p. 49.

³⁰Maximilian Rudwin, The Devil in Legend and Literature (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company, c.1931), p. 107.

³¹Ibid., p. 3.

these demons that someone has said that "the fear of evil, of famine, sterility, or utter death, is greater and more powerful in its operations than a respect of love for some beneficent power."³² No wonder these were called the Dark Ages!

During that period of history any man might meet the devil and, if sinful, suffer physical violence from him. If anyone disappeared, the devil might be supposed to have carried him off. Such stories as the following surely indicate the superstition prevalent in the church preceding the Reformation:

A rich usurer with a little fear of God in him, had dined well one evening, and was in bed with his wife, when he suddenly leaped up. She asked what ailed him. He replied: "I was just snatched away to God's judgment seat, where I heard so many accusations that I did not know what to answer. And while I waited for something to happen, I heard the final sentence given against me, that I should be handed over to demons, who were to come and get me today." Saying this, he flung on a coat and ran out of the house, for all his wife could do to stop him. His servants, following, discovered him almost crazed in a church where monks were saying their matins. There they kept him in custody for some hours. But he made no sign of willingness to make restitution or repent. So after mass they led him back toward his house, and as they came by a river, a boat was seen coming rapidly up against the current, manned apparently by no one. But the usurer said it was full of demons, who had come to take him. The words were no sooner uttered, than he was seized by

³²Lowe Thompson, The History of the Devil (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1929), p. 81.

them and put into the boat, which suddenly turned on its course and disappeared with its prey.³³

An historical anecdote which similarly illustrates the manner in which the human mind had become obsessed by the idea of the devil in the period immediate to the Reformation is the following:

At Basle in 1474 even a cock was tried on the devilish charge of having laid an egg, and though its lawyer pleaded that there was no record of the devil ever having made a compact with one of the brute creations, and that in any case the laying of an egg was an involuntary act, and as such, not punishable by law, his client was condemned to death and burned at the stake with due solemnity as a sorcerer in disguise.³⁴

Another medieval superstition about the devil relates that he is to be credited with the invention of music. This popular belief is based on church tradition, which ascribed the origin of music to the devil. Roman Catholic asceticism denounced all instrumental music as the devil's work.³⁵ Just in passing it is interesting to note that to Luther music drives the devil away.³⁶

Luther lived in such a demon world as described above. Preserved Smith is at least partly correct when he states: "One part of Luther's religion, borrowed from the popular

³³Henry Osborn Taylor, The Medieval Mind (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1951), I. 504.

³⁴Thompson, op. cit., p. 143.

³⁵Rudwin, op. cit., p. 255.

³⁶Bainton, op. cit., p. 341.

superstition of the age, was his belief in a personal devil."³⁷ This is not to say Luther's concept of the devil found its heart and core in the popular beliefs of the age, but it does attempt to show how they colored Luther's ideas about the devil, which are basically founded upon Scripture. The German scholar Obendiek calls Luther "ein Kind seiner Zeit."³⁸ Bainton admits that Luther was not entirely emancipated from believing that the devil was responsible for such pranks as stealing eggs, milk, and butter.³⁹ In Luther's Table Talk especially we find many evidences of this influence, although even there it seems to be somewhat modified. In his Table Talk Luther sees the devil sitting under a bridge seducing young girls into the water and forcing them into marriage, as the spirit who blows the fire into a blaze, as the one who puts changelings into the cradles of man, as one who misleads sleepers to climb the roof, and as a noisy hobgoblin who tumbles things around in the room.⁴⁰ The influence of medievalism is also seen in this story from Luther's Table Talk:

³⁷Smith, op. cit., p. 339.

³⁸Obendiek, op. cit., p. 23.

³⁹Bainton, op. cit., p. 26.

⁴⁰Plass, op. cit., p. 108.

An old minister, kneeling at prayer one day, heard behind him the devil, who was endeavoring to hinder him from his devotions, by grunting like a whole herd of pigs. The old minister not permitting himself to yield to fear, turned around and exclaimed: "Maitre devil, you have only got what you deserved; you were a glorious angel, and now you are only a filthy pig;" whereupon the grunting ceased, and the devil fled away, for he cannot endure to be treated with contempt. Ah, faith is a wonderful thing.⁴¹

To Luther the insane were possessed by the devil. He was not dogmatic about this, but he expressed his view clearly enough when he wrote that in his opinion all lunatics, idiots and insane persons are possessed by devils, though on that account they will not be damned.⁴² He thinks "daemones incubos et succubos" also possible. However, that devils can actually beget children through intercourse, he, indeed, utterly denies; but there are, he grants, children that are deformed by the devil, or are real devils with only simulated or stolen flesh.⁴³ This also surely is an influence of the beliefs of the time.

There is one danger which some authors succumb to when writing about Luther's concept of the devil. They use only the Table Talk, which are uncertain as to authority, to formulate everything Luther has said about the devil and to show furthermore that Luther magnified and coarsened the

⁴¹M. Michelet, op. cit., p. 322.

⁴²Plass, op. cit., p. 107.

⁴³Koestlin, op. cit., II, 334.f.

manical ideas of the Middle Ages concerning the devil. In this connection the writer is thinking again of Grisar.⁴⁴ It is true, as Reinhold Seeberg⁴⁵ says, that Luther magnified the "hoellische Majestaet" of the devil, but he did not magnify that maniacal fear and superstitious attitude which people had for the devil in the years preceding Luther. In short, Luther re-emphasized the Biblical concept of the devil, as can be seen in his exegetical writings and sermons, but at the same time was also influenced by some of the superstition of the times which definitely went beyond Scripture, but was not necessarily contrary to Scripture.

Again it is difficult to say which of the three factors influenced Luther's concept of the devil the most. Was it the Bible, his own faith and character, or the beliefs of the time? It is the opinion of the writer that in view of all the statements made by Luther concerning the devil in his sermons and exegetical writings, most of the credit for his concept of the devil should be given to his sincere interest in the Holy Scripture and also in his personal faith which he exercised as "Seelsorger."

⁴⁴Grisar, op. cit., p. 490.

⁴⁵Reinhold Seeberg, "Die Lehre Luthers," Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Werner Scholl, 1917), IV, Part I, 172.

CHAPTER III

THE PERSON OF THE DEVIL

Origin

The devil and his angels are fallen beings. This is certain from the declarations of Scripture.¹ It is uncertain on which of the days of creation their fall occurred--probably on the second or third. Beyond this Scripture gives no further information.²

Luther ascribes pride as the chief sin which caused the devils' fall. In this connection it is most interesting to note that even here Luther brings in Christology. The devils despised the Son of God and their chief Lucifer particularly was not satisfied to be the most beautiful image of God among the angels, but desired to be the inward, natural, exact image of God, equal to the Son.³ Here the ancient church fathers and also Luther apply the words of Isaiah 14:13, although they were originally spoken not of the devil, but of the king of Babylon.

Furthermore, Luther believes that the evil spirits took offence especially at the self-humiliation and incarnation

¹Saemmtliche Schriften, edited by J. G. Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), I, Col. 174.

²Julius Koestlin, The Theology of Luther, translated from the second German edition by Rev. Charles Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1897), II, 331.

³Ibid., p. 333.

of the Son, which resulted in the exaltation of humanity, even above the angels. Lucifer, perhaps, had foreseen this purpose of God. They stumbled also at the service they were expected to render to mankind. The wicked attempt to learn more about the unknown and unrevealed God than he was entitled to know was probably also a part of Lucifer's sin.⁴

The devils now constitute a realm by themselves, differing with various powers and offices. Lucifer, or simply "the devil," rules over the others, and they are his servants and subjects.⁵

Luther does very little speculating about the fall of the devil. Rather he concerns himself with the question as to why the devil in such bitter hatred seeks to prevent man from coming to God. In answer to the problem he contrasts two extremes. The devil is so wicked because before his fall he was such a grand and glorious creature; and out of this most beautiful image of God resulted God's most terrible and horrible enemy.⁶

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Dr. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Boehlinghaus Nachfolger, 1883-1939), LI, 396.

Number and Names

Luther maintains that the earth is full of devils. They exist in houses, fields, streets, waters, woods, and fires.⁷ In some areas they exist in greater numbers than in others, and in such areas they cause unnatural phenomena to occur. For example, Luther asserts that in his part of the country at Poltersberg there is a lake cursed with the presence of an unusual number of devils. When a stone is thrown into the lake, a dreadful storm immediately arises; and the whole neighborhood quakes to its center.⁸

The devils are also present in individual human beings. Every prince, as indeed every private man, has his own devil, as well as his own angel.⁹ Even bishops were no exception to the presence of devils in their lives. At the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, according to Luther, every bishop seemed to have brought with him as many devils as a dog has fleas on St. John's day.¹⁰ Six thousand devils are able to dwell in one man, as Scripture asserts in Mark 5 concerning the

⁷J. G. Walch, op. cit., XIII, Col. 1259.

⁸M. Michelet, Life of Luther translated by William Hazlitt (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), p. 321.

⁹Koestlin, op. cit., p. 333.

¹⁰Ibid.

Gadarene demoniac.¹¹ This large number, however, has definite demonic effects.

Although Luther attempts to cite no figures concerning the actual number of the devils in the world, he, nevertheless, maintains that they are manifold. To point out the vastness of their sphere of activity, Luther says that "the devil is as big as the world, as wide as the world; he reaches from heaven to hell."¹²

Luther's two most common names for the devil are "Teufel" and "Satan." Both have basically the same meaning and can be used interchangeably. Yet in certain cases Luther seems to use "Teufel" in a narrower sense, meaning specifically accuser or reviler, whereas "Satan" is used as a more general term implying enmity or opposition.¹³ The devils' names are usually descriptive of their activity. As Lucifer, the devil attempts to mislead the world under the name of Christ.¹⁴ Luther associates Belial with the Latin "malitia" and "iniquitas."¹⁵ In the name Beelzebub, the prince of devils, Luther sees the analogy of a "Fliegenkoenig" or "grosze

¹¹St. Louis, op. cit., XX, Col. 948.

¹²Preserved Smith, Conversations With Luther (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, c.1913), p. 156.

¹³Weimar, op. cit., XXV, 243; XXVI, 6.

¹⁴Ibid., VIII, 149.

¹⁵Ibid., V, 496 f.

Hummel."¹⁶ Theodosius Harnack presents quite a roll of descriptive names which Luther used for the devil: "Luegner, Moerder, Verfuhrer, Verklaeger, Verderber . . . diabolus . . . Laesterer criminator, caluminator . . . Gott der Suende and des Todes, der Urheber und Gewalthaber von beiden."¹⁷

In this connection it is interesting to note that Luther also speaks of a white devil and a black devil.¹⁸ The black devils assail humans beings with physical sins such as the lusts of fornication, avarice, and ambition. The white devils, who are far more powerful, tempt the Christian to unbelief, despair, or heresy.

Being and Essence

Luther maintains with Holy Scripture that the devils are not flesh and blood but are spirits. They are spirits who rule over the world in the atmosphere. Luther vividly describes their activity in the atmosphere when he says, ". . . droben in der Luft, da schweben sie, wie die Wolken ueber uns, flattern und fligen, allenthalben um uns her wie die Hummeln. . ."¹⁹ Not only do the devils rule in the atmosphere, but they also carry out their activity in the hearts of mankind.²⁰

¹⁶St. Louis, op. cit., XI, Col. 558.

¹⁷Theodosius Harnack, Luther's Theologie (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927), I, 256.

¹⁸St. Louis, op. cit., IX, Col. 65.

¹⁹Ibid., IX, Col. 843

²⁰Ibid., IX, Col. 839.

The character of the devils in the direct opposite to that of God and the good angels. As the nature of God is nothing but love, so the devils in their nature are nothing but an eternal flame of hatred and envy against God and all His works, particularly against the pious.²¹ However, as Luther learned from the Bible, the devil often presents himself as the angel of light.²² Even though the devil and his angels are able to present themselves in different ways, nevertheless, their basic nature is still that of hatred and envy against God and the Christian.

In the activity of the papists and enthusiasts Luther sees the presence of the devil.²³ Clothed as an angel of light in the papists and enthusiasts, the devil is always trying to insist that man must do something to merit salvation. Thus Luther states that the devil who once spoke through the serpent now speaks mostly through people.²⁴ In fact he goes so far as to say that the pope is "ein goettischer maiestetischer Teuffel, der da schlecht heraus fert, als sey er Gott selbs."²⁵ He who does not preach the kingdom of Christ or preaches against Christ must be a devil.²⁶

²¹Koestlin, op. cit., p. 331.

²²Weimar, op. cit., IV, 641.

²³Ibid., XXVI, 9; XXIII, 636.

²⁴St. Louis, op. cit., III, Col. 72.

²⁵Weimar, op. cit., XLV, 36.

²⁶Ibid., X, Part III, 159.

That the devil exists in certain beings in a special way is still more evident from Luther's Table Talks. It is at times dangerous to quote the Table Talk because its authority is uncertain. But changes are that Luther in his lighter moments did actually speak the things they contain. At any rate, they do aid in presenting a more complete picture of Luther's concept of the devil. Luther believes that the devil is in parrots, monkeys, and apes, because they are able to imitate men so well.²⁷

Not only can the devils enter other beings, but they can themselves assume the human form. The following quotation is again from his Table Talk:

The devil can so completely assume the human form, when he wants to deceive us, that we may very well lie with what seems to us a woman, of real flesh and blood, and yet all the while 'tis only the devil in the shape of a woman: Satan, according to St. Paul, has great power over the children of unrighteousness. 'Tis the same with women who may think it is a man in bed with them yet 'tis only the devil.²⁸

In view of the preceding statement in which Luther indicates that the devil can assume the human form, it is not difficult to understand why Luther advocated no mercy for the witches of his day.²⁹ They were devils with assumed human flesh.

²⁷Smith, op. cit., p. 163.

²⁸Michalet, op. cit., pp. 324 f.

²⁹Smith, op. cit., pp. 163 f.

Preserved Smith states that this attitude of Luther fanned the flames for the persecution of witches during the sixteenth century in which thousands of witches lost their lives. Four were persecuted in Wittenberg in 1540 during Luther's day.³⁰

To Luther the devil and his legions were very powerful, personal, spiritual, evil beings. He never underestimated their reality because he never underestimated the reality of Christ. Obendiek states it like this: ". . . gibt es einen Teufel, aber nur als Personification des boesen Princip, - gut, so genuegt auch ein Christus als unpersoenliche Idee."³¹

The Monarchy of God

Luther presents the devil as a very powerful being. Yet he is very careful not to teach a dualistic concept of God and the devil, as though both were before time, in time, and in themselves self-existing and complete. Sometimes it sounds in Luther's sermons and hymns as if the world were a battlefield between two equal powers, a good God and an evil god called the devil, but then he strongly emphasizes the

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Hermannus Obendiek, Der Teufel Bei Martin Luther (Furche-Verlag G.m.b.H.,: Berlin NW 7: 1931), p. 31.

fact that God is almighty and the devil, in spite of being God's enemy, is somehow always God's devil.³²

Luther does not ascribe to God the origin and cause of evil. The devil does that but God ordains it. God ordains it since He, in so far as may accord with His own purposes, allows the devil to do that which the latter does of his own accord in pure hatred and malicious will. The expressions which Luther uses to make clear this point are the following: ". . . (Gott dem Teufel)raum lesst. . ." ³³ ". . . die Hand abzeucht" ³⁴ and ". . . (deus) sed permittit. . ." ³⁵ An expression which seems to indicate that God actively incites the devil to evil is "Gottes Verhengnis." ³⁶ With this expression Luther guards against the Manichaean error; and thus he declares that God calls that strange work His, although it is not His own peculiar and characteristic work. ³⁷ God is no less the all efficient and compelling force in the devils than in all other creatures. But He works in them in accordance with the character which He finds them possessing. Since they are evil, when they are driven into action by the

³²H. H. Kraus, The Theology of Luther (London: James Clark and Co., 1947), p. 41.

³³Weimar, op. cit., XXXI, 147.

³⁴Ibid., XXXVII, 427.

³⁵Weimar, op. cit. XLIII, 64.

³⁶Weimar, op. cit. XVI, 119.

³⁷Koestlin, op. cit., 292.

impulse of His omnipotence, they do only that which is evil.³⁸ God who works all in all is also active "operator," in the devil.³⁹ But God, who Himself is good, can only work out of evil material, that which is evil, even as a good rider cannot ride a bad and unbroken horse well.⁴⁰ Thus God works in man, never originating evil, but works evil through that which can only work evil for it is evil--Satan.

Sometimes the devil merely carries out his malicious activity and God permits it.⁴¹ At other times the devil is the means or instrument through which God works and carries out His divine will.⁴² Harnack views Luther's devil as the means by which God carries out his wrath and anger. Not only that, but the devil is the ". . . Objekt, Produkt und Organ des Zorns. . . ."⁴³ However, Harnack warns that Satan and the "deus iratus" are not identical and dare not be equated.⁴⁴ The devil as an instrument of God's wrath places a fear of sin and death into man's heart. But at times the devil also presents man with a false trust that there is nothing to

³⁸Ibid., I, 485 f.

³⁹Weimar, op. cit., XV, 644.

⁴⁰Ibid., XVIII, 710 f.

⁴¹Ibid., XVIII, 480.

⁴²Ibid., XVI, 203.

⁴³Harnack, op. cit., p. 251.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 258.

fear in sin and unbelief. The latter is not the result of the wrath of God, but is the work of the devil.

The existence and work of the devil do not cast a shadow upon the majesty of God, but they serve to make God known and to honor Him. For the sake of His own majesty God must permit evil to occur.⁴⁵ The devils are compelled by their very rage, against their will, to serve God and further His purposes. The devils serve God in order to establish and prove His honor.⁴⁶ In one of his sermons in the series of Sermons upon Exodus Luther states:

God in this (impelling to evil) does well and nothing wrong. But he who is thus impelled does wrong, for he has before him the commandment of God which forbids him to do so, and yet the devil impels him so to act. . . If thou shouldst now ask: Is then the will of God against itself?--that is going too far. The will of God is here, but how this can be, I am not permitted to know.⁴⁷

According to Luther there is really no comparison between the power of God and the power of the devil. In the light of God's power the devil is powerless.⁴⁸ In the light of God's strength, the devil's power becomes as nothing.⁴⁹ God's power over the devil shows itself not only in the fact that God uses the devil to punish the godless and unrepentant and

⁴⁵Weimar, op. cit., XXXVI, 428.

⁴⁶Ibid., XVI, 117 f.

⁴⁷Koestlin, op. cit., I, 499.

⁴⁸Weimar, op. cit., XVIII, 179.

⁴⁹Ibid., XVI, 203 f.

aid in the salvation of the believer, but this power of God over the devil finds its climax in the fact that God is praised and commended by the devil.⁵⁰

The devil is also considered an agent of the God of mercy.⁵¹ Roland Bainton makes the observation that Luther only referred minor difficulties to the devil. In all major encounters God Himself was the assailant. The devil was something of a relief.⁵² This again shows the power of God over that of the devil. When God struck immediately the result was drastic, but when the merciful God used the devil as His instrument the result was not quite so terrible.

Luther always saw the devil not as an end in himself, but as a means to an end. God ordains the end. Luther vividly describes this when he visualizes the devil as the one who takes care of God's vineyard:

Dank habe der fromme Gott, der des Teufels und seiner Bosheit kann also brauchen, dass es nun musz alles zum besten dienen; sonst wo es an seinem boesen Willen laege, wuerd er uns bald mit seinem Messer erwuergen, und mit seinem Mist erstaenken und erstecken. Nu aber nimpt ihn Gott in seine Hand und spricht: Teufel, do bist wohl ein Moerder und Boesewicht, aber ich will dein brauchen wozu ich will; du sollt nur mein Hippen sein, die Welt, und was an dir hanget, soll mein Dungemist sein zu meinem lieben Weingarten, dass er desto besser werde ich will und musz euch haben zu meinem

⁵⁰Ibid., XXXI, Part I, 33.

⁵¹Ibid., VIII, 115 f.

⁵²Roland Bainton, Here I Stand (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1950), p. 362.

Werkzeug an dem Weinstock, dasz er gearbeitet und zugericht werde, Darum schneidet, haust, und hacket nur getrost; aber nicht weiter denn ich will. Denn so weit soll es nur gehen, dasz er meinen Weinstock nicht verderbe, sondern nuetze und bessere, und sofern dungen und misten, dasz er nicht ersteckt, sondern fein saftig und satt werde.⁵³

The devils are servants of God even as the angels are. Thus there also seems to be a constant conflict between the angels and the devils.⁵⁴ It is for this reason that Luther asks God to send His holy angels for protection against the devil in his morning and evening prayers. The power of the angels is greater than that of the devils because they have perpetual fellowship with God and stand in the presence of Him whose name is Almighty.⁵⁵ Yet Luther represents the ministry of the angels as insufficient for the conquest of the devil, which can be accomplished only by the Son of God.⁵⁶ If both God and His angels did not restrain and limit the rage of the devil, man could not live a single moment.

In conclusion, we must emphasize again that the power of the devil never stands parallel to the power of God. It is God alone who ultimately rules. Luther views God as a God who works through contraries, specifically, the devil.⁵⁸

⁵³Luthers Werke (Frankfurt a. M. und Erlangen: Verlag von Heyder & Zimmer, 1851), XLVIII, 254 f.

⁵⁴Weimar, op. cit., XXXIV, Part II, 225.

⁵⁵Koestlin, op. cit., II, 325.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 334.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 332.

⁵⁸Bainton, op. cit., p. 218.

There seems to be a contradiction which Luther does not try to solve. For him the plain word of Scripture meant more than reason. In Luther's assertion of the monarchy of God over the power of the evil one, H. H. Kramm sees an example of Luther's tendency to stress contradicting Bible statements without trying to explain them or to smooth them over. Kramm records Luther's view like this:

The devil is God's enemy, and God is almighty. But the almighty God does not destroy His enemy and his pernicious activities. And yet God is not responsible for the evil caused by the activities of the Devil. But there are not two Gods.⁵⁹

It is comforting to know that God has the devil in His power, and He permits the latter to ply his arts only in so far as may accord with and serve the divine purpose.

⁵⁹Kramm, op. cit., p. 41.

CHAPTER IV

THE ACTIVITY OF THE DEVIL

The World As Realm of the Devil

Luther's devil is a most powerful spirit, not an absolute power, however, because God is always above him. But, nevertheless, he is powerful; and he exercises his powerful reign over what Luther terms "the world." It is difficult to know just what Luther means by the world. Generally speaking, the world is the sum of all created things which find their existence in the physical universe. More specifically, Luther sees the world as that creation which strives against God and the spread of His Gospel. The world is composed of all the elements which war against God and the Christian soul. Over these, over the world, the devil is lord and ruler.¹

Again and again Luther repeats this frightening and horrible thought. ". . . ut statuamus totum mundum a Satana obsessum."² The whole world is held captive by the devil. "Horrendum hoc certe, quod totus mundus captus est

¹Dr. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Boehlinghaus Nachfolger, 1883-1939), XXIV, 82 f.

²Ibid., XLIII, 123.

suis cogitationibus."³ According to Luther we are living and serving in an inn, where the devil is lord and the world, his wife and his family are all adversaries of the Gospel.⁴

To say that the devil was lord and ruler of the world was not idle speculation on Luther's part. This was something he had experienced himself. His own words are significant. "Der Teuffel ist herr jnn der Welt, und ich habe es selbs nie koennen glauben, das der Teuffel solt Herr und Gott der Welt sein, bis ich nu mals zimlich erfahren, das es auch ein artickel des glaubens sey: Princeps mundi, Deus huius seculi. . . ."⁵ The despising and rejection of the Gospel was another evident token that the world is occupied by the devil.⁶

As pilgrims upon earth Christians are also in the devil's kingdom. In one of his writings Luther puts it this way: "Wahr sind hie yns teuffels reyck, nicht anders, denn wenn eyn pylger ynn eyn herberg keme, da er wuste, das sie alleym hauss rewber waren. . . ."⁷ Then interestingly enough he makes the application that if we would walk into a den of robbers we should be alert and wide awake. The second peti-

³Ibid., XVII, Part I, 47.

⁴Ibid., XXVIII, 329.

⁵Ibid., L, 473.

⁶Ibid., IV, 381.

⁷Ibid., XII, 394.

tion of the Lord's Prayer, "thy kingdom come," is also an indication that presently we must be under the tyranny of the devil.⁸

Occasionally Luther uses the term "kingdom of the devil" in a very restricted sense. In this connection the kingdom of the devil is everything that is opposed to the will of God. Thus man is confronted with an either/or. Man is either in the kingdom of the devil, which is a kingdom of darkness, error, sin, and death; or he is in the kingdom of Christ, a kingdom of light, understanding, justice, and life.⁹ At the head of the kingdom of God stands God as king. At the head of the devil's kingdom stands the devil, as the mighty ruler of the world whom man must serve as slave.¹⁰

Luther sees no vacuum between Christ and the devil. Whatever is not in the kingdom of God, is under the kingdom and power of the devil, where the devil is ". . . Bischoff, Hirte vnd Meister. . . ."¹¹ Who does not serve God, serves the devil.¹² The acceptance of Christ as Savior determines whether we are in Christ's kingdom or not; for if we are

⁸Ibid., I, 93.

⁹Ibid., XXIII, 716.

¹⁰Ibid., V, 666 f.

¹¹Ibid., XLVIII, 195.

¹²Ibid., XXV, 483.

without Christ, we are in the devil's kingdom; but if Christ is with us, the devil must yield.¹³

The Devil As the Instigator of Sickness and Misfortune

Luther once gave a good succinct account of his views on the cause of sickness and misfortune in a letter to Wenzel Link, where he states that "physicians may attribute such things to natural causes and sometimes partly cure them, but they are ignorant of the power of the devils."¹⁴ Of a thunder-storm on December 16, 1536, Luther said, ". . . It is simply Satanic. I believe the devils were going to hold a debate and some angel interposed this crash of thunder and tore up their propositions."¹⁵

All the evils of sickness and misfortune in the world are the devil's work. As the instigator of sickness and misfortune the devil kills man and beast, poisons the air, spoils the crops in the field, and sends disastrous plagues.¹⁶ Luther pictures the devil as a vicious hungry beast whose passion it is to break our arms and legs and to tear our head from our body.¹⁷ In fact, it hurts the devil to know

¹³Ibid., XV, 787; XXXVII, 32.

¹⁴Ewald Plass, This Is Luther (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, c.1948), p. 110.

¹⁵Preserved Smith, The Life and Letter of Martin Luther (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, c.1911), p. 339.

¹⁶Saemmtliche Schriften edited by J. G. Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), IX, Col. 844.

¹⁷Weimar, op. cit., XXVII, 153.

that we have one healthy finger on our hand.¹⁸ If the devil were in control of the frost, there would be no summer, but an everlasting winter; and all of mankind would freeze in one day.¹⁹

Luther traces the bitter enmity between the devil and God and man to the expulsion of the devil from heaven. Ever since that time, if the devil were not under God's control, he would in a moment empty and spoil the fish in the sea, the birds in the air, and the fruits of the field.²⁰ The sicknesses and misfortunes which the devil inflicts upon mankind are relatively small to what they could be if the devil's power to evil were not controlled by God. Nevertheless, it is the devil's peculiar work to cause as much sickness and misfortune as possible.

Obendiek contrasts Luther's opinion of the devil's ferocious activity and the loving activity of God when he states: "Der Teufel reiszt ein; damit ist seine Tastigkeit erschocpft. Aber Gott reiszt ein, um zu bauen!--Gott schlaegt nieder um zu heilen; diese positive Tendenz fehlt dem Wirken des Teufels."²¹ Luther is always confident, for even though

¹⁸St. Louis, op. cit., XII, Col. 1338.

¹⁹Ibid., V, Col. 1322.

²⁰Ibid., I, Col. 90.

²¹Hermann us Obendiek, Der Teufel Bei Martin Luther (Furche-Verlag G.m.b.H., Berlin NW 7: 1931), p. 208.

mankind lives in the night of sickness and misfortune, yet from the dark sky there shine the God-given stars to encourage us to faith and hope.²²

Natural Man As Slave of the Devil

Luther traces man's slavery to the devil back to the fall of Adam and Eve and the original sin which thus found entrance and which involves this dominion of the devil. It is worthy to note that the fall of Adam is never ascribed to a resistless influence of the devil, but is always represented as the fault of Adam, who was only tempted by the devil.²³ But since that fall, all men are slaves to the devil. All men are by nature, from birth, under the devil's power and must perform his will.²⁴ It is the total person, the "totus homo," body, soul, and spirit, who is impious and under the devil even as the whole world.²⁵

The devil operates in sin and natural man freely gives him the opportunity. Man is willing to sin, and upon man's willingness to sin follows the pleasure to sin. Thus the

²²Ibid., p. 58.

²³Julius Koestlin, The Theology of Luther, translated from the second German edition by Rev. Charles Hay, (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1897), II, 336.

²⁴Weimar, op. cit., XII, 47.

²⁵Obendiek, op. cit. p. 178. Obendiek quotes from the Bonner Ausgabe.

poison begins to take hold, kills the soul, and submits it to the devil.²⁶

Luther uses three pictures to point out the devil's hold on natural man through sin. First of all, he sees the devil as a master driving men into sin.²⁷ Secondly, he sees the devil throwing and hurling sins into man's heart.²⁸ Thirdly, he uses the picture of the devil lighting the fire of sin in man's heart.²⁹ Indeed, the origin of all human sin is the devil, and through this sin he becomes the master of natural man. The devil has imprinted his own picture of evil upon mankind.³⁰

To show the helplessness of mankind Luther states that man is like a donkey ridden now by God and now by the devil.³¹ This surely seems to imply that man has no freedom whatever to decide for good or ill. Even Christians are under the devil. Here is indeed a paradox which Luther does not attempt to solve. He states that the Christian is under the devil and still he is lord of the devil; and even though the Christian is pious and holy, yet he is under the devil who can

²⁶Weimar, op. cit., I, 273.

²⁷Ibid., XX, 301.

²⁸Ibid., XXVII, 109.

²⁹Ibid., III, 610.

³⁰Theodosius Harnack, Luther's Theologie (Muenchen: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927) I, 200.

³¹Roland Bainton, Here I Stand (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1950), p. 253.

over-run him.³² However, in contrast to natural man who follows the devil as a slave without resistance, the Christian is always engaged in a constant struggle with the master of evil.³³ A Christian is not entirely under the devil's power for he is "simul justus et peccatur." Here Luther inserts his distinction between flesh and spirit. Thus a Christian really has a double essence: the Holy Ghost in the heart, but the devil in the flesh.³⁴

The Christian's Temptation to Sin

As it has been stated before, Luther distinguished two classes of devils. It is only a low class of devils which assails us with the lusts of fornication, avarice, and ambition; it is a higher class which tempts us to unbelief, despair, or heresy.³⁵ It must be noted here also that temptation only concerns the Christian. The unregenerate man is already in the clutches of the devil and therefore cannot be tempted. It is precisely those Christians who have already attained a high standard of Christian character, the "lofty saints of God," who are, in the providence of God, most frequently assailed with temptation.³⁶

³²Weimar, op. cit., XVII, 299; XLI, 687.

³³Ibid., XXIV, 111.

³⁴Ibid., IV, 320; VII, Part I, 133.

³⁵Koestlin, op. cit., pp. 332 f.

³⁶Ibid., p. 259.

The devil is God's instrument of inward temptation. In such a temptation the Christian feels that the grace of God has forsaken him. He is, according to the emotions of his heart, actually in death and hell. He beholds nothing but wrath and terrors. Despair and unbelief are evident. Under such pains Luther himself had groaned. Not only did he realize such terrible inward temptations in his youth, but also in the Wartburg castle the devil confronted him with such questions as: "Are you alone wise? Have so many centuries gone wrong? What if you are in error and are taking so many others with you to eternal damnation?"³⁷ Thus Luther later on in his life says that an evil, convicting conscience is the open gate through which the devil operates. Man no longer knows whether he is a child of God. This temptation occurs especially in the hour of death.³⁸

Heresy and false doctrine are other methods of inner temptation which the devil uses. The devil's basic purpose in temptation is to destroy faith.³⁹ One of the most effective ways of destroying the Christian faith is through the spread of false doctrine. One of the methods by which the devil promotes false doctrine is by neglecting the difference between Law and Gospel and at times even substituting

³⁷Bainton, op. cit., p. 194.

³⁸Weimar, op. cit., XXVIII, 296.

³⁹Ibid., XX, 608.

the Law for the Gospel.⁴⁰ The devil in his own subtle way attempts to substitute works for faith.⁴¹ In the place of the forgiveness of sins through Christ, the devil places freedom of the will and good works.⁴² Luther's attitude against the practicing work righteousness of the monks was especially vehement. In his opinion all monks were built about the devil's neck, and the cloister is a hell with the devil as abbot and prior.⁴³ Luther's own words are significant:

Denn das menschen hertz kan nimermehr ruge haben, es habe dem die rechte lere oder das goettliche wort, das sie an Gott gleuben und fest an im halten, und wer das hat, der kan auch ein recht leben fueren. Diese lere kan der Teuffel nicht leiden, daruemb richt er falsche lere an und schickt falsche prediger, lesset das volck zwingen mit gesetzen zu guten werken, dadurch sie gen himel komen, wie wir Moenche mit unserz Geluebden und andern wercken gethan haben. Diese falsche lerer sind des Teuffels Fronvogte. . .⁴⁴

Thus the Christian must be constantly alert to fight off the temptation of heresy and false doctrine. Those well-learned in the Scripture are to be particularly aware of this temptation of the devil.⁴⁵ In this connection Luther states that

⁴⁰St. Louis, op. cit., IV, Col. 2077.

⁴¹Weimar, op. cit., X, Part III, 197.

⁴²Ibid., XIV, 237.

⁴³Ibid., XV, 429; XXXVIII, 148.

⁴⁴Ibid., XVI, 76.

⁴⁵St. Louis, op. cit., III, Col. 1157.

human reason is nothing self-created, but it proceeds from the devil.⁴⁶

Even while praying the Christian can be tempted. The devil, because he is the father of lies, may so deceive the Christian that instead of praying in the true name of Christ, he prays in the devil's name, who assumes the name of the true God.⁴⁷ Whether or not the Christian prays in the true name of Christ can be seen in his earthly life.⁴⁸ The devil furthermore deceitfully seeks to tempt the Christian by a total misrepresentation of himself and his followers, so that the Christian is attracted to him. The devil permits his own to do many good works, pray, fast, and build churches, as though he were holy and pious.⁴⁹

Luther considers the devils which tempt the Christian to commit physical sins quite inferior to those who tempt the Christian spiritually. The lower class of devils tempts men particularly to disobey the moral law of God. Crosses and sufferings are also such temptations. In back of the devil's maliciousness lies his purpose to destroy faith.⁵⁰ Satan is not fighting against us but against Christ in us.⁵¹

⁴⁶Weimar, op. cit., XX, 304.

⁴⁷Ibid., XX, 745.

⁴⁸Ibid., IV, 279.

⁴⁹St. Louis, op. cit., V, Col. 1118.

⁵⁰Weimar, op. cit., XX, 608.

⁵¹Bainton, op. cit., p. 149.

Luther sees a definite benefit in temptation. He is able to do this because he always sees the devil as a mere instrument in the mighty hand of God. Temptation always shows that the powerful Word with its dynamic character is present. Where there is no temptation the Word is not present; but where there is temptation, we can be certain that God's Word is at work.⁵² Furthermore, temptation turns us to God. If God, with all the devils that He has at His command, can yet scarcely lead us to call upon Him, what, Luther asks, would we do if there were no devil at all?⁵³ If there were no devil to tempt us, we would become "kald, faul, und lasse."⁵⁴

In closing the chapter, we observe once again the fact that the devil is a very powerful spirit under the control of almighty God. God permits him to exercise his evil presence in the world, in sickness and misfortune, in the slavery of man to sin, and in temptation of the Christian. Every moment the devil cunningly carries out his activity. He is an expert in his field. Luther says, "The devil, it is true, is not exactly a doctor who has taken his degrees, but he is very learned, very expert for all that. He has

⁵²Weimar, op. cit., IX, 591 f.

⁵³Koestlin, op. cit., 335 f.

⁵⁴Weimar, op. cit., XXXII, 114.

not been carrying on his business during thousands of years for nothing."⁵⁵

⁵⁵M. Michelet, Life of Luther, translated by William Hazlitt, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), p. 328.

In the 16th century, the Lutheran Church had conquered the devil and set for all in the world an example of his victory. In his victory, death, resurrection, and ascension. Luther had given the Christian world by which to overcome the devil in this world. He has given him the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, the sacraments, faith, Scripture, and prayer. In the light of these two facts, the devil cannot conquer and gain the ultimate victory over the Christian.

John Calvin

In Luther's teaching Christ often takes the place of God in his relationship to the devil because Christ bears all things in his hands and has also conquered the devil on himself.¹ "Devils Christian faith," says Luther.² Christ has freed mankind not only from sin, death, and hell, but primarily from the devil, who is their lord.³

¹Dr. Martin Luther, Works, Vol. 1, p. 117.

²Martin Luther, Works, Vol. 1, p. 117.

³Luther, pp. 117, 118, 119.

CHAPTER V

GOD'S VICTORY OVER THE DEVIL

Luther always viewed the Christian's struggle as serious. However, he was never fatalistic or even pessimistic concerning the Christian's power to overcome the prince of darkness. In the first place, the Lord Jesus Christ had conquered the devil once and for all in His all-sufficient redemption, in His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension. Secondly, God has given the Christian means by which to overcome the devil in this world. He has given him the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, the sacraments, faith, Scripture, and prayer. In the light of these two facts, the devil cannot conquer and gain the ultimate victory over the Christian.

Jesus Christ

In Luther's theology Christ often takes the place of God in His relationship to the devil because Christ bears all things in His hands and has also subjected the devil to Himself.¹ "Satana Christus maior," says Luther.² Christ has freed mankind not only from sin, death, and hell, but primarily from the devil, who is their lord.³

¹Dr. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Boehlinghaus Nachfolger, 1883-1939), XVII, Part I, 437.

²Hermannus Obendiek, Der Teufel Bei Martin Luther (Furche-Verlag G.m.b.H.: Berlin NW 7, 1931), p. 46.

³Weimar, op. cit., XX, 227.

Christ has conquered the devil and freed mankind from his slavery through His work of redemption or atonement. He has engaged the devil in a conflict and has come out Christus Victor. In Luther, however, we do not meet the classic idea of the atonement, as Gustav Aulen⁴ would have us believe.⁴ The basis of Luther's idea of the atonement is always Christ reconciling God to man by His atoning sacrifice. But in this reconciliation Christ is always the victorious Christ. Not only do we hear the tramp of marshaled hordes, the shouts of battle, and the triumph song in Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," but we also hear the thought expressed in this hymn:

In devils' dungeon chained I lay
 The pangs of death swept o'er me.
 My sin devoured me night and day
 In which my mother bore me.
 My anguish ever grew more rife
 I took no pleasure in my life
 And sin had made me crazy.

Then was the Father troubled more
 To see me ever languish.
 The Everlasting Pity swore
 To save me from my anguish.
 He turned to me his father heart
 And chose himself a bitter part
 His dearest did it cost him.

Thus spoke the Son, "Hold thou to me,
 From now on thou wilt make it.

⁴Gustav Aulen, Christus Victor, translated by A. G. Herbert (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1931), p. 124.

I gave my very life for thee
 And for thee will I stake it,
 For I am thine and thou art mine,
 And where I am our lives entwining,
 The Old Fiend cannot shake it."⁵

Luther sees the forces of evil pitted against the Divine Will. He acknowledges God as the only effective agent in His redemption from beginning to end--God in Jesus Christ.

In Christ's redemptive work the devil is pictured as deceived by God. This idea of the deception of the devil is closely connected with the thought of the hidden God, the "deus absconditus." God was present, with the mightiest of powers, hidden in the despised man Christ, in His lowliness and in His self-devotion to suffering and death.⁶ Luther's concept of Christ's conquest of the devil is that the devil swallowed Christ at His death imagining that He would in consequence of His weak humanity prove an easy morsel to swallow. But to show that even while dead Jesus put an end to the kingdom of the devil, Luther represents the transaction under the figure of a great whale, which with the angleworm, the humanity of Christ, swallowed also the sharp hook, His divinity.⁷ Thus the devil appears as deceived by divine

⁵Roland Bainton, Here I Stand (New York and Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c. 1950), pp. 66 f.

⁶Aulen, op. cit., p. 126.

⁷Julius Koestlin, The Theology of Luther, translated from the second German edition by Rev. Charles Hay, (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, c.1897), II, 410.

strategy. It is, therefore, certainly in accord with Luther's view to say that the devil, even when seeking with all his power to destroy Christ, was serving God and divine justice.⁸

The suffering which Jesus endured was the work of the devil. Thus Hermannus Obendiek states that the "Leiden" of Christ was really an "Erleiden."⁹ Already in the garden of Gethsemane Christ was in the hand of the devil.¹⁰ Throughout His passion He subjected Himself to the devil's fury. The climax came when Jesus was forsaken by God. Inasmuch as Jesus no longer received, as before, consolation directly from God, the devil gained an opportunity to assail Him more than before. He grinds his teeth at the prospect of devouring the innocent Lamb, so that the guileless man is forced to tremble and quail like a lost sinner.¹¹ Though on the one hand Christ subjects Himself to the devil's malice and fury in His suffering and death, yet in His very suffering and death Christ triumphs as victor.¹²

Luther was in doubt as to the actual significance of Christ's descent into hell. He did not know whether Christ descended into hell to endure still further its pangs, or

⁸Ibid., p. 404.

⁹Obendiek, op. cit., p. 71.

¹⁰Weimar, op. cit., XXVII, 111.

¹¹Koestlin, op. cit., p. 400.

¹²Weimar, op. cit., III, 56.

whether He descended in order to follow up the victory which He had already gained on the cross to its glorious consummation in His resurrection.¹³ Be that as it may, the resurrection was for Luther a most assuring act. The resurrection was a proclamation of Christus Victor. What the suffering and death of Christ had accomplished, through the resurrection became undeniable fact.¹⁴ Through the power of Christ's resurrection, every Christian is lord and master over the devil.¹⁵

The entire accomplishment of Christ's redemptive and atoning work brought about the subjection and conquest of the devil. Every bit of His earthly life, which began in Bethlehem and climaxed on Calvary, His descent into hell, His resurrection and ascension, was geared to make this release from the power of the devil perfect and complete. Thus Obendiek significantly states:

Nicht in den Einzelheiten, sei es nun das Leiden oder die Hoellenfahrt, oder die Auferstehung, oder die Himmelfahrt, sondern in diesem ganzen Geschehen, eben in diesem "Durchgang" hat Christus die Verderbensmaechte und damit auch den Teufel besiegt; in der Einheit und der Gesamtheit dieses Geschehens liegt die Kraft der Erloesung. . . . Der "Durchgang" ist der Sieg.¹⁶

¹³Koestlin, op. cit., p. 417.

¹⁴Weimar, op. cit., XII, 513.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 523.

¹⁶Obendiek, op. cit., p. 75.

The Gospel

The Gospel is a power. It has dynamic character. Thus it exposes the devil and brings his activity to light.¹⁷ It draws out the devil and all his angels to oppose it with his temptations.¹⁸ When Luther speaks of Gospel he means the message of the cross and the resurrection of Christ. He closely associates it with the Word. Wherever the Word is preached, the devil is at work. Luther states:

Das koempt daher, denn wo Gott mit seinem wort ist, da ist der Teuffel zornig, kan es nicht leiden, yhn wird sein reich gemindert. Wo wer aber allein ist, da das wort Gottes nicht gehet, da kan er wol from seyn, braucht seine tueche nicht so sehr, heuschelt und schmueckt sich feyn, das man yhn auch wol fuer den heiligen geist moechte ansehen; er lest die seinen viel guter werck thun, beten, fasten, kirchen bawen, messen und jartage stifften, stelt sich, als sei er ganz heilig und from. Wenn aber das wort Gottes widder an das licht koempt und er also verradten wird und ausgezogen: Da toebet er und wuetet, ist toll und thoericht, kan es nicht leiden, wird zornig und weckt auch sehe gelider auff: die vorhin from waren, die erregt er mit allerley suenden, mit getz, neid, has zorn, ketzereyen und das geschwirms on zal. Ist also auff gewachet, und wo das wort Gottes ym schwanck gehet, da reget er sich am meisten.¹⁹

First of all, then, Luther views the Gospel or the Word as the dynamic power which exposes the devil and brings him to

¹⁷Saemmtliche Schriften, edited by J. G. Walch, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), XII, Col. 1338.

¹⁸Weimar, op. cit., XXXI, Part I, 368.

¹⁹Ibid., XIX, 321 f.

light. Secondly, the Gospel, the Word, is that power by which the Christian is able to overcome the devil in his own life.

The devil is present without the Word, but he is exposed and conquered by the Word.²⁰ Because of the spiritual transcendental character of the devil, the only way one can be victorious in the battle with the devil is by using the Word of God as a weapon.²¹ The dynamic power of the Word in a positive sense reveals the power by which the Christian can overcome the assaults of the devil. It is not the Law, but it is the word of grace, the Gospel, the Word, which opposes the devil and destroys him.²²

Luther recognizes that his own restlessness is caused by the Word in combat with the devil.²³ His own human self could not avail against such a powerful enemy. Thus he puts his trust upon the Word of the Gospel: His words are these:

When the devil finds me idle, and not thinking upon the Word of God, he insinuates into my mind doubts and apprehensions that I have not taught aright; that I have overturned and destroyed authority without just cause, that my doctrine has occasioned all this confusion and disorder unrighteously. But as soon as I get hold of the word of God again, I am as strong as ever, and say to the devil: "What is the opinion of the world, great as that world is, to God? has not He set his Son over that world as its Lord and King? If the world attempts

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²⁰ Ibid., XV, 473.

²¹ Ibid., XVI, 108 ff.

²² Ibid., XV, 475.

²³ Ibid., XXXI, Part II, 635.

to unthrone its Lord, God will overturn the world and reduce it to ashes. . . ."24

God's Word is all powerful. Luther says, "Gottes worts krafft ist uber alle welt, Teufel, Engle."²⁵ God's Word means victory.²⁶ Even though the devil may frighten God's people as Goliath frightened the children of Israel, the stone of God's Word will make him fall.²⁷ Thus the Word of the Gospel is a dynamic offensive instrument of war against the devil. It is also a defensive shield against the darts of the devil.²⁸

The Word of the Gospel is so powerful because it is God's Word. "Quando audis verbum, audis deum," says Luther.²⁹ Wherever that Word is preached and taught the devil cannot and will not be victorious in his conquests.³⁰

This is not to say that the devil will not violently fight against the Word. He will fight directly by trying to remove the Word in its totality. He will fight indirectly by contaminating it and making it say what it does not say. Therefore, especially, the ministers and preachers of the

²⁴M. Michelet, Life of Luther, translated by William Hazlitt, (London: George Bell and Sons, 1898), pp. 329 f.

²⁵Weimar, op. cit., XXIV, 576.

²⁶Ibid., XII, 416.

²⁷Obendiek, op. cit., p. 160.

²⁸Weimar, op. cit., XXXII, 103.

²⁹Ibid., XXXVII, 136.

³⁰Ibid., XXXIV, Part II, 370.

Gospel are nothing else than soldiers of Christ, who are engaged in a violent struggle with the devil.³¹

Luther, indeed, realized the power of the Word of the Gospel, both as a power to overcome the devil, and also as a power to salvation. Thus he labored so zealously to bring it back to its glorious light and wrote the hymn, "Lord, keep us Steadfast in Thy Word."³²

Faith

Dr. Martin Luther valued faith very highly. The mere historical facts of the redemptive acts of Christ can avail nothing to overcome the attacks of the devil in the Christian. Even the devil believes that Christ died, but he does not believe that Christ died for him.³³ Thus Luther says, "Also must du Christum haben als deinen schatz," and only then is the devil's kingdom conquered.³⁴ The devil's temptations must fail on the basis of this confession: "Christiana sum."³⁵

A Christian without faith is impossible and unbelievable. To Luther the essence of Christianity is faith.³⁶ This faith in God as the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, carries with

³¹Ibid., XIII, 625.

³²W. G. Polack, The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942), p. 191.

³³St. Louis, op. cit., XIII, Col. 591.

³⁴Weimar, op. cit., XVI, 128.

³⁵Ibid., XXXI, Part II, 283 f.

³⁶Obendiek, op. cit., p. 81.

itself the happy assurance that the devil, whom Christ has overcome, is also defeated in every attack.³⁷ Indeed, it is an impotent devil who does not have power over one single hair of a believer.³⁸ Faith in the Word of Christ is the all sufficient factor in the salvation of mankind. Luther says:

Wer Christus Wort gleubet vnd helt, dem stehet der Himmel offen, die Hell zugeschlossen, der Teufel gefangen, die Suende vergeben, vnd er ist ein Kindt des ewigen lebens.³⁹

To point out the victory of faith, Luther, in one of his lighter moments, made this comment: "The devil has sworn our death; but he will stick his teeth into a hollow nut."⁴⁰

The Christian man must know that he is not preserved from the attacks of the devil by his own power, but alone through faith in Christ. Even though the devil may bruise the Christian's heel, he cannot tear him out of Christ's hand.⁴¹ Luther fears that man in temptation may begin to dispute or argue with the devil. Thus he asserts that in temptation one must seek refuge in the forgiveness of sins, in confession and absolution. Man must cling only to Christ and find shelter in the perfection of His redemption.⁴²

³⁷Weimar, op. cit., XI, 22.

³⁸St. Louis, op. cit., VII, Col. 100.

³⁹Weimar, op. cit., XLVIII, 155.

⁴⁰Michelet, op. cit., p. 331.

⁴¹Weimar, op. cit., XLVIII, 206.

⁴²Ibid., X, Part III, 61 f., 105.

Through faith in the redemptive power of God we can be assured of certain victory over the devil, even though a thousand devils may be hid in one.⁴³

This blessed assurance of faith rests in the revelation of God.⁴⁴ It has its heart and soul in Jesus Christ and in the Word. That is what makes it true and certain. Only by faith does God snatch a Christian from the devil's kingdom and set him into His own kingdom; only by faith does God give the Christian power to overcome the assaults of the devil; and only by faith can he gain the ultimate victory over the prince of darkness.⁴⁴

The Holy Spirit

Faith as certainty is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ In order to accomplish this certainty of faith in a believer, the Holy Spirit must enter the devil's realm and is thus at once involved in conflict with him.⁴⁶ Luther states, "Die 2 geister treiben sich mutuo: vel spiritum sanctum habes vel diabolum."⁴⁷ Obendiek asserts that Luther believes in a "ministerium Satanæ" and a "ministerium

⁴³Ibid., XIV, 337.

⁴⁴Ibid., XI, 58, X, Part III, 356; XVII, 294.

⁴⁵Obendiek, op. cit., p. 87.

⁴⁶Weimar, op. cit., XV, 554.

⁴⁷Ibid., XVII, Part I, 137.

spiritus," which are constantly involved in a violent battle, not as brother against brother, but as Truth against falsehood.⁴⁸ Luther himself states that we should:

alles wagen, leben und sterben, dass wir den Heiligen Geist haben, so wir des Herrn Christi Wort haben und glauben und gewiszlich bei uns selbst koennen schliessen: Es sei wider mich Teufel, Tod, und Suende, so bin ich dennoch heilig, denn dass ich glaube an Christus und habe ihn kennengelernt, das Wort und Sacrament recht verstehe und brauche, das habe ich nicht aus meinem Kopf, sondern aus dem Heiligen Geist.⁴⁹

The work of the Holy Ghost is to witness Christ.⁵⁰ The Holy Ghost must see to it that the Word is recognized as God's Word; otherwise it may appear as the devil's word.⁵¹ The Holy Ghost operates through the means of grace. Against this doctrine the devil fights.⁵² But the truth of the matter is that the person who does not acknowledge that the Holy Spirit works through the Word has become, without his knowledge, a victim of Satan.⁵³ This point is emphasized again and again in Luther's theology. Obendiek summarizes Luther's viewpoint like this:

Geist ohne Wort bedeutet Amt ohne Berufung, Amt ohne Berufung bedeutet Enthusiasmus, Enthusiasmus landet bei der Werkerei, Werkerei bedeutet Anspruch der

⁴⁸Obendiek, op. cit., p. 88.

⁴⁹Ibid., p.93.

⁵⁰Obendiek, op. cit., p. 90.

⁵¹Weimar, op. cit., XV, 478.

⁵²Obendiek, op. cit. p. 125.

⁵³Weimar, op. cit. XXXIV, Part II, 194.

Menschen an Gott, Anspruch der Menschen an Gott bedeutet Auflehnung des Menschen gegen Gott, Auflehnung des Menschen gegen Gott bedeutet Werk und Sieg des Teufels.⁵⁴

In the heart of the Christian, the devil and the Holy Spirit are constantly in combat. Since the Holy Spirit operates only through the Word, only through faith in the Word can the Christian overcome the devil. It is worthy to note once again that the "overcoming" is not man's act, but God's act through the work of the Holy Spirit. Luther's religion was thoroughly theocentric.

The Sacraments

The sacraments possess the same efficacious power as the Word. Luther usually speaks of three sacraments: Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord's Supper. Through their diligent use the devil is driven out by the Finger of God.⁵⁵

Luther sees the whole Gospel included in Baptism with salvation as its end goal. Thus when the devil assailed him, he would answer, "I am baptized."⁵⁶ Concerning the power of baptism Luther writes, "Denn man muss dem Teufel nicht viele Worte geben. Wenn dir deine Sunden vorwirft, so ist es gerade genug, wenn du ihm deine Taufe entgegenhaelst, von der er auch nicht leugen kann, dasz du sie habest."⁵⁷

⁵⁴Oberdieck, op. cit., p. 131.

⁵⁵St. Louis, op. cit., XIII, Col. 1704.

⁵⁶Bainton, op. cit., p. 367.

⁵⁷St. Louis, op. cit., IV, Col. 2099.

In the Lord's Supper Luther sees the perfection of redemption.⁵⁸ The devil, hell, death, and the world have been overcome.⁵⁹ By the use of the sacrament we share in this victory. If we were to ask Luther why a Christian should attend the Lord's Supper he would answer that we are yet in the devil's kingdom and that he is daily trying to destroy us in body and soul.⁶⁰

Abolution is the personal certainty of the forgiveness of sins which comes to us extra nos. It is not in us, but it comes to us in Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and the preaching of the Word.⁶¹ According to Luther, in all of these we are more than conquerors because of Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Prayer and Scripture

Luther believes in the diligent use of prayer and Scripture as a means of combating the devil. Prayer is the power through which we ask God to send us expert bowmen, "die scharfeepfeyle auff den teuffel schiessen."⁶² "Denn das sollen wir wissen das alle vnser schirm vnd schutz allein ynn dem gebete stehet" says Luther.⁶³

⁵⁸Weimar, op. cit., X, Part III, 69.

⁵⁹Ibid., IV, 618.

⁶⁰Obendiek, op. cit., p. 109.

⁶¹Weimar, op. cit., XXXI, Part II, 389.

⁶²Ibid., XV, 77.

⁶³Obendiek, op. cit., p. 96.

Every prayer is to be a prayer of faith. It is to rest on two thoughts.⁶⁴ First of all, we must be keenly aware of the tremendous power of the devil. Secondly, we must have the sincere conviction that in God's sight the devil's power is nothing; and we must be assured that God is the victor in us. Such a prayer of faith is a preserving and a freeing power which should encourage us also to pray for others.⁶⁵

Furthermore, in the struggle against the devil one should know the Scripture well and use it at the right moment.⁶⁶ Luther says that in spite of his being an old doctor and preacher, he daily says the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Psalms and Bible verses, and he remains a child and pupil of the Catechism in order to overcome the attacks of the devil.⁶⁷

Luther acknowledges both the Scripture and the Word as the power against which the devil fights, and also as the power on which everything which pertains to salvation depends.⁶⁸ Thus he exhorts all to hear and read the Holy Scriptures; for in their reading, hearing, and meditation, the Scriptures

⁶⁴Weimar, op. cit., XX, 720.

⁶⁵Ibid., XV, 111.

⁶⁶Ibid., X, Part III, 36.

⁶⁷Ibid., XXXI, Part I, 227.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 402.

as the Word will dispel, and by the grace of God the Christian again is victorious.⁶⁹

The Ultimate Victory

Luther sees two eschatological events, Judgment day and death. Occasionally he will speak beautiful words of our final victory over the devil as pertains to the Day of Judgment. Then again, he finds joy in the thought of death, for at the moment of death we are snatched in spirit from the devil's power.⁷⁰ According to Luther, a Christian always lives eschatologically, sub specie aeternitatis, and as such he knows that he shall keep the crown.⁷¹

The devil and his angels, who have been battling against the Christian in this world, will never be reconciled to God. However, at the second coming of Christ, the final execution of the divine judgment upon the devils will take place, which will be visited upon them in the fires of hell.⁷² Luther says it like this:

Die Teufel noch nicht endlich ihre Pein haben, sondern hingehen in einen verstockten, verzweifelten Wesen, und alle Augenblick auf ihr Gericht warten; wie ein Mensch der zum Tode verdammt ist, ganz verzweifelt,

⁶⁹Ibid., XX, 790.

⁷⁰Ibid., IX, 540; XLVIII, 205; XVII, Part I, 226.

⁷¹Ibid., XX, 429.

⁷²Koestlin, op. cit., p. 336.

versteckt, und immer je boeser wird; aber ihre Strafe ist noch nicht ueber sie gegangen, sondern sie sind jetzt allein dazu verfasst und behalten.⁷³

The Battle Hymn of the Reformation

The victory of the Christian over the devil is the work of the almighty God. Throughout this thesis we have noted Luther's emphasis on theocentric and Christocentric religion. The "sola gratia, sola fide, sola Scripture," are always in the foreground. This emphasis permeates every phase of Luther's religion. His demonology is no exception to this rule. Thus, perhaps the best conclusion to this thesis would be Luther's own words as he so dramatically and powerfully expressed them in "The Battle Hymn of the Reformation."

A mighty Fortress is our God
 A Trusty Shield and Weapon;
 He helps us free from every need
 That hath us now o'er taken.
 The old evil Foe Now means deadly woe;
 Deep guile and great might
 Are his dread arms in flight;
 On earth is not his equal.

With might of ours can naught be done.
 Soon were our loss effected;
 But for us fights the Valiant One,
 Whom God Himself elected.
 Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is,
 Of Sabaoth Lord,
 And there's none other God;
 He holds the field forever.

Though devils all the world should fill,
 All eager to devour us,
 We tremble not, we fear no ill,

⁷³St. Louis, op. cit., IX, Col. 1371.

They shall not overpower us.
 This world's prince may still
 Scowl fierce as he will,
 He can harm us none, He's judged;
 the deed is done;
 One little word can fell him.

The Word they still shall let remain
 Nor any thanks have for it;
 He's by our side upon the plain
 With his good gifts and Spirit.
 And take they our life,
 Goods, fame, child, and wife.
 Let these all be gone,
 They yet have nothing won;
 The Kingdom ours remaineth.⁷⁴

⁷⁴Polack, op. cit., p. 192.

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