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## Die Wittenbergisch nachtigal (1523), by Hans Sachs

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## “Die Wittenbergisch nachtigal” (1523)

By HANS SACHS

This free rendition of the German original was prepared by Prof. Phil. J. Schroeder and presented here as a tribute to Dr. Theodore Hoyer, whose understanding of Reformation history is all but epitomized in this excerpt.

**A**wake, the day is drawing near!  
In woodland thicket a voice I hear  
Of winsome, happy, nightingale  
On bluff and in the sunny vale.  
The night moves to its occident,  
The day dawns in the orient;  
The low’ring clouds must soon give way  
To leave their place to radiant day.  
Obscured is now the moon’s pale light;  
It is the planet of the night.

My bird so gay on lively pinion  
Is Martin Luther, Augustinian.  
’Tis he who called us out of night  
Away from darkest lunar light.

This darkened light does represent  
The sophists’ abstruse argument,  
Four hundred years in every season  
Its lodestar was but human reason,  
Which led us ever more and more  
From blessed Jesus’ Gospel lore.

Our blessed Martin did indict  
The prelates for not living right;  
Then, too, for us he did reveal  
God’s Word which men tried to conceal.  
In German tongue one hundred pieces  
In four short years were press releases.

And briefly I will now explain  
What this great corpus does contain:

Foremost the Prophets and the Law —  
That is the morning-red we saw.  
In this our Martin shows that all  
Are heritors of Adam’s fall —  
So full of evil, lust, and sin,  
To keep God’s Law none can begin.  
And e’en if outward show is good  
The heart contains an evil brood.  
And Moses, too, does this attest,  
The heart makes evil all the rest;  
Our Father looks upon the heart  
And judgment o’er it does impart.  
To God’s wrath all we subject be,  
Condemned to all eternity.

If this truth shines in brightest light,  
And sin and evil cause us fright;  
And if to God we humbly pray  
He sends the radiant light of day:  
The Gospel of our Christ and Lord  
Brings surcease in Redemption’s word.

Christ kept the Law by His own power,  
Removed the curse and paid the dower,  
Shook hell and won the devil’s game;  
Consigned him to the searing flame.  
Eternal life is thus our own  
As blessed John has clearly shown.  
Freedom’s banner is now unfurled:  
The Lamb has borne the sins of the world.