

# Watchwords for the Warfare of Life, Part Third. Words For The Halting- Places. I. The Visible Creation



Continued from [Watchwords for the Warfare of Life, Part Second. Words For The Day's March. II. Special Graces](#)

GOD writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but on trees, and flowers, and clouds, and stars.

## ***Creation the Veil of God.***

ALL creatures are merely shells, masks (Larven), behind which God hides Himself, and deals with us.

GOD dealeth not with us in this life face to face, but veiled in shadows from us. "Now, through a glass darkly; but then, face to face."

Therefore we cannot be without veils in this life. But in this wisdom is required, which can discern the veil from God Himself; which wisdom the world hath not.

The covetous man heareth, indeed, that "man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God;" he eateth the bread, but seeth not God in the bread, for he beholdeth only the veil, and outward show. So he doth with gold and other creatures, trusting to them as long as he has them; but when they leave him he despaireth.

GOD has set the type of marriage everywhere throughout the creation. Each creature seeks its perfection in another. The very heavens and earth picture it to us.

THAT marriage is marriage; the hand a hand; wealth, wealth—that all can understand; but to believe that the marriage state is God's order; the hand God's creature; good clothing and riches His gift—it is God's work when men understand this.

## ***Miracles in Common Things.***

WE foolish creatures cannot comprehend with our reason how it is that we

speak with our mouths, and whence the word comes, so that the voice of one man sounds in so many thousand ears; neither can we comprehend how our eyes see, nor how, when we sleep, as to the body we are dead, and nevertheless we live. And yet we seek to climb above ourselves, and to speculate about the high majesty of God, when we do not understand what is happening every day around us.

REASON cannot understand nor grasp how it is that of a little kernel comes a tree; how of a little grain of corn, which corrupts in the earth and perishes, twenty or thirty grains should spring to life.

Therefore the world is full of God's miracles, which happen without ceasing. But because they are so countless and so manifold, and more over so altogether common, as says St. Augustine, we do not regard them nor think of them.

Christ once fed five thousand men, not counting the women and children, with five loaves, and when they had all had enough, there remained over and above twelve baskets full. If such a miracle happened now, all the world would wonder.

But that God is daily, without ceasing, working great miracles, the fleshly heart sees and regards not; far less will it wonder and give thanks.

God the Lord gives daily water from the rocks; bread from the sand; wine, beer, butter, cheese, and vegetables of all kinds from the earth. But because He gives them lavishly, without ceasing, no one holds it to be a miracle.

The blind world, forgetting Him, thinks all comes by chance. But on the other hand those who love Him, whithersoever they turn their eyes, whether they look on the heavens or the earth, the air or the water, see pure, obvious miracles of God, where at they rapturously rejoice, and cannot enough wonder; have gladness and delight therein, and praise the Creator, and know that He also has delight in them.

THE whole world is full of miracles, but our eyes must be pure, lest, because they are so common to us, they become dim.

IN brief, in all, even in the smallest creatures, yea, even in their least members, we see the almighty power and the great wonder-working of God. For what man, however powerful, wise, and holy he be, can out of a fig make a fig-tree, or even one other fig? or out of a cherry-stone a cherry-tree, or even understand how God does it?

NO man can think out, or truly understand what God has done, and still ceaselessly is doing. Nor, if we sweat blood for it, could we write three lines such as St. John has written.

THE growth of every seed is a work of creation.

GOD is constantly making visible things out of invisible, and would fain have us do the same. But we reverse His way, and must needs see and grasp a thing before we will believe it.

### ***The Creatures God's Army.***

ALL the creatures are God's Host or Army. I have purposely kept the word *Exercitus* (army in Latin), army, as it stands in the Hebrew, to defy the devil, who is forever striving with all his powers, and in all kinds of ways, to hinder all the creatures in accomplishing the work for which God created them.

### ***Flowers.***

THE world, since Adam's Fall, knows neither God her Creator, nor His creatures; lives a life poorer than that of the cattle, honors not God, nor glorifies Him. Ah, if Adam had not sinned, how man would have recognized God in all the creatures, would have praised and loved Him, so that even in the smallest flower he would have seen and contemplated God's almightiness, wisdom, and goodness.

For truly who can think to the bottom of this, how God creates out of the dry, dull earth so many flowers of such beautiful colors, and such sweet perfume, such as no painter nor apothecary can rival? From the common ground God is ever bringing forth flowers, golden, crimson, blue, brown, and of all colors. All this Adam and his like would have turned to God's glory, using all the creatures with thanksgiving. But we misuse them senselessly, just as a cow or any unreasonable brute tramples the choicest and fairest flowers and lilies beneath its feet.

### ***A Green Tree more glorious than Gold.***

IF Adam had not fallen, all the creatures had seemed such to us, that every tree and every blade of grass had been better and nobler than if it had been of gold. For in the true nature of things, if we will rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold or silver.

### ***The Sun.***

DOCTOR MARTIN LUTHER said he had observed and taken notice that the sun for the two last days had risen as if with a bound of joy. "He rejoiceth as a hero to run a race." It is a beautiful work of God that we, fallen creatures, dare not gaze at nor fix our eyes upon.

In Paradise we could have gazed on the sun with open eyes, without pain or hindrance.

### ***A Rose.***

HE had a rose in his hand, and was admiring it as a fair and excellent work and creature of God; and he said, "If a man were able to make one rose, he would be worthy of an empire."

### ***The Dew.***

I HAD not known what a lovely thing the dew is, unless the Holy Scriptures had commended it, when God says, "I will give thee of the dew of heaven." Ah,

the Creation is a beautiful thing. When we ought to be understanding it, we lisp and stammer, and say "cledo" for "credo," like the babes. The word is strong, but the heart lisps. But our Lord God knows well that we are but poor little children, if we would only acknowledge it. We can never understand, save through the Son. This is the sum of His discourse, " Per Me, per Me, per Me."

### ***Birds.***

SEE! Christ makes the birds our masters and teachers, so that a feeble sparrow, to our great and perpetual shame, stands in the Gospel as a doctor and preacher to the wisest of men.

TOWARDS evening, two little birds who were making a nest in the Doctor's garden came flying thither, but were now and then frightened by those who were walking there.

Then the Doctor said, "Ah, thou dear little bird, fly not from me. From my heart I wish thee well, if thou wouldst only believe it. Just in this way it is that we distrust our Lord, who nevertheless gives us nothing but good. Surely He will never harm us who has given His Son for us.

"See the little birds, how choice and pure their way of life is. They lay the eggs so daintily in the nest, and brood over them. Then the nestlings peep out.

"If we had never seen an egg, and one were brought us from Calicut, in what a rapture of wonder we should be about it!"

ONE evening when he saw a little bird perched on a tree, to roost there for the night, he said, "This little bird has had its supper, and now it is getting ready to go to sleep here, quite secure, and content, never troubling itself what its food will be, or where its lodging on the morrow. Like David, it 'abides under the shadow of the Almighty.' It sits on its little twig content, and lets God take care."

DOCTOR LUTHER said, "How gladsome are the little birds; sing so deliciously; hop from one branch to another! They have no anxious cares about any want or scarcity that may come; are so content in themselves; and sing with a glad heart their morning and their evening song. Well might we take off our hats to them and say, 'My dear sir Doctor, I must confess I have not acquired this art of which thou art a master! Thou sleepest all night in thy little nest, without any care; in the morning thou risest again, art joyful and well off; settest thyself on a tree and singest and praisest God; seekest after ward thy daily food and findest it. Why cannot I, old fool that I am, do the same, when I have so much reason to do it?' Can the little bird leave its cares, and keep itself in such fulness of content, like a loving saint, having neither acre nor barn, neither larder nor cellar, yet singing and praising, joyful and satisfied, because it knows that it has One who cares for it? Why then cannot we do the same, laboring indeed the while, to till the field and gather the fruits, and garner them against our need?"

NO one can reckon how much it costs only to feed the birds, and even those which are of no use. I consider it costs more to maintain all the sparrows for one year than the king of France's revenues, with all his wealth, rents, and taxes. What shall we say, then, of the food of all the other birds, ravens, jackdaws, crows, finches, and the rest?

SPARROWS are the smallest and the most dissolute of birds; yet they have the greatest glory. All through the year they have the best days, and do the greatest mischief. In the winter they infest the granaries; in the spring they devour the seed in the field; in harvest-time they have enough; in autumn grapes and fruits are their refection. Ergo digni sunt omni perscutione. (Latin meaning: Therefore they are worthy of all scrutiny.)

### ***The World our Storehouse.***

GOD'S power is great, who nourishes the whole world. It is a difficult article truly to grasp, "*I believe in God the Father*" He has created a plentiful provision for us. All seas are our cellars; all forests our hunting-grounds; the earth is full of silver and gold and countless fruits, all created for our sake. The earth is our granary and our store-chamber.

It is God who feeds us, not money.

GOD knows all handicrafts, and exercises them in the most skilful way. For the stag, He makes a coat to cover him, which would not of itself wear out for nine hundred years. For the stag's feet He makes shoes which last longer than the owner. And the sun is His hearth-fire, at which the food of all the creatures is cooked.

I WONDER how our Lord God finds wood for so many uses throughout the whole wide world; as wood for building, for burning, for carpenters, for coopers and wheelwrights, for beams of chambers, window-sashes, oars, candlesticks, cups, buckets, etc.

In brief, wood is the most useful and needful thing in the world, which we could not do without.

### ***Cattle preaching to us.***

ONE day when Doctor Luther saw the cattle in the field going to pasture, he said, "There go our preachers; the carriers of our milk, butter, cheese, wool, who daily preach to us faith in God, that we should trust Him as our Father, that He will care for us and feed us."

### ***Divers kinds of Beasts.***

WILD beasts are beasts of the Law, for they live in fear and trembling. But tame animals are creatures of grace; they live securely with man,

### ***Beauty of some Creatures—their Use.***

IT does not follow that God has created all plants merely that they may furnish food for man and beast. Many things were created that we may praise

God for them. The stars, of what use are they, save that they praise God their Creator?

### ***The Stars.***

THE science of the stars and of the revolutions of the heavens is the oldest science of all, which brought many others with it. The ancients, especially the Hebrews, gave earnest heed to the movements of the heavens, as God says to Abraham: "Consider the stars; canst thou count them?" Astronomy is a beautiful gift of God, as long as she keeps to her own sphere; but if she steps beyond it, and seeks to prophesy future things, as the Astrologers do, this is not to be encouraged. I have gone so far in Astrology that I believe it to be nothing.

### ***The Music of the Spheres.***

PYTHAGORAS says that the movements of the stars make a beautiful concert and harmony, according with each other; but that men through constant use are now weary of this. It is indeed so with us. We have so many beautiful creatures around us that we heed them not, for their abundance.

### ***All Creatures working freely according to God's Law.***

WHATEVER a thing is created for, it does without law and unconstrained. A tree brings forth fruit freely by nature, unconstrained. The sun shines by nature, whereto God has created it, unbidden and uncompelled. And all creatures do of free will what they ought to do. So also God Himself is ever doing good by His nature and character, freely.

### ***Thanksgiving for a Thunderstorm.***

"THAT is a beautiful storm," he said once, with thanksgiving, when thunder came with a fruitful rain, awakening and moistening earth and trees. "Thus Thou givest, unthankful and covetous as we are! That is a fruitful thunder; it has touched the earth and opened its treasure-house, so that gives forth a fragrant perfume, just as the prayer of good Christians gives forth fragrance to God."

### ***May.***

ONCE in beautiful weather in May, he said, "What a picture of the Resurrection! See how the trees are dressed for their bridal! How delightfully all is growing green! What a precious May! Ah, that we would only trust God! What will it be in the life beyond, if God can show us such great delights in this pilgrimage, and this troubled life!

### ***Man, not Nature, the Dwelling-place of God.***

HEAVEN and earth, with all castles of kings and emperors, could not make a dwelling place for God, but in the man who keeps His Word, there He will dwell.

Isaiah calls the heavens His throne, and the earth His footstool, but not His

abode. We may search long to find where God is, but we shall find Him in those who hear the Words of Christ.

For the Lord Christ saith, "If any man love Me, he will keep My words, and we will make our abode with him."

(To be continued.)

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