

Chapter Twenty-Six

Continuation of the foregoing material and of other matters of that kind

“However, a person who makes use of invulnerability sins more manifoldly than he himself thinks; for, firstly, he becomes disloyal to his Creator and Heavenly Father, Who till then has so faithfully preserved him and wishes to continue to protect him further, yea even to bring him into the heavenly fatherland; secondly, he places himself in alliance with and in the protection of, both God’s and his own very worst enemy (alas, what a wretched choice, when one holds Satan himself to be higher than God!); thirdly, the devil is hereby worshiped, as it were, and is given the honor of a protector of man, which honor is due benevolent God alone; fourthly, this honor due God alone, without Whose will heaven and earth would not be able to exist for an instant, is stolen from God and given to the devil when the latter is given preference over God and is honored as a preserver of man (and yet is in truth a corrupter of man); fifthly, the most terrible idolatry that heathens ever practiced is hereby committed, which sin is the worst of all and most hated by God; sixthly, does a man not in this instance sin against nature when he does unto his fellow man what he would not wish done by others unto him? Namely when made through the devil’s help as hard as iron, he cannot be harmed by his opponent, be he ever so valiant, but rather, seventhly, worse than an assassin who steals the life of one who has left his skin in its natural condition; eighthly, such a person, if no genuine reform ensues, is actually lost forever, for those who employ the above-mentioned Passau art say themselves that anyone who dies in the twenty-four hours after he chews up and swallows

such a Passau slip of paper goes to the devil. And it is the same with other means of making oneself invulnerable as it is with the Passau art, for if one is good, then they are all good, and if those who use the Alpine plant called chamois root or those who have brought with them from their mother's womb I know not what and are for that reason invulnerable wish to entertain in their wildest dreams the possibility that theirs is an unnatural and therefore also an unjust matter; for they unfortunately do not know at all under what sort of conditions and with what sort of superstitions chamois roots are created, nor what sort of pacts and stipulations at the birth of children the "good-luck" caul, which they bring with them into the world, are made by some sorts of old women so that the children will be invulnerable. Many other evils might be added in which man immerses himself when he makes himself invulnerable; but, my son, let it suffice for you to know that by so doing you lose the eternal good, which is the very greatest harm of all that may befall a human being. The only other thing to be noted is that upright, honorable, and good folk, both among the soldiery and the civilian citizenry, have no respect for those who make themselves invulnerable; for they say if these people were not faint-hearted, cowardly ninnies, which class of people are otherwise called, if you will pardon the expression, sons of bitches, then they would not desire to draw over them any such scoundrel's birth-caul.

So let this be enough of talk about making oneself invulnerable; in speaking of it, it now occurs to me that I was told that a faint-hearted booby appealed to another fellow to let him have a slip of paper which would make him invulnerable; the other one agrees to do it and writes down three times naught but the following: "Defend yourself, you son of a bitch!" wraps it up and gives it to the other one to sew up in his clothes, whereupon he imagined that he was invulnerable, and in all encounters went into battle as boldly as if he

had been blind and a second Horny-Hided Sigfried, and he each time came away unscathed too, which reminds me of that old story about a woman who got from a traveling medicine man a slip of paper for her eye troubles which she hung around her neck and by which she was cured of her eye troubles. After her father confessor learned of this, however, and was unwilling to permit it because it was a matter of superstitions, but instead demanded of her the slips of paper and opened it, he found on it naught save this: 'May the devil rip out your eyeballs and then shit in the sockets!'

"These would have been, of course, ridiculous things and amusing pranks, had only superstition not been present. But, my son, what indeed do you think was the content of those unknown and unintelligible words that you employed when you made cavalrymen appear on the battlefield, or, to put it more accurately, conjured up so many thousand devils? Might they well have had another meaning save that they obligated and bound you to Satan himself, for the sake of which he so willingly presented himself with a legion of more or less evil spirits and served you? No, verily, the devil does nothing without an eye to a reward. 'Tis dangerous to deal with Jews when they begin to speak Hebrew to one another; how much more so with wretched Satan when one contracts with him in an incomprehensible language, who is after all never found to be without deceit when he speaks clearly and comprehensibly. And the same will have been the case with the words which you used when you conjured others' musket barrels shut or undid their invulnerability."

After the pater said this he paused a little and looked at me as if I were a wretched person for whom one bears great pity and sympathy, which so cut me to the quick that I sat there like a carved statue and nearly died inside for remorse and sorrow. But I recovered myself enough so that I was able to say: "Now I recognize for the first time the magnitude and manifoldness of my grave sins, which

I did not understand before.” “My child,” the pater thereupon answered, “twould have been your duty that you ought to have known and understood this; for to this end our faithful Heavenly Father has revealed His divine and most holy will, so that we may recognize it, behave in accordance with it, vanquish our own perverse will and make it conform to His and thereby achieve what our Savior earned on the cross. For this purpose God has given us reason so that we are quite well able to grasp and comprehend His will, and not so that we misuse it on superstitions or anything else which goes against His divine will, but rather we should apply it to His eternal praise and to the accomplishment of our salvation. For this purpose our benevolent Father has given us a mind, so that when we finally, in accordance with our duty, have recognized and grasped with our reason the most holy will of God, we may put in mind this and whatever else pertains to the praise of God and to the accomplishment of our salvation, continuously consider these things diligently and nevermore forget them.”

I answered: “Father, you must believe surely that I did not turn over to you and destroy the art of making myself invisible and my other arts with the intent of pursuing my wanton arts further in the future, but rather out of shame, which did not permit me to be so bold as to speak with you about them.” “My son,” the pater answered, “this shame stems, again, from the cunning and inspiration of the devil, who is attempting to see to it that you should keep these things on your person till in the future, at his then further instigation, you sin with them again, and perhaps more gravely than before, so that he may finally get you in his claws. Through damage to your body and great danger to your soul and your eternal salvation you have already learned whither the devil was misleading you with these infernal arts; and you have, on the other hand, understood palpably enough that only the unfathomable goodness of God at that time

(despite the fact that you deserved and were worthy of a different fate) preserved you from ruin in this world and the next; yea, called you anew to penitence and thus to the heavenly fatherland. If you are now wise and do not wish to hurl yourself impetuously into hell, then you will easily be able to think what you have to do.”

Hereupon I spread out my junk without delay, namely, all manner of slips of paper for making myself invulnerable to shot and other slips with characters and unknown words, some of them written in bat's blood, especially those which one loads into a pistol with a handful of chaff or chopped straw and fires out behind oneself, at which as many troopers of horse appear on the battlefield as there were pieces of chaff or chopped straw. The pater did not deign to read a single one of the slips, but instead (because we happened to be sitting at a fireplace) threw them all into the fire, whereupon there was heard such an explosion in the fire as if over 300 musketeers had fired off a salvo. The fire also forthwith blazed up so mightily and so shot out of the fireplace that we feared the room might catch fire and burn up with us in it. It did not last long at all, however, for scarcely had we taken fright when we heard and saw nothing more; but anyway, for that reason the pater did not wish to throw the root from the anthill which made one invisible into the fire too, for fear that worse might befall us; rather he said I should wrap it up and seal it and give it to him till he was able to give it a different death, without danger to himself, which I was then glad to do.

Meanwhile the pater saw my anxious state of mind, and that I gladly and from the bottom of my heart had done away with my damnable arts; therefore he began to console me again, and said that he was gladly willing to suffer me in his company till I should have the opportunity to get home again safely, admonishing me loyally that I should soon confess my sins again and pour my heart out to God like water; not like wine, which leaves behind in the drinking

vessel its smell; not like milk, which leaves behind its color; not like oil, which leaves behind some of its greasiness; and not like honey, which leaves behind its taste; for, he said, God wishes to have us completely, and whenever the slightest bit of us is left behind, so that wretched Satan would be able to gain access and get his claws on us again, 'tis dangerous for man.

I promised him to follow his instructions obediently and, in order to mend my ways, to pour my life, as it were, into a different mold, with humble expression of my gratitude to him for his having so loyally espoused my cause and for having brought me, through God's grace, to recognize myself for what I was. He answered that what he had done was his duty, and if I would persist in my good resolve and improve my life so that I achieved salvation, then he did not doubt that God would reward him; I should merely be content, he said, and direct my obedience and humility to God's will.

After that I began to wail and lament that in the entire Christian world so many of the sort of things which I had done were going on, since in part the words and works which people were employing for these things were abominable and terrible, and in part quite ridiculous and yet nevertheless they were all damnable; as, for example, there were the horrible conjurings and alliances with the devil himself, the foolish and superstitious ceremonies and the ridiculous chanting of spells, each of which, even the slightest one, since it goes against the will of God, leads away from God and to hell. What manner of arts old beggar men and beggar women, such as gypsies, practice and teach to others is well known, and that the peasants have spells, magic arts, and superstitious usages which they employ so that nothing can be stolen from them, so that their horses can not be enchanted, so that their cows not be milked dry by demons, and other things of that sort. Some know how to conjure bugs and lice into another's house, others how to drive away caterpillars, ground

lice, beetles, and other varmints, others how to conjure snakes, and yet others similar magic tricks; some were able to conjure shut the mouths of mice so that they are unable to gnaw anything up; some the mouths of dogs so that they are unable to catch any hares; indeed, there is well nigh no creature or insect with which forbidden magic arts are not practiced, so much so that Praetorius has brought together in his "Pot of Fortune" a whole heap of such superstitious things; and elsewhere more of them have been presented to the world in public print, whereby it is to be lamented that these perverse people mostly misuse holy days, without doubt at the special instigation of Satan himself, such as Good Friday, on which not only do the smiths, completely naked, forge from a gallows chain their rings against epilepsy, but also other abominable things are carried out, of which it is unnecessary to speak and terrifying to hear, such as Walpurgis Night and St. Philip's and St. James' Day, when the peasants through their magic attempt to preserve their cattle for the whole year from being enchanted by sorcery, and know not that they are then themselves practicing sorcery; St. John's night, on which some wicked people to attain invisibility receive fern seeds from the devil and do other evil things, and often run a great risk, as, for example, curious and concupiscent women, who on St. Andrew's night wish to learn what manner of husbands they are to get. Finally, even the holy Christmastide, in which the Salvation of the World was born to us, is not safe from such God-forgetful folk.

