

WHEN AN EVIL THOUGHT is newly sown in you, either about things afar off or about those formerly known, and it manifests itself constantly in your mind, then know most certainly that it lays a snare for you; awaken yourself, and be alert in time.

St Isaac the Syrian, *Ascetical Homily 64*, p. 452
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WE MUST NOT IMAGINE that anyone slips and comes to grief by a sudden fall, but that he falls by a hopeless collapse either from being deceived by beginning his training badly, or from the good qualities of his soul failing through a long course of carelessness of mind, and so his faults gaining ground upon him little by little.

St John Cassian, *Conference with Abbot Theodore*, ch. xvii
NPNF, Vol. XI, p. 361

BY MEANS OF SOME EARTHLY AND CARNAL AFFECTION, by which a man in his natural will is bound, sin entices him, until it becomes to him a fetter and a chain and a heavy weight, sinking and stifling him in the world of wickedness, and not allowing him to come to the surface and get to God. Whatever a man has loved in the world, weighs down his mind, and holds it down, and will not let him come up. ¶ In this balance, with its bias to the scale of evil, all mankind hangs and is tested, Christians and all, whether dwelling in cities, or in mountains, or in monasteries, or in fields, or in deserts; because the natural will of man entices him to set his affection, say, on property, another on gold and silver, another on the wisdom of the eloquence of the world for the sake of the glory from men; another has loved power, another glory and honours among men, another wrath and anger – for yielding quickly to it is loving it – another unseasonable conversations, another jealousy; . . . Whether it be a little thing of the world or a great that ties him, the man is kept down by it, and not allowed to rise. Whatever passion a man does not bravely war against, is an object of his affection; and it holds him fast, and weighs him down, and becomes to him a hindrance and a fetter, preventing his mind from going up to God and pleasing Him, and from serving Him only and thereby proving fit for the kingdom and obtaining eternal life.

St Macarius the Great, *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*,
tr. Mason, Homily V, pp. 45–6

PEARLS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

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