

CHAPTER XXVI

The Demons hold a Council in Hell against Most Holy Mary.

322. At the instant of the incarnation of the Word, as I said in chapter XI (130), Lucifer and all hell felt the power of the right arm of the Almighty which hurled them to the deepest of the infernal caverns. There they remained overwhelmed for some days until the Lord in his admirable providence allowed them to come forth from this captivity, the cause of which they did not know. The great dragon then arose and scoured the earth, spying everywhere for new developments to which he might attribute the rout which he and all his satellites had experienced. This search the proud prince of darkness would not trust entirely to his companions, but he himself issued forth in their company to course about upon the globe, seeking with the most cunning malice to find what he wanted. He spent in this search three months and finally returned to hell just as ignorant of the true cause as when he had come forth, for the great mysteries of heaven were not intelligible to him at that time because the darkness of his malice did not permit him either to rejoice in their wonderful effects or to glorify and bless their Author; this was reserved to us men, for whom Redemption was inaugurated.

323. The enemy of God was very much confused and aggrieved without knowing how to account for it. In order to discuss the matter he called together all the infernal hosts, without excusing or permitting a single one of the demons to be absent. In this convention from a prominent place he addressed the meeting in this manner: "You well know, my subjects, with what great anxiety I have sought to avenge myself and have tried to destroy the power of the Almighty ever since God cast us out from his dwelling and deprived us of our might. Although I cannot do anything to injure Him, I have spared no time or exertion in extending my dominion over men whom He loves. By my own strength I have peopled my reign (Job 41:25), and many nations and tribes obey and follow me (Lk. 4:6). Day by day I draw toward myself innumerable souls, depriving them of the knowledge and possession of God so they might not enjoy the happiness which we have lost. I ensnare them into these eternal pains which we suffer, since they will follow my teachings and guidance; upon them I will wreak the vengeance which I have conceived against their Creator. But all this appears of small consequence to me in the face of the sudden overthrow which we have experienced, for an attack so powerful and ruinous has not happened to us since we were hurled from heaven. I recognize your forces as well as mine have been much weakened. This new and extraordinary defeat must have some new cause, and I fear our weakness is the beginning of our ruin.

324. "This matter will require renewed diligence, for my fury is unquenchable and my vengeance remains insatiable. I have scoured the whole earth, observed all its inhabitants with great care, and yet I have found nothing notable. I have watched and persecuted all the virtuous and perfect women who are of the race of Her whom we saw in heaven and whom I expected to meet among them; but I find no sign of her having as yet been born, for I do not find one who possesses the marks of the one who is to be the Mother of the Messiah. A Maiden whom I feared because of her great virtues, and whom I persecuted in the temple, is already married, and therefore She cannot be the one we look for, since Isaiah says She is to be a Virgin (Is. 7:14). Nevertheless I fear and detest this Maiden, since such a virtuous Woman might give birth to the Mother of the Messiah or to some great prophet. To this hour I have not been able to overcome Her in anything, and regarding her life I understand less than others. She has always invincibly resisted me, and easily eludes my memory; or remembering Her, I cannot approach Her. I have

not yet been able to decide whether these difficulties in regard to Her are miraculous, or arise from my forgetfulness, or whether they are simply the consequences of the contempt in which I hold such an insignificant Maiden. Yet I will consider this matter, for recently we could not resist the power of her command by which we were dispossessed of our right to dwell in those persons from whom She drove us. This certainly requires satisfaction, and She merits my wrath solely because of what She has shown Herself to be on these occasions. I resolve to persecute Her and overcome Her; do you yourselves assist me in this enterprise with all your strength and malice, and those who will distinguish themselves in this conquest will receive great rewards at my hands.”

325. The whole infernal rabble which had listened attentively to Lucifer praised and approved his intentions, and they told him not to worry about this Woman, for She would easily be overcome, and he would not be without his triumphs over Her since his power was so great and ruled all the world (Jn. 14:30). Then they set about discussing the means of entrapping most holy Mary, supposing Her to be a woman of distinguished and remarkable virtue and holiness, but not the Mother of the incarnate Word, for as I have said at that time the demons were ignorant of the hidden sacrament connected with Her (130). Having agreed upon these means there followed a long conflict of Lucifer and his ministers of evil with the heavenly Princess, so She could many times crush the head of this infernal dragon (Gen. 3:15). And though this was a great battle, and one of the most remarkable conflicts against him in her life, yet afterwards there was another even greater one when She remained in the world after the Ascension of her most holy Son into heaven; of this I shall speak in the third Part of this History (*Cor.* 451-526). It was very remarkable because Lucifer at that time already knew Her to be the Mother of God, and of this battle St. John speaks in chapter XII of the Apocalypse as I shall explain in its place.

326. In dispensing the mysteries of the Incarnation the providence of the Most High was most admirable, as it is now in the government of the Catholic Church. There is no doubt it is proper to the strong and sweet providence of God to hide many things from the demons which are better unknown to them, both because they are unworthy of knowing the sacred mysteries (as stated above [322]), as also because the divine power becomes more manifest in keeping the demons in subjection; moreover, this ignorance allows the hidden works which God has ordained in his Church, as well as all the sacraments which He has worked in it, to proceed more sweetly, and also so the unmeasured wrath of the demons may be more effectively curbed by not allowing them to proceed according to their malice. Although the Almighty could always repress and restrain the demons by force, yet He proceeds in this matter according to what is most appropriate to his infinite goodness. For this reason the Lord concealed from these enemies the dignity of most holy Mary and the wonderful manner of her pregnancy, as well as her virginal integrity before and after birth, and He concealed it still more effectively by giving Her a spouse. Likewise they were uncertain of the divinity of Christ our Lord until the moment of his death, and since that time they have understood many of the mysteries of the Redemption in which they had been deluded and puzzled. Instead of inciting the Jews to inflict upon Him the most cruel death, as shall be declared in its place (*Tran.* 517, 540, 548, 562), they would have sought to prevent it as the Apostle said (I Cor. 2:8), and they would have tried to retard our Redemption by making known to the world that Christ is the true God. Therefore when St. Peter confessed Him as such, Christ forbade him and the rest of the Apostles to make it known to anyone (Mt. 16:20). Though because of the miracles He wrought and the exorcisms which He performed the demons almost began to suspect Him to be the Messiah, and called Him the Son of God (Lk. 4:34-5; 8:28), yet His Majesty would not allow them to publish it about; nor did they call Him this with

certain conviction, for their suspicions subsided when they saw our Lord despised and fatigued. They could never penetrate the mystery of the humility of the Savior, and their inflated pride kept them in darkness.

327. Thus since Lucifer did not know the dignity of Mary the Mother of God at the time of this persecution, fierce as it was, it was not as terrible as the one She suffered later on when he knew who She was. If on this present occasion he had known She was the One whom he had seen in heaven clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12:1), and that She was to crush his head (Gen. 3:15), he would have been lashed into devouring fury and consumed in fiery wrath. If they were so fearfully enraged at the mere thought of her sanctity and perfection, it is certain had they known her greatness they would, as far as would be allowed them, have disturbed the whole universe in order to make an end of Her. However, since they on the one hand were ignorant of the mysteries of the heavenly Lady, and on the other hand felt the effects of her powerful virtue and extreme sanctity, they were on this occasion thrown into confusion and doubt, asking each other: Who is this Woman, against whose powers we must admit we are so feeble? Is She perhaps the One who among creatures is to hold the preeminent place?

328. Others judged this Woman could not possibly be the Mother of the Messiah expected by men, for besides having a husband She with her husband belonged to the most poor, humble and insignificant people in this world; they had wrought no public miracles or prodigies, nor had they attracted the esteem or reverence of any of their fellowmen. Since Lucifer and his associates are so proud, they could not persuade themselves that such extreme humility and self-abasement could be compatible with the dignity of the Mother of God. Lucifer thought God in his power would not choose for Himself what he considered unworthy of his own dignity, which he knew was beneath that of the Almighty. In the end he was deceived by his own arrogance and conceited pride, for these are the vices which are most apt to darken the intellect and drag the will to ruin. Because of this Solomon says their own malice made them blind (Wis. 2:21)* so they would not know the eternal Word was to make use of such means in order to destroy the arrogance and haughtiness of the dragon, whose thoughts were more distant from those of the Almighty than the earth is distant from heaven (Is. 55:9). He thought God would descend into the world against him with great pomp and noisy ostentation, humiliating by his power the proud princes and monarchs whom the demon had filled with his own arrogance; and so well had he succeeded that many who reigned before the time of Christ were inflated with such pride and presumption as to have lost their common sense and forgotten they were mortal and earthly. Lucifer judged all these things according to his own vanity and method of proceeding against the works of the Lord.

329. But His Majesty, who is infinite Wisdom, worked all to the contrary of what Lucifer judged, for He came to conquer him not only by his omnipotence but by humility, meekness, obedience and poverty, which are the weapons of his warfare (II Cor. 10:4). Far from Him are the empty show and vanity maintained by the riches of the world. He came disguised and hidden in the outward appearance of lowliness, and He chose a poor Mother. All that the world values He came to despise, teaching the true science of life in word and example; hence the demon found himself deceived and overcome by the very things which were most repugnant and unbearable to him.

330. In ignorance of all these mysteries Lucifer spent some days spying out and reconnoitering the natural condition of most holy Mary, her temperament and composure, her inclinations and

* cf. also Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10 [Ed.]

the tranquility of her actions, so equable and measured, for all this could not be hidden from this enemy. Seeing that in all things She was so perfect, her constitution so sweet, and that She was altogether an invincible wall, he returned to consult with the demons, proposing to them the difficulty which he sensed in tempting that Woman, an enterprise which caused him great apprehension. All of them projected mighty plans of attack, encouraging each other in trying to solve the difficulties. Regarding the execution of these designs, the glorious triumphs of the heavenly Princess over all her enemies, and the foiling of all of their damned and malicious counsels, I shall speak in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.

331. My daughter, I desire thee to be very aware and watchful in order not to be possessed by the ignorance and darkness by which mortals are commonly obscured, forgetful of their eternal salvation, without considering their danger, by the incessant persecution of the demons to bring them to perdition. Thus men rest and sleep, forgetful as if there were no powerful and vigilant enemies. This formidable carelessness arises from two causes: First, men are so absorbed with their earthly, animal and sentient being (I Cor. 2:14) that they do not know how to feel wounds other than those affecting the animal senses; everything else that is interior does not harm them in their estimation.* The other reason is this: The princes of darkness are invisible and hidden to the senses (Eph. 6:12), and as carnal men neither touch them, nor see them, nor sense them, they forget the fear of them; yet for this very reason they must be more attentive and careful, since invisible enemies are more shrewd and dexterous in causing injury by their treachery. For this reason the danger is so much the more certain the less obvious it is, and the wounds are so much the more deadly the less they are noticeable, perceived and felt.

332. Hear, my daughter, most important truths for true and eternal life. Attend to my counsels, practice my instruction, and receive my admonitions; for if thou carelessly forget them I shall cease to speak to thee. Notice, then, what thou hast not until now understood of the disposition of these enemies. I make known to thee that no intellect, nor human tongue, nor the angels, can manifest the wrath and furious rage which Lucifer and his demons have conceived against mortals (Apoc. 12:12) because they are the image of God himself and capable of enjoying Him eternally. Only the Lord himself comprehends the wickedness and malice of these proud and rebellious spirits against his holy Name and against his worship. And if by his powerful arm these enemies were not subdued, they would in one moment destroy the world, and more than famished lions, dragons, and wild beasts tear apart all men and rip their flesh to pieces. But the most kind Father of mercies[†] shields and restrains their wrath, and keeps his little children in his arms so they do not fall prey to these infernal wolves.

333. Now consider, with all deliberation possible to thee, if there is any sorrow so lamentable than to see so many men darkened and forgetful of such danger; that some by levity, for petty causes, or for a brief and momentary pleasure, others by negligence, and others by their disorderly appetites, all cast themselves voluntarily from the refuge where the Most High has placed them, into the furious hands of such impious and cruel enemies, who will execute upon them their fury, and this not for an hour, a day, a month, or a year, but eternally inflict upon them unspeakable and unimaginable torments. Be amazed, my daughter, and fear to see such

* cf. Mt. 5:28 [Ed.]

† cf. II Cor. 1:3 [Ed.]

horrendous and formidable stupidity of impenitent mortals, and that the faithful, who know this danger by faith, have lost their minds, and the demon has them so demented and blind in the midst of the light furnished them by the true and Catholic faith they profess, that they neither see nor recognize the danger, nor know how to separate themselves from it.

334. So thou mayest fear this danger more and guard thyself against it, remember this dragon recognizes thee and stalks thee from the hour thou wert created and entered into the world. Night and day he restlessly prowls about thee, awaiting the chance to prey upon thee. He observes thy natural inclinations, and even the benefits of the Lord, in order to make war upon thee with thy own weapons. He consults with other demons regarding thy ruin, and promises rewards to those more solicitous in securing it. Thus they weigh thy actions with great vigilance, measure thy steps, and all work to cast thee into dangers and bonds for every work and action thou dost undertake. All these truths I desire thee to see in the Lord, in whom thou shalt know where they lead; measure them afterwards with thy own experience, and comparing them thou shalt understand whether there is any reason to sleep in the midst of such dangers. And though this watchfulness is important for all those born into this world,* for special reasons it is more necessary for thee than anyone else; and though I do not manifest them all to thee now, do not doubt thou must live with great vigilance and caution. It is enough for thee to know thy soft and fragile nature, of which thy enemies shall avail themselves against thee.

* cf. Mk. 13:37 [Ed.]