

CHAPTER XV

Declaring the Hidden Warfare of the Demons against Souls; the Manner in which the Lord Defends Them through His Holy Angels, through Mary Most Holy, and through Himself; and a Council Held by the Demons against the Queen Herself and the Church after the Conversion of St. Paul.

277. By the abundant instruction of the Holy Scriptures,* and later by that of the holy Doctors and masters of the spiritual life, the whole Catholic Church is informed and all its children are warned of the malice and most vigilant cruelty of hell against all men in seeking to draw them to eternal torments. From the same sources we also know how the infinite power of God defends us, and thus if we wish to avail ourselves of his invincible friendship and protection, and if we on our part make ourselves worthy of the merits of Christ our Savior, we shall walk securely on the path of eternal salvation. In order to assure us in this hope and console us all the Holy Scriptures were written, as St. Paul assures us (Rom. 15:4); yet at the same time we must exert ourselves lest our hopes be made vain through lack of our cooperation. Hence St. Peter joins one with the other, for having admonished us to throw all our care upon the Lord who is solicitous for us he immediately adds: *Be sober and watch, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (I Peter 5:8).

278. These and other warnings of sacred Scripture are given both in general and for each one in particular. And though from them and from continued experience the children of the Church can arrive at a more definite and particular knowledge of the attacks and persecutions of the demons against all men, yet because in their earthliness and gross sensuality they are accustomed to attend only to what they perceive by the senses and never lift their thoughts to higher things (I Cor. 2:14), they live in false security, ignoring the inhuman and hidden cruelty with which the demons seek their perdition and draw them to it. Men also ignore the divine protection by which they are surrounded and defended, and like ignorant persons they neither give thanks for this blessing nor pay any attention to their danger. *Woe to the earth* (says St. John in the Apocalypse [12:12]), *because Satan is come down unto you, having great wrath and indignation!* This lamenting voice the Evangelist heard in heaven, where if the saints could feel sorrow they certainly would feel it for us due to the hidden warfare which such a powerful, enraged and mortal enemy wages against men. But though the saints cannot have sorrow because of this our danger they compassionate us, while we, sunk in a formidable lethargy and forgetfulness, have neither sorrow nor compassion for ourselves. In order to awaken from this sleep[†] those who read this History, throughout the course of these revelations I have been given understanding and enlightenment concerning the hidden schemes of malice concocted by the demons against the mysteries of Christ and against the Church and her children. These I have described in many passages, particularly dilating upon some of the secrets of this terrible warfare against men which the demons wage in order to draw us to their side. On this present occasion of the conversion of St. Paul the Lord has shown to me this truth more openly, enabling me to describe and make known the continual battle and altercation which goes on, unperceived by our senses, between our Angels and the demons over the defense of souls, and the manner in which we are

* Gen. 3:1; I Par. 21:1; Job ch. 1 and 2; Zach. 3:1; Mt. 13:19; Lk. 8:12, 13:16; Acts 5:3; II Cor. 4:4, 11:14; Eph. 6:11; I Thes. 2:18; I Peter 5:8; Apoc. 2:10, etc.

† cf. Rom. 13:11 [Ed.]

defended by the divine power, either by means of these same Angels, or through most holy Mary, or by Christ our Savior, or by the Almighty himself.

279. Regarding the altercations and contentions which these holy Angels have with the demons in order to defend us from their envy and malice there are clear testimonies in sacred Scripture, which I suppose for my purpose it shall be enough to refer to them without going into detail. Well known is what the holy Apostle Judas Thaddeus says in his canonical letter (Jude 9), that St. Michael contended with the devil against his intention of making known the resting place of the body of Moses, whom the holy Archangel, at the command of God, had buried in a place concealed from the Jews. Lucifer wished to make it known in order to tempt the Jews to fall away from lawful worship into idolatry by inducing them to offer sacrifices at his sepulchre, but St. Michael opposed the attempt to reveal it. The enmity of Lucifer and his demons against man is as old as their disobedience against God, and their fury and cruelty after they had come to know that the eternal Word was to take flesh and be born of that Woman clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12:1) are proportionate to their rebellious pride against God, as was said in the first Part (*Con.* 90-1). From his rejection of these counsels of eternal Wisdom and his refusal to bow his neck in obedience was born this hatred against God and his creatures, and since he cannot vent it upon the Omnipotent he executes it upon the works of his right hand; moreover, because the demon possesses the nature of an angel he resolves irrevocably and never ceases to strive after what he has once determined upon by his will, and thus although changing the means to attain his end he never changes his will in regard to persecuting mankind. On the contrary, his hatred has increased and will increase in proportion to the favors lavished by God upon the just and saints of his Church and the victories gained by the seed of that Woman his Enemy, in whom God had threatened to crush his head while he would be able to do no more than lie in ambush at her heel (Gen. 3:15).

280. But since this fiend is a pure spirit and is not fatigued or ever in need of rest, he rises up so early to persecute us that he begins the combat from the very first instant of our existence in our mother's womb, and he does not abate his fury and strife against the soul until it leaves the body, verifying that which holy Job said: *The life of man upon earth is a warfare* (Job 7:1). This battle does not consist merely in our being born in original sin and therefore subject to the *fomes peccati* and the disorderly passions inclining us to evil, but besides fomenting the continual battle within our own selves the demon wages war against us on his own account, availing himself of all his own astuteness and malice, and as far as his power goes of our own senses, faculties, inclinations and passions. Above all he seeks to make use of other natural causes to deprive us of salvation together with our life; and if he does not succeed in this, he misses no chance of causing us damage or leading us into sin and robbing us of grace, even from the moment of our conception until that of our death. Hence our defense must also last this long.

281. All this, especially with the children of the Church, happens in the following manner. As soon as the demon suspects that the conception of a human body is to take place, he first notes the intention of the parents and whether they are in the state of grace or not, or whether they have committed any excess in the act of generation. He also studies the complexion of the humors of their bodies, for ordinarily these humors influence those of the body generated. The demons also take note of the particular as well as the general natural causes and conditions of nature which unite in bringing about the generation and the organization of the human body. From these different concurring elements of generation the demons with their vast experience judge as much as possible the complexion or inclinations of the one conceived, and they are accustomed to lay out great plans for future action. If they fear good results, they seek to hinder as much as possible

the last generation or infusion of the soul, presenting dangers or temptations to the mothers in order to bring about a miscarriage during the forty or eighty days* it takes after the conception of the body to organize it for the infusion of the soul. But as soon as they see God create and infuse the soul the wrath of these dragons exerts itself in furious activity to prevent the creature from issuing to light and attaining Baptism if it is to be born where this Sacrament can easily be administered. For this purpose they suggest and tempt the mothers to many disorders and excesses whereby the parturition is forced and a premature birth or the death of the child in the womb might be caused, for among Catholics, and heretics who still administer Baptism, the demons content themselves with depriving children of Baptism so they are not justified and go to limbo where God is not seen. Among pagans and idolaters they are not so solicitous because among them damnation is in certain prospect.

282. Against this malignance the Most High provides defense and protection in various ways. The most common is that of his vast and universal Providence, which ensures the proper effects of natural causes in their time independent of the perversion or hindrance of the demons, for this is the limit set to their power; otherwise, if God would give free scope to their implacable malice they would overturn the whole world. But the goodness of the Creator will not allow this; neither does He desire to deliver over his works, nor the government of inferior matters, and much less that of men, to his sworn and mortal enemies, who in the well-ordered government of the universe serve only as vile executioners, and even in this office they do no more than what is commanded and permitted them. If depraved men would not join hands with these enemies, entertaining their deceits and by their sins meriting punishment, all nature would preserve the common order of cause and effect both in general and in particular, and there would be no occasion for such great misfortunes and losses among the faithful in the diminution of crops, contagious diseases, sudden deaths, and other devastations invented by the demon. All these and many other evils, happening even at the birth of children through vices and disorders, we merit ourselves by uniting with the demons for our own chastisement and delivering ourselves over to their malice.

283. Adding to this general providence enters the particular protection of the Angels, to whom as David says the Most High has given the command to bear us up in their hands lest we stumble into the snares of Satan (Ps. 90:12); and in another place it says He sends his Angels to surround us with his defense and free us from evils (Ps. 33:8). This defense, like the persecution, begins from the womb in which we receive being, and continues until our souls are presented for judgment at the tribunal of God according to the state and fate each one has merited. At the moment in which a human being is conceived the Lord commands the Angels to stand guard over it and its mother. Afterwards in its opportune time He assigns a particular Angel as its guardian as I said in the first Part of this History (*Con.* 114). From the very beginning the Angels enter into violent combat with the demons for the protection of the souls committed to their care. The demons contend they have jurisdiction over the creature because it is conceived in sin, a child of malediction, unworthy of grace and divine favor, and a slave of hell. The Angel refutes them by maintaining it was conceived according to the laws of nature, over which hell has no power; and though it has original sin, it contracted it along with the same human nature, which was the fault of its first parents and not of its own free will; and in spite of original sin God has created it to know, praise and serve Him so in virtue of his Passion and merits it can merit eternal glory; and these high ends are not to be frustrated by the mere will of the demon.

* cf. *Conception* 218 and its footnote [Ed.]

284. These enemies also allege that the parents of the creature had neither an upright intention nor the proper end in view in its generation and committed excess and sinned in the act of generation. This is the strongest argument which the demons can advance for their right over human creatures yet in the womb, for without a doubt such sins make the child unworthy of much of the divine protection or hinder the generation. But though this latter often happens and a number of human beings are conceived without ever issuing into the light, ordinarily the holy Angels prevent such a sad result. If they are legitimate children the Angels allege the parents have received the Sacraments and blessings of the Church, and likewise have some virtues such as almsgiving, acts of piety, and other devotions or good works. All these things the Angels allege, and they use them as weapons against the demons in order to defend the souls entrusted to them. Over illegitimate children the contention is greater, for the enemy exercises a greater right because in the begetting of such children, whereby God has been so grievously offended, the enemies obtain a greater right and the parents justly deserve rigorous chastisement. Hence in defending and preserving illegitimate children God manifests his most generous mercy in a special manner. The holy Angels allege this mercy and that the children are the result of natural causes as I have said above. If the parents have no merits of their own, neither any virtues, but are sullied by sins and vices, then the holy Angels refer to the merits found in the forefathers of the child, in its brothers or relations, or to the prayers of its friends and acquaintances, and that it is no fault of the child if the parents are sinners or have committed excess in its generation. They also contend that those children if they live may reach a high degree of virtue and holiness, and that the demon has no right to hinder them from arriving at the knowledge and love of their Creator. Sometimes God manifests to them his design of choosing them for some great work in the service of the Church, and then the defense of the Angels is most vigilant and powerful, yet the demons also exercise greater fury in their persecution, being incited thereto by the greater solicitude of the Angels.

285. All these altercations and those of which we shall yet speak are spiritual since they are between the Angels and the demons whom they battle; the weapons with which the Angels and the Lord himself fight are also spiritual. The most effective arms against the malign spirits are the divine truths and mysteries of the Divinity and most holy Trinity, of Christ our Savior, the hypostatic union, the Redemption, and the immense love with which the Lord as God and man seeks our eternal salvation; and next after these are the sanctity and purity of most holy Mary, her mysteries and merits. All these sacraments are presented in ever new aspects to the view of the demons so they are forced to understand and take notice of them through the activity of the holy Angels and of God himself. And then happens what St. James says, that the demons *believe and tremble* (2:19), for these truths terrify and torment them so much that in order not to be obliged to take notice of them they descend to the abyss, and they are so tormented by their horror of the mysteries of Christ they are accustomed to ask God to take away the knowledge and remembrance of the hypostatic union and other great wonders of divine love. Hence the Angels repeat many times in these battles: "Who is like unto God? Who is like unto Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who died for the human race? Who is like unto Mary most holy, our Queen, who was exempt from all sin, and gave flesh and human form to the eternal Word in her womb, being a Virgin and remaining always a Virgin?"

286. The persecutions of the demons and the defense of the Angels continue at the birth of the child. At that hour the mortal hatred of this serpent exceeds itself, especially with those children who might receive the water of Baptism, for he strives to hinder this by any means in his power; yet also the innocence of the infant cries loudly to the Lord in the words of Ezechias: *Lord, I*

suffer violence, answer Thou for me (Is. 38:14), and the Angels regard this as spoken in the name of the child. They guard them at that age with great care since they are now outside of the womb of their mothers and hence unable to protect themselves, and neither is the watchfulness of those who raise them able to protect them from such dangers as that age entails. Hence many times the care of the elders is supplemented by that of the holy Angels, shielding the child in its sleep, when alone, and in other situations in which many children would perish if they were not protected by their Angels. Those of us who arrive at the reception of holy Baptism and Confirmation have in these Sacraments a powerful defense against hell by the character with which we are signed as children of the Church; by the justification by which we are regenerated as children of God and heirs of his glory; by the virtues of faith, hope and charity, and other virtues by which we are adorned and strengthened to perform good works; by the participation of the other Sacraments and suffrages of the Church whereby is applied to us the merits of Christ and his saints; and other great blessings which all the faithful must acknowledge receiving. And if we would but avail ourselves of these benefits we would conquer the demon with these weapons and hell would have no part* in any of the children of the Church.

287. But O sorrow!, that there are so many counted among those same children who after arriving at the use of reason lose the grace of Baptism and join hands with the demon against their God! In view of this it would seem just for us to be deprived and cut off from the protection of his providence and his holy Angels. But He does not act thus; on the contrary, at the time when we begin to be unworthy of it, He meets us with greater kindness in order to manifest in us the riches of his infinite goodness. Words cannot describe what and how great are the astuteness and diligence of the demon in order to ruin man by inducing him to commit some sin as soon as he arrives at the age of the use of reason. For this they prepare from afar, seeking to accustom children to vicious actions during the years of their infancy; to ensure they hear and see other similar evil conduct in their parents, in those who help raise them, and in the company of others who are older and more depraved; that their parents neglect to prevent this damage in those tender years of their children, because then, as on soft wax on the unwritten tablet, all sensible impressions are deeply engraved and thus give the demons an opportunity to move the inclinations and passions of the children, and it is well known that men ordinarily follow these inclinations and passions unless prevented by special influences.† As a result of all this these youth upon coming to the use of reason follow their inclinations and passions in that which is sensible and delectable, with which their imagination or phantasy is filled. As soon as they fall into some sin the demon immediately takes possession of their souls, acquiring new right and power for drawing them into other sins.

288. Not less active is the diligence and care of the holy Angels to prevent such damage and defend us from the demon. They frequently inspire the parents with holy thoughts, urging them to watch over the education of their children, to catechize them in the law of God, to enjoin upon them pious works and devotions, and to withdraw them from all evil and exercise them in the virtues. The same good thoughts they instill into the children as they grow up, or according to the light given to them by God regarding his intentions with the souls. In conducting this defense they enter into great disputes with the demons because those malign spirits allege all the sins of the parents against the children, and likewise the disordered actions the children commit because

* cf. Jn. 14:30 [Ed.]

† cf. Dt. 33:25 [Ed.]

of them, for though the children are not guilty in this* yet the demon claims these actions are the result of his own activity and therefore he has a right to continue them in those souls. If a child with the use of reason begins to sin, the demons exercise intense resistance in order to prevent the holy Angels from withdrawing them from sin. The same Angels on their part allege the virtues of the parents and forefathers, and the good actions of the children themselves; even if it is no more than having pronounced the name of Jesus or Mary as taught them by their parents, they bring this as a defense as their having begun to honor the Name of their Lord and of their Mother, and likewise if they practice other devotions or know the Christian prayers and recite them. Of all this the Angels make use as man's own weapons in order to defend them against the demon, for with any good work we remove some of the right the demon had acquired over us due to original sin, and still more by actual sins.

289. When the child begins to exercise the use of reason the battle between the demons and the Angels becomes still more bitter, for whenever we commit some sin the dragon exerts all his powers to deprive us of our lives before we have time to do penance and thus seal our eternal damnation. And so we may fall into other new offenses he fills with snares and dangers all the paths we take in all the states of our lives, and he overlooks none of us, though he does not tempt one as dangerously as the other. But if men would know these secret workings of the demon just as they actually happen, and if they could perceive the traps and pitfalls which by their own fault they permit the demon to prepare for them, all would live proceed with trembling;† many would change their state of life, or would refuse to enter upon it; and others would forsake the positions, offices and dignities which they crave. But in ignorance of their risk they live on in pernicious security; they do not know enough to understand or believe more than is evident to their senses, and therefore they do not fear the entanglements and pitfalls prepared by the demon for their unhappy ruin. Hence the number of fools is so great, and that of the truly prudent and wise so small; many are called and few are chosen; the wicked and the sinners are countless, while the virtuous and the perfect are very scarce. To the extent each one multiplies his sins the demon is collecting positive acts of possession in the soul, and if he cannot put an end to the life of his victim he at least seeks to treat him as his vile slave. He claims each day this soul becomes more his own, and of its own will it so chooses, and hence it cannot justly be rescued from his hands nor deserve the assistance which it will not accept; that the merits of Christ should not be applied to it when it spurns them; and that it should not benefit from the intercession of the saints when it entirely forgets them.

290. By these and other pretenses which cannot all be mentioned here the demon tries to cut short the time of penance for those whom he claims as his own. If he does not succeed in this he tries to block the way of their justification, and there are many souls he obtains in this way. But the protection of God and the defense of the holy Angels is lacking to no one, and thus we are delivered from the dangers of death in innumerable ways, and this is so certain there is scarcely anyone who could not verify it in the course of his life. They furnish us with ceaseless inspirations and warnings, and make use of all occasions and means available for our admonishment and exhortation. And what is more, they defend us from the fury and malice of the demons, and allege against them for our defense all that the intellect of an angel and a blessed spirit can devise, and all that their power and their most ardent charity can command for our safety. All this is necessary many times for some souls, and for many souls who have

* Not yet having the use of reason [Ed.]

† cf. Philip. 2:12 [Ed.]

delivered themselves over to the jurisdiction of the demon; and only for this temerity do these souls use their liberty and faculties. I do not speak of pagans, idolaters and heretics; these indeed the Angels likewise defend and inspire to the practice of the moral virtues, which they afterwards use as arguments against the demons, but ordinarily the most they do for them is to protect their lives so God, having allowed them so much time for their conversion, is justified in his behavior toward them. The Angels also labor to prevent them from committing such great sins to which the demons incite them, for the charity of the Angels exerts itself so these souls may at least not incur such great punishments as the malice of the demon seeks to fasten upon them.

291. In the Mystical Body of the Church are fought the greatest and most persistent struggles between the Angels and the demons according to the different states of souls. All its members they commonly defend with the ordinary weapons furnished them by the sacramental character impressed upon the soul in Baptism, by grace, by virtues, by the performance of good and meritorious works, by devotions to the saints, by the prayers of the just, and by whatever good activity they have during their entire life. This defense of the just is most powerful, for since they are in the grace and friendship of God the Angels obtain a greater right against the demons, and thus they keep them away and exhibit to them the souls of the just and the saints as formidable against hell, and this privilege alone should cause us to esteem grace above all that is created. There are other lukewarm and imperfect souls who fall into sin and occasionally rise again; against these the demons obtain more power to persecute them with their cruelty. But the holy Angels strenuously exert themselves in their defense, so (as Isaias says [42:3]) *the bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flax He shall not quench.*

292. There are other souls so unhappy and depraved that during their whole life after their Baptism they have not performed one good work, or if they have ever risen from sin they have returned to it with such eagerness that they seemed to have renounced their God, living and acting as if they had no hope of another life, nor fear of hell, nor repentance for any of their sins. In these souls there is no vitality of grace, nor attempt at true virtue, nor do the holy Angels have any good or available grounds for their defense. The demons cry out: This soul at least is altogether ours, subject to our commands, and has no part in grace. They point out to the good Angels all the sins, wickedness and vices of such souls who of their own free will serve such evil masters. What then passes between the Angels and the demons is incredible and indescribable, because the demons exert all their fury to prevent such souls from receiving inspirations and helps; and since they cannot withstand the divine power, they at least put forth great effort so these souls will not admit or attend to the call of heaven. With such souls it ordinarily happens that whenever God himself or through his holy Angels sends them a holy inspiration or movement these demons must first be put to flight and the soul snatched from their midst, lest these birds of prey immediately pounce upon and destroy the holy seed (Lk. 8:12). This defense the Angels usually conduct with the words which I have quoted above (285): "Who is like unto God, who dwells on high? Who is like unto Christ, who is at the right hand of the eternal Father? Who is like to most holy Mary?" These and other similar sayings are hurled at the fleeing infernal dragons, and sometimes they are thereby hurled back into hell, though they again return to the conflict, not abating in their fury.

293. The enemies also try with all their might to induce men to multiply their sins so the measure of their sins may so much the sooner be completed and their time of penance and life may come to an end, for then the demons would be enabled to carry them off to eternal torments. But the Angels, who are rejoiced by the repentance of sinners (Lk. 15:10), even though they may not be able to bring them to repentance, labor diligently with the children of the Church (Gal.

6:10) to hinder their sins as much as they can, preventing an innumerable number of occasions of sin, thereby lessening the number of sins or preventing them altogether. And when with all these proceedings, and others unknown to mortals, they cannot bring the souls back from sin, they resort to the intercession of the most holy Mother of God, asking Her to be their Mediatrix with the Lord and lend her aid in confounding the demons. In order to move her merciful kindness all the sooner they induce the souls of sinners to practice some special devotion or perform some service in honor of the great Lady. Although it is true all good works performed in the state of sin are dead and very weak weapons against the devil, yet they always retain some suitability, though remote, due to the good end in view, and thus the sinner is less indisposed toward grace than without them; moreover, these works when presented by the Angels, and especially by the heavenly Mother, possess in the eyes of the Lord a certain life, or the resemblance of it, altogether different from that given to them by sinners, and hence though He does not bind Himself to respond to them He nevertheless does it because of the one who asks.

294. In these different ways an innumerable number of souls come out of their sinful ways and are snatched from the claws of the dragon, most holy Mary interposing her help when the defense of the Angels is not sufficient; for there are innumerable souls who fall into such a terrible state that they need the powerful assistance such as this great Queen can provide. For this reason the demons are so greatly tormented by their own fury whenever they know any sinner calls upon or remembers this great Lady, since they know by experience how kindly She receives sinners and how readily She makes their cause her own. Without hope or spirit of resistance the demons immediately give themselves up as foiled and vanquished. When God desires to bring about some special conversion it often happens the great Queen herself peremptorily commands the demons to withdraw from that soul and sink into the abyss, and her commands are always obeyed. At other times, without such peremptory orders, God permits them to see the mysteries, power and sanctity of his Mother, and with this new knowledge they flee terror-stricken and vanquished, leaving the souls who respond to and cooperate with the graces which the Lady herself acquires for them from her most holy Son.

295. Yet although the intercession of the great Queen is so powerful and her dominion so formidable for the demons, and though there is no favor the Most High grants to the Church and to souls in which most holy Mary has not interceded, there are nevertheless many occasions in which the humanity of the incarnate Word himself battles for us and defends us against Lucifer, declaring Himself openly with his Mother in our favor and annihilating and vanquishing the demons; such and so great is the love He has for men and the solicitude He has for their eternal salvation. And this happens not only when He justifies souls by means of the Sacraments, because then the enemies feel more immediately the virtue of Christ and his merits operating against them, but also when in other miraculous conversions He gives these malevolent spirits a particular kind of knowledge of one or more mysteries by which they are terrified and confounded, as is said above (285). He operated in this manner in the conversion of St. Paul, of Magdalen, and of other Saints, and does so whenever it is necessary to protect some Catholic kingdom or the Church from the treachery and wicked plans of hell concocted for their destruction. On such occasions not only his sacred humanity but even the infinite Divinity, armed with the omnipotence of the Father, declares Himself immediately against all the demons in the manner described above, giving them new knowledge and representation of the mysteries and of his omnipotence by which He wills to oppress, vanquish and despoil them of the prey they have caught or intend to catch.

296. Whenever the Lord thus interposes such powerful aid the whole infernal reign of confusion is terrorized and stricken down into the hellish abysses for many days, giving forth howls of mournful despair and completely unable to move from their places until the Lord again gives them permission to rise. Yet as soon as they receive permission they again issue forth with their former fury for the ruin of souls. Though it may not seem in harmony with their pride and arrogance to enter into a new contest with Him by whom they have just been overthrown and vanquished, nevertheless their jealous fear lest we come to the enjoyment of God, and their furious desire to prevent it, again prevail and urge them to continue their persecutions to the end of our lives. I was made to understand that if God was not so outrageously misused in his mercy He would often interpose, even miraculously, his divine omnipotence on our behalf. Especially would He do this in defense of the Mystical Body of the Church and some Catholic kingdoms, bringing to naught the counsels of hell for the destruction of Christianity which in our unhappy times we see with our own eyes. We do not merit this protection of the divine power because all of us commonly irritate his justice and the world has allied with hell, into whose power it has delivered itself and is left by God because men so blindly and contentiously insist on following this insanity.

297. In the conversion of St. Paul we see this assistance of the Most High manifested, for He had set him apart even in the womb of his mother (Gal. 1:15) and chosen him as an Apostle and a vase of election. And though the course of his life until the persecution of the Church was a variety of events which left the demon in doubt, as happens with many souls, yet he observed him from his conception and scrutinized his nature and the care with which the Angels defended and guarded him. Hence the hatred of the dragon grew, and he desired to kill him in his early years. Since they failed in this and later saw him become a persecutor of the Church they were solicitous to preserve his life (253). When the holy Angels found themselves powerless to withdraw Paul from the error to which he had entirely dedicated himself, the powerful Queen entered the combat and made his cause her own. Through Her was interposed the divine power of Christ himself and the eternal Father, and by the powerful arm of the Almighty he was snatched from the grasp of the dragon. In one instant at the apparition of the Lord all the demons who accompanied Saul on the way to Damascus were hurled into the abyss.

298. On this occasion Lucifer and his demons felt the lash of the divine omnipotence, and as terrified and threatened by it they adhered for some days to the profound depths of the infernal caverns. But as soon as the Lord removed those species of knowledge which He had given them in order to confound them they returned to breathing wrath in their indignation. The great dragon called together the rest and spoke to them in this manner: "How is it possible to rest, when every day I see new injuries heaped upon me by this incarnate Word and this Woman who conceived and bore Him as man? Where is my strength? Where is my power, my fury, and the great triumphs which I gained over Him among mortals ever since God without reason cast me from the heavens to this abyss? It seems, my friends, the Omnipotent intends to seal up the portals of these infernal regions and open up those of heaven, which would be the destruction of our reign and all my coveted designs to drag into these torments the rest of mankind. If God, besides having redeemed men, works for them such miracles, if He shows them such love and seeks to draw them to his friendship by such powerful works of his right hand, they will permit themselves to be overcome, even if they have the disposition of wild beasts and hearts as hard as diamonds. All will love and serve Him if they are not more obstinate and rebellious than we

ourselves. What soul can be so callous as not to be drawn to this Godman, who with such a tender love seeks the soul's own glory? Saul was our friend, a willing instrument of my designs,* subject to my will and command, an enemy of the Crucified, and I had destined him for most cruel torments in this hell. In the midst of all this God suddenly snatches him from my hands, and by his divine power raises this insignificant creature of the earth to such high grace and favors that we his enemies are astounded. What has Saul done to deserve such an exceeding good fortune? Was he not in my service offending his God? If God has been so generous with him, what protection will He not lavish upon other less grievous sinners? And even if He does not convert them by such great miracles He will gain them through Baptism and the other Sacraments by which they can justify themselves day by day. And by this rare example He will draw the world after Him† when I intended through Saul to extinguish the Church, and now he defends it with great vigor. Is it possible that I will see the vile nature of men raised to the grace and happiness which I have lost, and they will enter into heaven from which I have been hurled? This thought torments me more furiously than the fires of hell. I am filled with a powerless rage against myself for not being able to destroy myself in my wrath; would that God himself would do it instead of preserving me in these torments. But since this is not to be tell me, my vassals, what will we do against this so powerful God? Him we cannot injure, but in those whom He loves so much we can avenge ourselves because in them we can oppose his will. And since my majesty is most offended and incensed against this Woman our Enemy, who gave Him human existence, I wish to inaugurate new ways of destroying Her and avenging ourselves for having robbed us of Saul and cast us into this abyss. I will not rest until I have vanquished Her; for this purpose I determine to execute against Her all the plans which I in my knowledge have formed against God and man after I was cast into the abyss. Come all of you and help me in this demand and execute my will.”

299. Such were the words of exhortation addressed to the demons by Lucifer. Some of them answered: “Our captain and leader, we are ready to obey thee, knowing how much this Woman our Enemy oppresses and torments us. But it is possible that She by Herself without other aid may resist us, despising all our efforts and attacks as we have seen on other occasions when She showed Herself altogether our superior in strength. What shall move Her above all is to see us attack the followers of her Son because She loves them and is solicitous for them as a Mother. Let us raise a general persecution against the faithful, for we have at our service the whole of Judaism, now incensed against the new Church of the Crucified. Through the priests and Pharisees we may succeed in all our attempts against the faithful and thus vent our wrath against this hostile Woman.”‡ Lucifer approved of this counsel and showed favors to the demons who had given it. Thus agreed they issued forth to destroy the Church by the hands of others just as they had attempted it through Saul. Thence resulted what I shall relate further on, and the battle which most holy Mary waged against the dragon and his hosts wherein She gained such great victories for the holy Church. I referred to this battle in chapter XXVI of the second Part (*Inc.* 325), and there stated that I had reserved it for this place.

* cf. *Transfixion* 367 [Ed.]

† cf. Jn. 12:32 [Ed.]

‡ cf. Apoc. 12:17 [Ed.]

*INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT LADY
OF THE ANGELS GAVE ME.*

300. My daughter, by no power of human words shalt thou in this mortal life ever succeed in describing the envy of Lucifer and his demons against men, or the malice, astuteness, deceits and ruses by which in his wrath he seeks to bring them into sin and later on to eternal torments. All good works which men attempt he tries to hinder, and if they accomplish them he slanders them and labors to pervert and destroy them. All the malice of which his own mind is capable he attempts to inject into souls. Against these attacks God provides admirable protection if men would only cooperate and correspond on their part. Hence the Apostle admonishes them to walk carefully amid all these dangers and conflicts, *not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil* (Eph. 5:15-16) and full of dangers in mortal life. In another place he says: Be ye steadfast and constant in order to abound in all good works, because thy labor shall not be in vain before the Lord (I Cor. 15:58). This truth the enemy knows and fears, and hence he seeks with deepest malice to cause dismay in souls at the commission of one sin so they might ruin themselves by despair and leave off all good works, for thus would they throw aside the weapons with which the Angels can defend them and do battle with the demons. Although these works in the sinner have not the life of charity or of merit for grace or glory, yet they are very useful. Sometimes it happens because of the habit of doing good the divine clemency furnishes efficacious help for performing these works with greater fervor, or with sorrow for sins and true charity by which the soul regains justification.

301. From all the good the creature does the Blessed seize some cause for defending him from his enemies and beseeching the divine mercy to look upon him and draw him from sin. The Saints are also obliged to come to the assistance of those who invoke and call upon them with all their heart in dangers and necessities, and who have for them a loving devotion. If the Saints in their charity are so inclined to favor men in the dangerous conflicts with the demons, thou must not be surprised, my dearest, that I am so merciful with sinners who take refuge in my clemency, for I desire their salvation immeasurably more than they themselves. Innumerable are those whom I have saved from the infernal dragon because of their devotion to me, even though they have recited only one *Ave Maria*, or have said only one word in my honor and invocation. So great is my love for them that if they would call upon me in time and with sincerity none of them would perish. But sinners and the reprobate do no such thing, because the wounds of sin, not being of the body, do not distress them, and the more often they are committed the less regret or sorrow they cause. The second sin wounds an already dead body, which knows neither fear, nor defense, nor sensation.

302. The result of this most apathetic insensibility to eternal damnation and the deceits of the demons in fastening it upon men is dreadful. Without knowing upon what they rest their false security, sinners are asleep and perfectly at ease regarding their ruin, when they ought justly to fear and take heed of the swiftly approaching eternal death, or at least seek help by praying to the Lord, or to me, or the saints; yet even this, which costs them so little, they do not know how to begin until the time and conditions during which salvation can be realized has for many of them passed away. If for some of them I still procure salvation in their last agony, this privilege cannot be common to all. Hence so many children of the Church are lost, who in their ingratitude and foolishness despise the many and powerful helps given by the divine clemency in most opportune time. It shall also be for them new confusion when recognizing the mercy of the Most High, the pity with which I desired to rescue them, and the charity of the saints to intercede for

them, they did not desire to give God the glory of their conversion, and to me and the angels and saints the joy of helping them if they would have called upon us with all their heart.

303. I desire, my daughter, to manifest to thee still another secret. Thou already knowest my Son and Lord in the Gospel says the angels in heaven have joy whenever any sinner does penance and is converted to the way of life through his justification (Lk. 15:10). The same happens in its manner when the just perform works of true virtue and merit new degrees of glory. Now that which happens among the heavenly inhabitants in the conversion of sinners and the increase of merit of the just has a counterpart in what happens with the demons at the sins of the just and the deeper falls of sinners, for no sin is committed by men, however small, in which the demons do not take pleasure, and those who attend to the business* of tempting mortals immediately give notice to the demons in the eternal dungeons of their successes. There they enjoy them and record them for further use, both in order to press their claims before the divine Judge and so they can know the greater dominion and jurisdiction they have over unhappy sinners who have subjected themselves to their will to a greater or lesser degree according to the gravity of the sin committed. In this manner they show their treacherous hatred of men whenever they succeed in deceiving them into sin by some momentary and apparent gratification. But the Most High, who is just in all his works, ordained also that the conversion of sinners and the good works of the just would redound to the torment of the envious demons, since they rejoice so much at human perdition.

304. This scourge of divine Providence greatly torments all the demons because by it they are not only confounded and oppressed in the mortal hatred they have against men, but by the victories of the saints and the conversion of sinners the Lord strips them of a great part of the strength communicated and given to them by those who permitted themselves to be overcome by their deceptions and sinned against their true God. The new torments thus caused to them they seek to vent upon the damned in hell, and just as there is new joy in heaven at the penance and good works of sinners, so for the same reason there is uproar and new confusion in hell at the good works of the just. On such occasions amid howls of despair the demons inflict new accidental torments upon all who live in those dungeons of dismay and horror. In this way heaven and hell are affected by such contrary effects in the conversion and justification of the sinner. Whenever the souls justify themselves through the Sacraments, especially by a truly sorrowful Confession, it often happens that the demons for some time dare not approach the penitent, nor for many hours even presume to look at him, if he himself does not again encourage them by losing the divine favor and returning again to the dangers and occasions of sin, for then the demons quickly cast off the fear inspired by true penitence and justification.

305. In heaven there can be no sorrow or pain, but if there could be the saints would feel it because of nothing in the world so much as to see the justified souls falling back and losing grace, and the sinner drawing away further or making it impossible for him to regain the divine favor. Sin of its own nature is just as powerful to move heaven to sorrow and pain as penance and virtue are to torment hell. Consider then, my dearest, in what dangerous ignorance of these truths mortals commonly live, depriving heaven of the joy it receives in the justification of any soul, God of the external glory resulting therefrom, and hell of the pain and chastisement inflicted upon the demons, who on the contrary rejoice in the fall and perdition of men. I desire thee, as a faithful and prudent servant, to be guided by thy higher knowledge and labor in compensating these evils. Make sure always to approach the sacrament of Confession with

* cf. Ps. 90:6 [Ed.]

fervor, esteem and veneration, and with heartfelt sorrow for thy sins, for this Sacrament inspires the dragon with great terror, and he exerts himself diligently to hinder souls by his deceits in order to cause them to receive this Sacrament with lukewarmness, out of mere habit, without sorrow or the proper disposition. He is so eager in this matter not only because he wishes to cause the loss of souls, but also to avoid the fierce torments of being oppressed and confounded in the malice of his pride by the true penance and justification of his escaped victims.

306. Above all of this, my friend, I desire to warn thee that although the infernal dragons are indeed the authors and masters of lies and deal with men only in order to mislead and ruin them by their deceits, yet whenever these enemies in their meetings confer among themselves in regard to misleading men they are forced to admit certain truths which they know and cannot deny; they understand them, yet communicate them to men not in good faith but obscured and mixed with their own errors and falsehoods for the promotion of their own malicious designs. Since thou hast in this chapter, and in the whole course of this History, laid bare so many of their counsels, meetings and secrets, they are highly enraged against thee, for they flattered themselves that these secrets and all their machinations would never come to the knowledge of men. Hence they are furious to take vengeance upon thee; but the Most High shall protect thee if thou call upon Him to crush the head of the dragon. Do thou also beseech the divine clemency that these advices and instructions may help to undeceive mortals and by the divine light redound to their benefit. On thy own part do thou seek faithfully to correspond as being under greater obligations to Him than all others living in the present age; for if understanding their malice thou dost not exert thyself to vanquish them with the assistance of the Most High and his holy Angels, thy ingratitude and the triumph of hell will grow in proportion to the favors thou hast received.