

CHAPTER IV

Through Most Holy Mary the Temple of Diana in Ephesus is destroyed; Her Angels Carry Her to the Empyrean Heaven, where the Lord Prepares Her to Enter into Battle with the Infernal Dragon and Vanquish Him; this Duel Begins with Temptations to Pride.

431. Widely known is the history of the city of Ephesus, situated on the western confines of Asia, for many renowned events of past ages made that city famous and illustrious throughout the globe. But its greatest privilege and excellence consists in having received and hosted within it the supreme Queen of heaven and earth for the space of some months, the number of which I shall state later on. This privilege was a most fortunate one for Ephesus, since the other things which are mentioned for its renown made it truly unhappy and infamous, because through them the prince of darkness had permanently set up his throne in that city. But since our great Lady and Mother of Grace found hospitality in this city, and thus considered Herself under obligation to its inhabitants who received Her generously and offered Her some gifts, it naturally followed that She in her most ardent charity, preserving the order of this most noble virtue, would repay their hospitality with greater benefits, considering them more as neighbors and benefactors than strangers; for if She was most generous towards all, She would certainly show greater demonstrations and favors of charity toward the Ephesians. Her own gratitude moved Her to this since She considered Herself indebted to the whole commonwealth. She offered up for it special prayers, asking her divine Son to pour out over its inhabitants his blessings, and as a kind Father to illumine and bring it to his true faith and knowledge.

432. She received an answer from the Lord that as the Lady and Queen of the whole Church She was free to do as She pleased; however, She should take notice of the obstacles which this city placed in the way of divine clemency by its ancient and present abominations, and that its inhabitants had thereby locked the gates of mercy and merited the rigors of justice which would have already been executed upon them if the Lord had not ordained that She live among them at the very time when their wickedness had reached the highest point and called the loudest for punishment. Together with this answer most holy Mary perceived the divine justice as it were asked her permission and consent for the destruction of that idolatrous people of Ephesus and its neighborhood.* At this answer and what it implied the kind Heart of the most sweet Mother was much afflicted, yet her nearly unlimited charity was undaunted, and multiplying her prayers She answered the Lord:

433. “Most high King, just and most merciful, well do I know the rigor of thy justice shall be executed if thy mercy is excluded; yet for thy mercy any motive found by thy wisdom is sufficient, small though it may be on the part of sinners. Consider therefore, O Lord, how this city has allowed me to live in it according to thy will, and how its inhabitants have helped me and offered me and thy servant John their possessions. Temper thy rigor, my God, and let it be exercised upon me so I may suffer for cure these miserable ones. And Thou, the Almighty, who hast infinite goodness and mercy to conquer evil with good, canst remove the obstacle which prevents them from making good use of thy blessings, and so my eyes may not see the loss of so many souls who are the works of thy hands and the price of thy blood.” The Lord responded to this petition and said: “My Mother and my Dove, I desire Thee to know expressly the cause of

* cf. Ex. 32:10 [Ed.]

my just indignation, and how these men for whom Thou dost plead have merited it. Thus attend and Thou shalt see.” And immediately by a most clear vision was manifested to the Queen what follows:

434. She perceived that many centuries before the Incarnation of the Word in her virginal womb, among the many councils held by Lucifer for the destruction of men one was held in which he spoke thus to his demons: “From what I noticed in my initial state in heaven, from the prophecies God has revealed to man, and from the favors shown to many of his friends, I have been able to ascertain how much God will be obliged toward men and women who shall abstain in future times from many vices which I desire to maintain in the world, in particular those connected with the delights of the flesh and the pursuit of possessions, even renouncing what is allowed. So they may thus labor against my wishes He will furnish them with many helps by which they shall willingly be chaste and poor, subjecting their own will to that of other men. If through these virtues they overcome us they will merit great rewards and favors from God, as I have traced in some who have been chaste, poor and obedient; in this way my intentions will be greatly frustrated if we do not take measures to counteract this damage and compensate for it in all the ways possible to our astuteness. I also take into consideration that if the divine Word is to assume human flesh, as I have been given to understand, He will be very chaste and pure, and will teach chastity to many others, not only men but women, who though they are weaker yet are usually more tenacious; and if they overcome me, whom I previously cast down in the first woman, it will be for me the greatest torment. Beyond this the Scriptures of the ancients promise many favors which men will enjoy through the incarnate Word in their human nature, which He will certainly raise up and enrich by his power.

435. “In order to oppose all this,” Lucifer continued, “I want your counsel and diligent help, and we must begin even now to hinder men from attaining such benefits.” To this extreme proceeds the hatred and plotting of hell against the evangelical perfection professed in the sacred religious orders. This point was considered at length among the demons, and the result of their deliberations was that a great many demons were appointed as heads of hellish legions who were to tempt those desirous of living a life of chastity, poverty and obedience; and as a mockery especially of chastity they should immediately institute a type of false and apparent state of virginity in which counterfeit and hypocritical virgins would consecrate themselves to Lucifer and all the demons. The enemies hoped thereby to gain over these persons to themselves not only for their own triumph but also to discredit the religious life and chastity which they presumed would be instituted by the incarnate Word and his Mother in the world. And so this false religion intended by hell would persist more effectively they resolved to found it with an abundance of all that is worldly and delightful to nature, yet concealed to the world, for in secret those interested agreed to live licentiously under the name of chastity dedicated to false gods.

436. But immediately the question arose whether this religion was to be for men or for women. Some of the demons wanted it to be for men only, because being more constant the false religion would thereby be perpetual; it seemed to others that men are not so easily deceived as women, since they reflect with greater force of reason and could detect error beforehand, while this risk was not so great in women, who were of weak judgment, ready to believe earnestly in what they like and have once settled upon, and inclined to persevere in their error. This argument prevailed and was approved by Lucifer, although he did not entirely exclude men since he judged some would be found who would embrace the fallacy due to the influence they would thereby gain over others. This could be expected especially if the demons would help them along by

nourishing their fear of losing the estimation of their fellowmen, and astutely making use of public opinion to keep alive the fallacies in those who would engage in this service.

437. Following up their infernal schemes the demons set about instituting a feigned and deceitful religion or congregation of virgins, for Lucifer said to the other demons: "Though it would be very pleasing to me to have real virgins consecrated and dedicated to my worship and reverence, as God desires to have, yet chastity and purity of the body so offend me that I cannot endure this virtue even if practiced entirely in honor of my greatness; hence we must seek to make these virgins the object of our depravity. If any of them desires to be chaste in body we will fill her interior with impure thoughts and desires of the type that in truth none will be chaste, though by her vain pride she may desire to contain herself; and since she shall be impure in her thoughts we will seek to preserve her in the vainglory of her false virginity."

438. In order to start this false religion the demons scoured the whole earth, and it seemed to them that among all the nations certain women called Amazons were best suited for the execution of their diabolical plans. These Amazons had come from Scythia to Asia Minor where they now lived. They were warlike, eclipsing by their arrogance and pride the weakness of their sex. By force of arms they had taken possession of extended provinces, and had constituted Ephesus as the center of their power. For a long time they governed themselves, disdaining subjection to men and life in their company, for in their presumptuous pride they called such a life slavery or servitude. Since much is said of them in histories, though with many contradictions, I shall not expound upon this matter; for my purpose it is sufficient to state since these Amazons were proud, vainglorious, and averse to men, Lucifer found them predisposed toward his counterfeit virginity. He filled them with vain hopes of gaining great veneration and renown in the world by being known as pledged to virginity, and stirred them with the desire of becoming famous and admired by men, with perhaps of one of them reaching the position and worship of a goddess. In their unbridled ambition of this worldly honor many Amazons got together, both true and lying virgins, and instituted their counterfeit congregation of virgins at Ephesus, the place of their origin.

439. In a short time these more than foolish virgins grew very numerous, and through the instigations of the demons were much admired and applauded by the world. Among them one signalized herself and became very celebrated for her beauty, nobility, high intellect, chastity, and other allurements. She was called Diana and her fame and admiration became widespread. Because of the veneration in which she was held and the multitude of companions she had they were given the first temple of Ephesus, which the world estimated as one of its marvels and which took many years to construct. Since Diana gradually gained the worship and title of a goddess among the blind multitude this rich and sumptuous temple was finally dedicated to her and was called the temple of Diana. In imitation of it and under the same title many others were built in other parts of the world. In order to spread the renown of this counterfeit virgin during her lifetime in Ephesus the demon communicated with her and filled her with diabolical illusions; many times he surrounded her with a false splendor and manifested to her secrets to be promulgated. He also taught her some ceremonies and forms of worship, similar to those of the people of God, by which she and the people would worship the devil. The rest of the virgins venerated her as a goddess, which was also done by the other heathens, who were as prodigal as they were blind in attributing divinity to all that seemed to them wonderful.

440. These diabolical frauds had thus been established when the neighboring kings defeated the Amazons and assumed the government of Ephesus, preserving this temple of Ephesus as something sacred and divine, and permitting the continuance of that gathering of insane virgins.

Although this temple was burned by a common man, the city and the government authorities rebuilt it, being especially helped by the contributions of women; this was thirty years more or less before the Redemption of the human race. Hence at the time when most holy Mary was in Ephesus it was not the old temple which stood but the second one, built later. In this temple the virgins occupied different apartments. But since at the time of the Incarnation and death of Christ idolatry was so firmly established in the world, those diabolical women not only had not improved their habits but had deteriorated, and nearly all of them conversed abominably with the demons. Along with this they committed other most loathsome crimes and deceived the world by their hoaxes and prophecies by which Lucifer filled both them and their dupes with their insanities.

441. This and much more most holy Mary beheld around Her in Ephesus, and because of it She was struck with sorrow certainly mortal if She had not been preserved by the Lord. But having seen that Lucifer had as it were made the idol of Diana the seat or chair of his wickedness, She prostrated Herself upon the ground before her most holy Son and said to Him: "Most high Lord and God, worthy of all reverence and praise, it is reasonable for these abominations which have lasted for so many ages to be terminated and atoned. My heart cannot suffer seeing a wretched and abominable woman accorded the worship of the true Divinity, of which Thou alone as the infinite God art worthy, nor the name of chastity so profaned and dedicated to the demons. Thine infinite condescension has made me the guide and Mother of virgins as a most noble part of thy Church, the most precious fruit of thy Redemption, and most pleasing to Thee. The title of chastity must remain consecrated to Thee in souls who shall be my daughters, and I can no longer consent that it be falsely claimed by these adulterous women. I make complaint against Lucifer and against hell for their audacity in having unjustly usurped this right. I beseech Thee, my Son, to chastise him with the pain of seeing these souls rescued from his tyranny, and that all of them come forth from his slavery into the liberty of the faith and true light."

442. The Lord answered: "My Mother, I grant thy petition, since it is not just for this virtue of chastity to be dedicated to my enemies, though it be in name only, which is so ennobled in Thee and so pleasing to Me. Yet many of these false virgins are foreknown as reprobates due to their abominations and obstinacy, and not all of them will overcome themselves and walk the path of eternal salvation. Some few of them will accept into their hearts the faith, which shall be taught to them." At this juncture St. John came to the oratory of most holy Mary, but he did not know of the mystery in which She was then engaged, nor of the presence of her Son our Lord. But the true Mother of the humble desired to join to her prayers those of the beloved disciple, and secretly asked permission of the Lord to speak to him. Receiving it, She spoke to him thus: "John, my son, my heart is wounded by having known of the great sins committed against the Most High in this temple of Diana, and my soul desires that they now be ended and atoned." The holy Apostle answered: "My Lady, I have seen something of what passes in this abominable place, and I cannot restrain my sorrow and tears in seeing that the demon is venerated within it with the worship which is due to God alone; and no one can stop such great evils if Thou, my Mother, dost not make this cause thy own."

443. Most holy Mary then instructed the Apostle to join Her in prayer for a remedy of these evils. St. John went to his chamber while the Queen remained with Christ our Savior in hers. Prostrate before the Lord and shedding copious tears She resumed her prayers and petitions. She persevered therein with most burning fervor and as it were agonizing sorrow, appealing to her divine Son for comfort and consolation. She received the following response to her petitions and prayers: "My Mother and my Dove, let what Thou askest be done without delay; ordain and

command, as the powerful Lady, all which thy Heart desires.” With this approval the love of most holy Mary was inflamed with zeal for the honor of the Divinity. As Queen She imperiously commanded all the demons in the temple of Diana to descend immediately to the depths of hell and leave that place which they had possessed as their own for so many years. Many legions of them inhabited that temple, deceiving the world by their superstitions and profaning the souls therein, yet in the shortest twinkling of an eye all of them were hurled into hell by the force of the words of Mary most holy. So great was the terror by which She struck them down that as soon as She opened her lips to pronounce the first word they waited not for the second, for they were then already in hell, and the swiftness of an angel, proper to them as pure spirits, seemed to them tardy in their flight from the Mother of the Omnipotent.

444. They were unable to leave the profound caverns until (as I shall soon relate) they received permission to come forth with the great dragon to do battle with the Queen of heaven, and in hell itself they sought the localities farthest removed from the place where She was upon earth. I must remark that by these triumphs most holy Mary so vanquished the demon he could not return to reassume the same position or jurisdiction in those places of which he was dispossessed; however, this infernal hydra* was and is so venomous that new heads grow upon him where the former are cut off, since he returns to his wicked plans with new schemes and stratagems against God and his Church. Continuing this victory the great Lady of the world, with the consent of Christ our Savior, immediately ordered one of her holy Angels to go to the temple of Diana and destroy it without leaving a stone upon a stone. Of all the women who dwelled there he was to save only nine designated by Her, while all the rest must be left to die and be buried in the ruins of the building; these were reprobates, whose souls, before they could increase their punishment by more sins, would be buried in hell with the demons whom they had obeyed and worshipped.

445. The Angel of the Lord executed the mandate of his Queen and Lady, and in the shortest space of time the rich and famous temple of Diana, the establishment of which had consumed many ages, was shattered to the dust. So sudden was the destruction and ruin of it that it roused the astonishment and fear of the inhabitants of Ephesus. The Angel saved the nine women designated by most holy Mary as She had pointed out and whom Christ our Lord had prepared, for these alone were converted to the faith as I shall relate (461); all the others perished in the ruins, not leaving even a remembrance of themselves. Though the inhabitants of Ephesus instituted an inquiry they could find no one upon whom to put the blame as they had been able to do in the burning of the first temple, when for the sake of the fame attached to his crime the incendiary delivered himself up of his own accord. The evangelist St. John took occasion from this event to preach with still greater fervor the divine truth and free the Ephesians from the deceits and errors of the demons. The Evangelist joined the Queen of heaven in giving thanks to the Most High for this triumph over Lucifer and idolatry.

446. But it is necessary to point out the event related here must not be confused with that referred to in chapter XIX of the Acts of the Apostles (v. 24ff.) regarding the temple of Diana, and which occurred when St. Paul was in that city preaching some years later than the above event. St. Luke relates a renowned artificer of Ephesus called Demetrius, who manufactured silver images of the goddess Diana, conspired with other craftsmen of his art against St. Paul, for the Apostle preached all through Asia that those were not gods which were manufactured by the hands of men. Because of this new doctrine Demetrius persuaded his associates that St. Paul was

* A many-headed serpent of Greek mythology which could regenerate a severed head; also an aquatic invertebrate with multiple tentacles which can also regenerate. [Ed.]

not only ruining their trade but causing the temple of Diana, so greatly venerated in Asia and the whole world, to be despised. By this plot they stirred up the artisans, and these incited the whole city, so the cry went up *great is Diana of the Ephesians*, bringing on what St. Luke relates in that chapter. And so it may be understood there is no contradiction to what I have said above, I will add this temple of which St. Luke speaks was another less costly and more ordinary temple which the Ephesians began to build after most holy Mary had returned to Jerusalem. When St. Paul came to preach in Ephesus this temple had already been completed. From what St. Luke says we can gather how deeply ingrown idolatry and the cult of Diana was in the Ephesians and in the whole of Asia, not only because of the many ages they had lived in this error, but also because that city had made itself so illustrious and famous throughout the world by the worship and temple of Diana. Having been delivered from this deceit and vanity, they imagined they could not live without their goddess and without having her temples in their city, since it was the head and origin of this superstition for the other kingdoms which vied to imitate them. So ingrained was the ignorance of the true God among the heathens that many Apostles and many years were required for making known the truth and rooting out the cockle of idolatry, especially among the Romans and the Greeks, who esteemed themselves the most wise and civilized of all the nations of the earth.

447. Having destroyed the temple of Diana most holy Mary conceived still greater desires of laboring for the exaltation of the name of Christ and the spread of the holy Church so the triumph gained over the enemies could bring its proper fruit. While She was thus multiplying her prayers and petitions for this purpose it happened one day the holy Angels manifested themselves to Her in visible forms and said to Her: “Our Queen and Lady, the great God of celestial hosts commands us to bring Thee to heaven before his royal throne to which He calls Thee.” The most holy Mother answered: “Behold here the handmaid of the Lord; may his most holy will be done in me.” Then the Angels received Her upon a throne of light (such as I have described on other occasions [399]) and bore Her to the empyrean heaven into the presence of the most holy Trinity. He did not manifest Himself on this occasion by an intuitive vision but by an abstractive one. She prostrated Herself before the sovereign throne and adored the immutable being of God in profound humility and reverence. Then the eternal Father spoke to Her and said: “My Daughter and meekest Dove, thy inflamed desires and clamors for the exaltation of my holy Name have come to my ears, and thy petitions for the holy Church are acceptable in my eyes and oblige Me to use mercy and clemency. In return for thy love I desire to give Thee anew my power so with it Thou canst defend my honor and glory, triumph over my enemies and their ancient pride, humiliate them and crush their necks, and by thy victories help my Church and acquire new benefits and gifts for its faithful children, thy brethren.”

448. Most holy Mary replied: “Here is, O Lord, the least of thy creatures; my heart is prepared for all that shall be for thy pleasure, for the exaltation of thy Name, and for thy greater glory. May thy divine will be done in me.” The eternal Father added: “Understand, all my courtiers of heaven, that I appoint Mary as the Captainess and leader of all my hosts and the conqueror of all my enemies, gloriously to triumph over them.” The other two divine Persons, the Son and the Holy Ghost, confirmed this, and all the Blessed with the Angels answered: “Thy holy will be done, O Lord, in heaven and on earth.” Then the Lord ordered eighteen of the most supreme Seraphim to adorn, prepare and arm their Queen for battle against the infernal dragon, mysteriously fulfilling on this occasion what is written in the book of Wisdom (5:18): *The Lord will arm the creature for the revenge of his enemies*, and the rest which is there recorded. The first six of the Seraphim came forward to adorn most holy Mary with a type of light as an

impenetrable armor, which at the same time manifested the sanctity and justice of the Queen, so invincible and impenetrable to the demons that in an ineffable manner She was made godlike in strength. For this wonder the Seraphim and the Saints rendered gratitude to God.

449. Then six of the remaining twelve Seraphim approached, and in obedience to the command of the Lord they furnished Her with another new enlightenment. It was a type of reflection of the Divinity in her countenance, unbearable to the sight of the demons.* In virtue of this gift the enemies, though they came to tempt Her as we shall see (470), could not look upon her deified face, not being deemed worthy of this privilege by the Lord. After these came the last six Seraphim, and at the command of the Lord they furnished Her with offensive weapons, since She was to take upon Herself the defense of the Divinity and his honor. In fulfillment of this order the Angels added to all the faculties of the great Lady new qualities of divine power which corresponded to all the gifts with which the Most High had endowed Her. By this benefit He granted the great Lady power so She could impede, restrain, and halt at will the most secret schemes and attempts of all the demons, and thus all of them became subject to the will and mandate of Mary most holy, without liberty to hinder her decrees, and She availed Herself of this power many times in favor of the faithful and her devotees. All these special powers and whatever they implied the three divine Persons confirmed, each One separately conferring upon her gifts corresponding to his divine attributes and bidding Her return to the Church and by them triumph over the enemies of the Lord.

450. At her departure the three divine Persons gave their blessing to most holy Mary, and the great Lady adored Them with highest reverence. With this the Angels returned Her to her oratory, and in admiration of the works of the Most High said: “Who is this, who so deified, rich and prosperous descends from the highest heaven to the world in order to defend the glory of his Name? How adorned, how beautiful does She advance to fight the battles of the Lord! O Queen and most eminent Lady, *with thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously, and reign* (Ps. 44:5) over all creatures, and may all of them praise and magnify Thee because He has shown Himself so generous and powerful in thy benefits and favors. *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts* (Is. 6:3) and of the celestial armies, and in Thee all the generations of men shall bless Him.” Arriving at her oratory most holy Mary prostrated Herself and rendered most humble gratitude to the Almighty, adhering to the dust as She was accustomed to do upon receiving such benefits (4, 317, 400).

451. Mary most prudent conferred within Herself for some time in order to prepare for the expected conflict with the demons. While thus meditating She saw coming upon the earth, as from the abyss, a fearful red dragon with seven heads, from each of which came forth the smoke and fire of extreme wrath and fury, while many other demons followed him in similar shapes. This vision was so horrible that no other living person could have endured it without losing his life, and it was indeed necessary for most holy Mary to be prepared and made so invincible in order to enter into battle with those most bloody beasts of hell. They all gathered around the great Queen, and with furious wrath and roars threatened Her, saying; “Let us advance, let us advance to destroy this our Enemy. We have the permission of the Almighty to tempt Her and make war upon Her; this time we will finish Her and avenge the damages She has always inflicted upon us, and for having cast us out of our temple of Diana. Let us likewise destroy Her; She is a mere creature and a woman, while we are clever, astute and powerful spirits. There is no need to fear an earthly creature.”

* cf. Acts 6:15; *Coronation* 194 [Ed.]

452. That entire host of infernal dragons advanced upon the invincible Queen, Lucifer leading them on and inciting Her to battle. Since the most deadly poison of this serpent is his pride, by which he usually instills his vices for the destruction of innumerable souls, it seemed to him proper to begin with this vice, outwardly concealing it in accordance with the state of sanctity which he imagined in most holy Mary. For this purpose the dragon and his followers transformed themselves into angels of light and thus manifested themselves to Her, thinking She had not yet seen and recognized them as demons and dragons of hell. They began with praise and flattery, saying: "Thou art powerful, Mary, great and valorous among women; all the world honors and celebrates Thee for the magnificent virtues it recognizes in Thee, and for the prodigious wonders Thou dost perform by them. Thou art worthy of this glory, since no one equals Thee in holiness. We know this better than all the rest, and therefore we proclaim it and sing to Thee the festivity of thy exploits." At the same time Lucifer pronounced these feigned praises he sought to produce in the imagination of the humble Queen boastful thoughts of pride and presumption. But instead of inclining or moving Her to any pleasure or consent in them, he drew forth in Her living darts of pain which transfixed her most sincere and truthful Heart. All the torments of the martyrs were not so painful to them as these diabolical flatteries were to Her. In order to confound them She elicited acts of humility, annihilating Herself and debasing Herself in such an admirable and powerful a manner that hell could not bear it nor remain longer in her presence, for the Lord had ordained that Lucifer and his ministers know and feel these acts of humility. All the demons fled with dreadful howls, saying: "Let us flee to the abyss, for less tormenting to us is that place of confusion than the invincible humility of this Woman." They left Her, and the most prudent Lady gave thanks to the Omnipotent for this first victory.

*INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN
AND LADY OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.*

453. My daughter, in the pride of the demon, insofar as it is his portion, there is an endeavor which he himself knows to be impossible, namely since the just and the saints serve and obey God he wants them to serve and obey him, and thus in this respect he might be like unto God. But the fulfillment of this wish is impossible since it implies in itself a contradiction. The essence of sanctity consists in the creature conforming itself to the divine will, loving God above all things in obedience, whereas sin consists in deviating from this rule by the love of some other object and obedience to the demon. But the uprightness of virtue is so conformable to reason that even the enemy himself cannot ignore it; because of this he seeks if possible to cause the good to fall in order to satisfy his wrath and envy at not being able to draw them to his service, and satiate his intense desire of preventing the glory of God in his saints, glory which he cannot appropriate for himself. For this reason he exerts violent efforts to fell to the earth some cedar of Lebanon in sanctity* and enslave those who have been the servants of the Most High. With this in view he exerts all his ingenuity and care, and often he seeks to induce his devotees to practice some of the moral virtues, even if only in appearance, as is done by hypocrites and as the virgins of Diana did. By this he hopes to be included and share in a certain manner in what God loves and desires, thereby sullyng and perverting the essence of virtues and the purity of the Lord which He desires to communicate to souls by means of these virtues.

* cf. I Cor. 10:12 [Ed.]

454. Take notice, my daughter, that so numerous are the detours, machinations and snares of this serpent for the fall of the just that without the special favor of the Most High souls could never know them, much less overcome them or escape his treacherous plots. In order to obtain this protection of the Lord, His Majesty desires the creature on its part never to relax in vigilance, nor trust in its own strength, nor ever be remiss in asking and desiring this help, for without it man can do nothing* and will soon perish. What especially draws down the divine clemency is fervor of the heart, promptness in divine worship, and above all persevering obedience and humility, which give stability and fortitude against the assaults of the enemy. I desire to impress upon thy mind, not for thy discouragement but for thy advice and warning, that the works of the just into which this serpent does not impart some of its poison are very rare, for he usually tries with utmost subtlety to excite some terrestrial passion or inclination by which he secretly deflects or perverts the intentions, preventing man from acting purely for God and for the legitimate ends of true virtue. Since the cockle of some foreign affection, either in part or in whole, is thus sown with the wheat,[†] it is difficult to detect unless souls strip themselves of all earthly inclinations and examine their works in the divine light.

455. Thou art well warned, my daughter, against this peril and the ceaseless efforts of the demons, which are more violent against thee than against other souls. Let not thy vigilance be less than his, and do not trust in the mere appearance of good intention in thy works; for though appearances must always be good and upright, yet this is not sufficient, nor can the creature always discern them. The demon often deceives the soul under the cloak of a good intention, proposing some apparent or very remote good end in order to lead them into proximate danger, and thus it happens that enmeshed in this danger the soul never attains the good end by which it was deceitfully motivated. At other times he prevents the soul under the cloak of this good intention from examining into circumstances which vitiate the act by imprudence in the performance; then again under the outward good intention are often hidden the earthly passions and inclinations which dominate the heart. Hence amid so many dangers thou canst find safety only in scrutinizing thy actions by the light which the Lord infuses into the superior part of thy soul; by it thou shalt know how to *separate the precious from the vile* (Jer. 15:19), the truth from falsehood, the bitter from the sweet, and the passions from right reason. Then the divine light in thee will not be obscured by darkness,^Δ thine eye will be single and will purify the body of thy actions (Mt. 6:22-23), and thou shalt be entirely and in all things pleasing to thy Lord and to me.

* cf. Jn. 15:5 [Ed.]

† cf. Mt. 13:25; Gospel, Epiphany V [Ed.]

Δ cf. Lk. 11:35 [Ed.]