

# Satan

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Catholic Truth Society No.do0352 (1965)

The modern world regards Satan as a superstition too absurd and out-of-date even, to be the subject of music-hall jokes. There are many Christians who refuse to think about him because the thought is disquieting. They seek comfort from religion and dwell on the mercy of God and the love of a gentle Saviour. They have reacted against the horrific pictures of Satan painted by 'hell-fire' preachers who sought to frighten their hearers into a life of virtue. Hence Satan is ignored. Nothing pleases him more than that he should be able to do his insidious work undetected.

It is a fundamental teaching of sacred Scripture that there is a powerful, superhuman, evil being, called by the sacred authors Lucifer, the Devil, the Adversary, the Ruler of this World, who is dedicated to rebellion against God and the corruption of man and all that is good. To teach the truths revealed by God concerning him, the sacred authors had necessarily to use images, since they were teaching about a being with an angelic nature, a spirit without a body, having natural powers and modes of operation different from those of which man has personal experience. The images used to communicate the truths concerning him are intended to express ideas rather than suggest pictures. Images such as that of the Serpent and the great Dragon indicate Satan's cunning, malevolence, hatred of man and terrible power to destroy him.

Satan remains a mystery. Yet there is much revealed about him in sacred Scripture from which the Church and her theologians have drawn deductions which are an essential part of the Catholic Faith.

## The Great Battle

Before man was made, and perhaps before the beginning of time, there was a mysterious rebellion against God. A powerful spirit called Michael led the spirits faithful to God in battle against the rebel spirits who were led by Satan. Michael was victorious. Satan and the rebels were banished from the presence of God into a state of suffering and misery.

We do not know the cause of the rebellion. An opinion held by many theologians is that Satan, full of pride in his own glory and strength, refused to accept the divine plan that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should become man, and that human nature, in the Person of Christ, should be elevated above that of the angels. Nor do we know how beings without bodies can fight. We can only presume that there was a clash of mighty personalities, a battle of strong wills, in which good triumphed. It is thus described in St John's Revelation, the Apocalypse:

'Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God" (Rev 12:7-10).

St Peter says, God 'cast them into hell and committed them to the pits of nether gloom to be kept until the Judgement' (2 Pet 2:4). St Jude says: 'And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwelling have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgement of the great day; just as Sodom and Gomorrah {Gomorrah} and the surrounding cities, which likewise acted immorally and indulged in unnatural lust, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire' (Jude, verses 6 and 7).

The Battle continues

God did not destroy the wicked spirits entirely. Although they were banished to eternal suffering, they were allowed restricted liberty until the Judgement, to carry on among men their battle against God. So in the text quoted above St John says Satan accuses God's people day and night before God and has descended upon earth and sea, 'in great wrath'.

We do not know why God allows them this liberty. It is the heart of the problem of evil. Sufficient to say that having gifted Satan and his angels with free will and great natural powers, God allowed them to continue to use them, knowing that in the battle against evil men would rise to great heights of heroism and love, thus giving greater glory to God than they would have done had the evil spirits been rendered harmless.

## SATAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are not many explicit references to Satan and the evil spirits in the Old Testament. But there is one text of the utmost importance, which stands at the very head of the Holy Bible and is the main source of the Church's teaching concerning Satan. This is the account of the Fall.

### The Fall

Satan began his war against man at the very beginning of human history. He was spitefully jealous of man's happy estate and the glorious future to which God had destined him, and sought to drag him down into misery. The sacred author of the Book of Genesis represents Satan as a serpent, probably because this reptile was the object of pagan worship with all its horrible associations. The serpent tempts the woman and, through her, the man, to defy the law of God, seeking pleasure of the palate in the taste of forbidden fruit and, more, seeking forbidden knowledge out of pride, desiring to be 'like to God, knowing good and evil'. With the first sin not only was man deprived of supernatural life, the life of God, but the balance in human nature was destroyed. There was in man an inclination to evil as well as to good. The effects of Original Sin have been inherited by all men ever since. Satan's form of warfare is to encourage man to give way to his evil inclinations, strengthening them and handing them on to his posterity, so that God's plans for mankind in the natural and supernatural order should be thwarted.

The story of the Fall ends on a note of hope. The sacred author, using the poetical and figurative language which is in the style of the great epics of the ancient Eastern world, tells of God's promise that the Evil One will be utterly defeated in his battle against mankind:

'God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all cattle, and above all wild animals; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel".' (Gen 3:14-15)

Satan defeated mankind in the person of the Woman, called Eve. But there will be a constant state of warfare between the offspring ('the seed') of the Woman and the offspring of the Serpent in which the Serpent and his brood will be defeated. The Greek text, by applying the personal pronoun 'he' to the seed of the Woman, points to an identification of it with Jesus Christ. The Church has always seen in this text a reference to our Lord who, by his life, death and resurrection, crushed Satan, being wounded himself in his human nature, his 'heel'. Mary his mother, who played a unique part in the defeat of Satan, is called by the Fathers the 'Second Eve', because through her came life, as death came through Eve.

There are explicit references to the devil in the two didactic books, Tobias {Tobit} and Job. The Book of Wisdom says: 'But through the devil's envy death entered into the world, And those who belong to his party experience it' (2:24-25). In general the battle between good and evil is a frequent theme of the Old Testament writers.

### SATAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

References to Satan and the devils are so much part of the woof and warp of the New Testament that it is destroyed if these texts are removed. St John thus describes the whole purpose of the life of Christ: 'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8).

#### Satan in the New Testament Satan in the Synoptic Gospels

At the head of the Old Testament stands the account of Satan's attack on the first man. At the head of the New Testament stands the account of his attack against Christ. Our Lord, at the beginning of his public life, met him face to face and proved himself infinitely superior. Satan, finding him exhausted after forty days of prayer and fasting in the wilderness, put him to the test. The temptation was that Christ should be the kind of Messiah many of the Israelites desired, a conqueror establishing a glorious, powerful and wealthy Kingdom of Israel. Christ rejected this suggestion. His kingdom was to be characterized by humble obedience to the will of God. He banished Satan, saying: 'Begone, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve"'. (Mt 4:10) Satan left him but did not desist from attacking his kingdom.

Immediately after the account of the temptation in the desert, St Mark records an outstanding incident in which an evil spirit spitefully admitted Christ's power over him:

'And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God". But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him' (Mk 1:23-26).

It would be impossible here to describe all the other exorcisms. Such sentences as these show that they were characteristic of Christ's ministry: 'And he went throughout Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons' (Mk 1:39). 'And a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured' (Lk 6:17-18). The astonishing account of the madman in the country of the Gadarenes and the headlong stampede of the herd of swine to death teaches that the evil spirits can possess the bodies of animals as well as of men (Mt 8:28-34). In this incident the spirits admit Christ's power over them and cravenly beg for mercy.

It has been suggested that these exorcisms were merely cures of diseases caused by psychological disturbances which the men of that time thought were the result of possession by evil spirits.

Certainly some of the afflicted showed symptoms which the modern doctor would associate with such illnesses as epilepsy, schizophrenia and hysteria. It may be that the people in question were suffering from these diseases. This does not rule out the influence of the evil spirits. All diseases and disturbances of the natural functions of man are evil and to be attributed to the proximate or remote agency of Satan, the cause of all evil. This is not to say that all suffering from these diseases are possessed by the devil. But it is important to notice that Christ and the Gospel writers on several occasions expressly attribute these particular recorded disturbances to Satan and the evil spirits and claim that Christ cured them through his power over the devil. When he cured the woman who had suffered for eighteen years from a curvature of the spine, with symptoms similar to those of a local paralysis, he said it was Satan who had 'bound' her (cf. Lk 13:16). It was a demon who made one man dumb (cf. Mt 9:32), another blind and dumb (cf. Mt 12:22), another deaf-mute and epileptic (cf. Mk 9:14-28). In a controversy with the Pharisees, in which they accused him of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils, Christ stated clearly and firmly that he cast out devils by the finger of God. He appealed to common sense, asking if the Devil would fight against himself, if 'Satan casts out Satan'. He claimed that his casting out devils was proof that the kingdom of God had come (cf. Lk 11:14-23).

Christ gave to his apostles and disciples the power and commission to cast out devils in his name. He said to them: 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons' (Mt 10:8). He gave them 'power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases' (Lk 9:1). They returned full of joy from their first mission, saying: 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name'. And he made that striking reply which can be seen as a claim to have existed when the wicked spirits rebelled, and also an explanation of why they were subject to his power. He said: 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven' (Lk 10:17-18).

### Christ's Teaching in the Synoptics

Our Lord taught the main truths concerning Satan by means of parables, which the Gospels interpret for us. In the parable of the Sower, the birds who eat up the seed fallen on the pathway represent Satan, who destroys faith in souls, takes away the word of God planted in them (cf. Mk 4:15).

In the parable of the enemy who by night sowed weeds among the wheat, the enemy represents Satan, who corrupts men. God allows the corrupted ones to live side by side with the good till the Day of Judgement. 'The field is the world, and the good seed means the sons of the kingdom; the weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the close of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the close of the age' (Mt 13:38-40).

Satan's most dangerous and insidious attack is upon souls rather than bodies. He seeks to inhabit the soul and, if driven out, will return with greater force (cf. Mt 12:43-45). He is intensely active in great sinners such as Mary Magdalen, who was possessed by seven devils before her conversion (cf. Lk 8:2). Satan directed his attacks particularly against Peter and the apostles, seeking to destroy the unity of the Church from the beginning, as he has sought to destroy it ever since. But he was and is thwarted through the prayers of Christ for Peter and the Church. Our Lord said to Peter: 'Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you [in the Greek, the plural], that he might sift you [the plural] like wheat, but I have prayed for you [the singular, that is, Simon] that your [the singular] faith may not fail; and when you [the singular] have turned again, strengthen your [the singular] brethren' (Lk 22:31-32). Peter is the cause and centre of the unity of the Church and it is against him

that Satan directs his special attack to destroy unity. He it is who holds together the Church in its faith.

#### Satan in the New Testament Satan in the Gospel of St John

A dominant theme of the fourth Gospel is the battle between Christ, the Light, and the powers of darkness, of which Satan is the prince. It is referred to in the prologue of the Gospel, which may be regarded as the thesis and summary of its message: 'In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it' (1: 4-5).

Satan, the devil, is expressly mentioned less than a dozen times in St John's Gospel, but the thought of this dark spirit, the leader of the powers of darkness opposing the light, seems to be always present in the mind of the Evangelist. Satan is the gloomy back-ground against which the Jewish leaders and Judas Iscariot move, and the black shadows which move in as the final scene draws near.

It is typical of the very 'spiritual' Gospel of St John that not a single case of diabolical possession is recorded. He is interested only in the spiritual and moral activity of Satan, his hardening of hearts and darkening of minds. Satan is a superhuman, other-worldly being who, 'from the beginning', at least from the creation of man, has rebelled and schemed against God. He is the mind behind all the evil forces which slowly marshal themselves against Christ, in particular, (to use the terms that John uses) 'the world', 'the Jews', and Judas Iscariot. Let us see what is signified by these terms.

The devil is the outstanding, the chief, the original evil, a liar and the father of lies, the 'murderer' whose first lie brought about the spiritual death of man (cf. 8:44). He is the 'ruler of this world' (cf. 12:31), that is, of all those men and things which have been corrupted to serve evil, those who are slaves to 'the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and pride of life' (cf. 1 Jn 2:16), those who commit sin and do not love their brothers and are thus 'children of the devil' (cf. 1 Jn 3:8-10).

The second opposing force is 'the Jews', by which St John means those among the Scribes and Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, the rulers in Jerusalem, who plotted Christ's death. These are the children of the devil and, like him, have no truth in them and thus are 'murderers' (cf. 8:44).

The third enemy is Judas, the traitor. Christ called him 'a devil' (cf. 6:70). It was Satan who put it into his heart to plot Christ's death (cf. 13:2), and who 'entered into' him at the time of betrayal (13:27). For St John the moment of Judas' departure from the Supper Room was the beginning of the 'hour' of the powers of darkness. The traitor, having taken the morsel from the hand of Christ, went out into the darkness. This for the poetical and mystical soul of St John was the symbol of the spiritual darkness of Satan's kingdom, and he concludes the incident with the dramatic and poignant remark: 'And it was night' (13:30).

Yet the light triumphed. The hour of darkness turned out to be the hour of Christ's glory. No sooner had Judas gone than Christ said, 'Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified' (13:31). He moved forward confidently to victory over Satan. He had said: 'Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out' (12:31). Now he says: 'The ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me... Rise, let us go hence (to meet him)' (14:30-31). Finally he says: 'The ruler of this world is judged' (16:11).

#### Satan in Revelation

As in his Gospel, so in his Revelation, the Apocalypse, St John frequently refers to the battle waged against Christ and his Church by Satan and the world. The pagan city of Rome, the beast with ten horns and seven heads, is the epitome of all the evils of the world. 'The dragon', against whom Michael and his angels fight, is Satan. The persecutors of the Church, at Smyrna and Philadelphia, are 'the synagogue of Satan' (2:9; 3:9). Pergamum, where there was a famous shrine dedicated to idolatry, is 'Satan's throne' (2:13). The bottomless pit is 'Satan's prison' (20:3, 7), from which he will be freed for a time to deceive the nations, but will be finally thrown by the great angel into 'the lake of fire', where he and his followers 'will be tormented day and night for ever and ever' (20:10).

#### Satan in the New Testament Satan in the Acts of the Apostles

Christ was completely victorious over Satan and his evil spirits, but God, for his own mysterious reasons, allows him liberty to tempt mankind until the Day of Judgement. Wherever the Church is weak, whether in missionary lands or in the underworld of modern cities, there is his attack most apparent. It is stronger, though more secretive and subtle, in the souls of those who are striving for holiness.

The Acts of the Apostles tells how active Satan was in the first years of the struggling Church, and how the apostles, in the name of Christ, exorcised him from those possessed. For example, Peter drove out 'unclean spirits' in Jerusalem (5:16), Philip in Samaria (8:7), Paul at Philippi (16:16) and Ephesus (19:12). Jewish exorcists tried to imitate Paul, but the evil spirit cried: 'Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?', and the possessed man leapt at them and overpowered them (19:16).

#### Satan in the Letters of the Apostles

St Paul and the apostles, in their letters to the infant Churches which they had founded, taught what Christ taught. They have much to say concerning Satan and the evil spirits. The main truths which they teach are that Satan hates God and man and strives constantly to make man rise in rebellion and to seek unlawful pleasure at the expense of his neighbour. St Paul teaches that Satan has power to act upon the mind as well as upon the senses. It is Satan who tempts men to anger (cf. 2 Tim 2:24-26), lack of self-control in marriage (cf. 1 Cor 7:5), unforgiveness (cf. 2 Cor 2:10), self-esteem (cf. 1 Tim 3:6). All these are ultimately temptations to disobedience in pride, the sin which is the root of all evil, the first sin of which Satan himself and the first human beings were guilty. All who follow the devil are 'the sons of disobedience', as were St Paul's converts before they reached the gift of the faith (Eph 2:2, 5:6; Col 3:5). He writes to the Ephesians, 'and you he [Christ] made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience' (Eph 2:2). The Sons of Disobedience is a good name for those who are under the influence of the devil.

Saints Peter and Paul, in eloquent and urgent words, called Christians to vigorous resistance against the attacks of the devil. They tell them not to rely on their own strength but be confident of victory in the power of the Lord:

'Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen' (1 Pet 5:8-11).

St Paul, drawing his metaphors from the equipment of the Roman soldier of his day, thus urges the Ephesians to fight in the battle against Satan and his evil spirits:

'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places' (Eph 6:10-12).

Having examined the teachings of the Holy Bible concerning Satan, one must now turn to the liturgy of the Church, the definitions of Councils and the writings of the Fathers and theologians.

### SATAN IN THE LITURGY

There are many prayers in the liturgy, particularly in the administration of the Sacraments and in Blessings, which teach that there is a supreme evil spirit, Satan, and with him hosts of demons, who constantly endeavour to lead men into sin, to take possession of their faculties and even to possess places and things.

The exorcisms at baptism are notable examples of this. {Here the references are to the liturgy attributed to Pope St Pius V.} The priest prays over the one to be baptized:

'Drive out of him all blindness of heart, break the bonds of Satan which have bound him'.

He addresses the evil spirit; and bids him depart.

The one to be baptized is asked {the 'square brackets indicate the wording of the Liturgy of Pope Paul VI}: 'Do you renounce [reject] Satan? And all his works? And all his pomps [empty promises]?' - to each of which questions he replies, 'I do'. The priest makes the sign of the Cross on ears and nostrils [lips or tongue], saying, 'Ephpheta, which is, Be you open to the sweet fragrance about you. As for you, evil spirit, get you gone; for God's judgement is upon you'. [See Mark 7:31-36]

Holy water is blessed so that 'where it is sprinkled and the Holy Name invoked, the unclean spirits may cease from troubling us. Like a venomous reptile may the devil be banished and terrify us no more'.

The eleventh 'title' of the Roman Ritual is concerned with driving out devils from those possessed. Careful instructions are given concerning the behaviour of devils and the possessed and the preparations which the priest must make before carrying out this important and somewhat frightening rite. In the long prayers of exorcism the priest speaks sternly to Satan and the devil, or devils, which possess the man, and bids them depart in the name of Christ. There are also prayers for driving devils away from places. These exorcisms are not mediaeval prayers and rites now in abeyance. They are used with startling effects today. {Note that their use is only authorized to a duly appointed priest.}

### DEFINITIONS OF THE CHURCH

Very few errors concerning Satan and the devils have arisen in the history of the Church. Hence there has been little need to make definitions in condemnation of false doctrine on this point of teaching. There have been several official pronouncements, of which two are outstanding. At the Council of Braga in 561 anathemas were pronounced against the Manichaeans who taught that the devil was not created but emerged from primeval darkness, that the human body and material things

come from the devil and are therefore evil; also against the Priscillians, who taught that thunder and lightning and other unpleasant natural phenomena were the work of the devil. At the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 a profession of faith was drawn up to counteract the same heresies revived by the Albigenians. It defined that God is the Creator of all things, having made everything out of nothing at the beginning of time, both spiritual and corporeal, both the angels and the universe. It added: 'The devil and the other demons were created by God and were good, but they themselves made themselves evil. Man, on the other hand, sinned at the suggestion of the devil' (Denzinger 428).

It is then of divine faith, revealed in sacred Scripture, that there are fallen angels, that the chief of these, the Devil or Satan, tempted man and led him to sin, that Satan and his wicked angels continue to tempt and persecute human beings and that in punishment for their rebellion against God they have been condemned to suffer in eternal fire, which was prepared for them. It is of Catholic Faith that the demons were created by God, were good, sinned and fell through their own fault and are spirits, without bodies, not made of matter.

It is certain that the devils, like the angels, are spirits, that they were created at the beginning of time, if not before. Nothing definite has been said by the Church about the nature of their being, the nature of their sin or their condition after their fall.

The speculations and deductions of theologians and the common experience of men in their contact with evil enable us to make the following conclusions with assurance.

## CONCLUSIONS

Before God created man, and perhaps before he created the universe, he created hosts of angelic spirits. These beings, like man, are immortal and gifted with supernatural life. But, unlike man, they are pure spirits, that is, not encumbered with material bodies. Their activities are not limited by the senses of sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing, or by the laws of gravity, or by fatigue, age and decay. There is one amongst them, spiritually privileged in gifts of intellect and will above the rest, their Prince, Lucifer, 'the morning star'. He rebelled against God and led the others in rebellion with him. Only the spiritual sins of pride and envy were possible to a creature who, being without body or human passions, could not covet material things, lust for sexual pleasures, be angry at imagined wrongs, gluttonous for food and drink or desirous of slothful ease. Pride was his sin.

When he and his followers were defeated by Michael and his angels, in a mysterious battle of intellect and wills, he and the rebels were cast out from the presence of God into eternal suffering. They deprived themselves of the supernatural gift of divine life, their natural gifts were much impaired and they were cut off from the friendship and communion of God and the faithful spirits. In consequence they find themselves in a self-elected state of misery due to their clear knowledge of all the beauty and good which they have forfeited through their own fault, accompanied by impenitent self-rebuke and a malicious envy of those who enjoy this goodness and beauty. Hatred and envy consume them and are so fierce that there is no image in the human language which better describes their suffering than the pain of fire.

The envy of Satan was directed against man, whom he incited to commit the first, the Original Sin. Ever since, the evil spirits have done all in their power to encourage man to sin constantly.

Christ defeated Satan utterly, yet God for his own mysterious purposes has not deprived the evil spirits completely of their power and liberty, but allows them to tempt men. Satan's powerful genius and that of his evil supporters is dedicated to making man join in his rebellion and share his

unhappy state. The evil spirits, and the followers of Satan in the world, form a kingdom, 'the dominion of darkness' (cf. Col 1:13), dedicated to evil. Satan is the ruler of this kingdom and in it are all the other evil spirits and the people of 'the world'. It is a hideous caricature of the kingdom of Christ. Satan sets himself up not merely as its prince, but even as its god. St Paul calls him 'the god of this world' (cf. 2 Cor 4:4). Those who resist his wiles and remain in Christ will live happy forever. Those who follow him will suffer with him for all eternity.

## SATAN IN HISTORY AND THE MODERN WORLD

Study of history and the experience of modern life teaches us that there is a Power of Evil which takes a grip on human beings, even groups, nations, districts and places. It manifests itself in the same patterns of human behaviour, the patterns of the seven deadly sins. The vicious potentates of the ancient world have their counterparts in modern dictators and exploiters of the people. The murderers, robbers and rapists who prowled the lanes and streets a hundred or a thousand years ago have their counterpart in the modern countryside and underworlds of cities. The phenomena associated with Black Magic, witchcraft, diabolical possession and such things are familiar to many doctors, psychiatrists, criminologists and social workers, and are everywhere and always similar. This indicates the direction and purposefulness which is characteristic of a powerful personality. Satan is not human. He is a 'pure' spirit. Yet he is not just an abstract power.

He is perverse. He twists truth. The most successful lie is the half-truth, in which an aspect of truth is presented as a disguise for the basic, underlying falsehood. In the same way Satan masks the ugly to make it seem beautiful.

He is predatory. He preys on men and leads them to prey on others, disturbing, corrupting and ultimately ruining them.

He is possessive. He seeks to enslave the human appetites, imagination and senses, so that they clamour for self-gratification in defiance of what the God-given conscience dictates.

He makes his strongest attack upon the strongest fortresses of goodness, namely, holy people. Many of the saints had vivid experiences of Satan's attack. The testimony of great mystics, such as St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila, and the recorded experiences of St John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, show that the devil is intensely and cunningly active in trying to disturb, confuse and lead astray souls striving to enter into full communion with God. Here, more than anywhere else, the evil spirit seeks to masquerade as an angel of light' (2 Cor 11:14). These saints knew Satan as a real being, as real as themselves, although he rarely assumed a visible appearance. However, his presence was often manifested in violent, terrifying and disgusting occurrences.

There has always been among some depraved men a cult of Satan, and it is claimed that he has manifested himself on occasions. J. K. Huysmans associated with professed satanists and claimed, in his book *La-bas* (1899), to have had documentary evidence of satanic manifestations. One suspects that, in all this, psychopathic illnesses and a taste for what is depraved and bizarre play an important part.

## CHRISTIAN CONFIDENCE

The Christian must not be terrified by this teaching of Holy Church. He is right to fear Satan, yet it should be a reasonable fear made calm by hope and confidence in Jesus Christ. Satan and his evil spirits were defeated by him and they are cravenly abject before him. As he approached his passion, Jesus said: 'Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out' (Jn 12: 31); 'He has no power over me' (Jn

14:30). Jesus lived, died and rose from the dead precisely to defeat Satan. As St John says, 'The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil' (1 Jn 3:8). The Epistle to the Hebrews says: 'He himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage' (Heb 2:14-15).

Those who receive the life of Christ through the Sacraments and remain in his body can never be defeated by the evil powers who were conquered by him and are terrified and abject before him. They can say with St Paul: 'For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:38-39).

Also the Christian belongs to a glorious company of angels and saints. The army of the bright spirits who fought for God with St Michael still fight evil and watch over God's people and the whole of creation. These spirits are everywhere, protecting and guiding God's creation and, in particular, the souls of human beings. It is a common teaching of theologians that each soul has a guardian angel. This is expressed beautifully by the poet Francis Thompson in his poem 'In no strange land':

Not where the wheeling systems darken,  
And our benumb'd conceiving soars! -  
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,  
Beats at our own clay-shutter'd doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;  
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!  
'Tis ye, 'tis your estran-ged faces,  
That miss the many-splendour'd thing.

But (when so sad thou canst no sadder)  
Cry; - and upon thy so sore loss  
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder  
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,  
Cry, - clinging Heaven by the hems;  
And lo, Christ walking on the water,  
Not of Genesareth, but Thames!

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Note: Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

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## APPENDIX I

### A Simple Exorcism A Prayer Against Satan for Priests or Laity

#### Prayer Against Satan and the Rebellious Angels

Published by Order of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII but adjusted to conform with "Inde Ab Aliquot Annis" of 29 September 1985

The following is a simple exorcism prayer that can be said by priests or laity. The term “exorcism” does NOT always denote a solemn exorcism involving a person possessed by the devil. In general, the term denotes prayers to “curb the power of the devil and prevent him from doing harm.” As St. Peter had written in Holy Scripture, “your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.” (1 St. Peter 5,8 )

The Holy Father exhorts priests to say this prayer as often as possible, as a simple exorcism to curb the power of the devil and prevent him from doing harm. The faithful also may say it in their own name, for the same purpose, as any approved prayer. Its use is recommended whenever action of the devil is suspected, causing malice in men, violent temptations and even storms and various calamities. It could be used as a solemn exorcism (an official and public ceremony, in Latin), to expel the devil. It would then be said by a priest, in the name of the Church and only with a Bishop's permission.

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Most glorious Prince of the Heavenly Armies, Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in “our battle against principalities and powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places” (Eph., 6,12). Come to the assistance of men whom God has created to His likeness and whom He has redeemed at a great price from the tyranny of the devil. Holy Church venerates thee as her guardian and protector; to thee, the Lord has entrusted the souls of the redeemed to be led into heaven. Pray therefore the God of Peace to crush Satan beneath our feet, that he may no longer retain men captive and do injury to the Church. Offer our prayers to the Most High, that without delay they may draw His mercy down upon us; take hold of “the dragon, the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan”, bind him and cast him into the bottomless pit ... “that he may no longer seduce the nations” (Apoc. 20, 2-3).

Prayer for the grace of Exorcism

In the Name of Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, strengthened by the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God, of Blessed Michael the Archangel, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and all the Saints, we confidently undertake to repulse the attacks and deceits of the devil.

Psalm 67 verses 2 and 3 (Vulgate) [Psalm 68 verses 1 and 2 in the Hebrew]

God arises; His enemies are scattered and those who hate Him flee before Him. As smoke is driven away, so are they driven; as wax melts before the fire, so the wicked perish at the presence of God.

V. Behold the Cross of the Lord, flee bands of enemies.

R. The Lion of the tribe of Juda, the offspring of David, hath conquered.

V. May Thy mercy, Lord, descend upon us.

R. As great as our hope in Thee.

(The crosses below indicate a blessing to be given if a priest recites the Exorcism; if a lay person recites it, they indicate the Sign of the Cross to be made silently by that person.)

We ask God to drive them from us, whoever they may be, unclean spirits, all satanic powers, all infernal invaders, all wicked legions, assemblies and sects. In the Name and by the power of Our Lord Jesus Christ, + may they be snatched away and driven from the Church of God and from the

souls made to the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the Precious Blood of the Divine Lamb. +

May the Lord rebuke the most cunning serpent, that he shall no more dare to deceive the human race, persecute the Church, torment God's elect and sift them as wheat. + May the Most High God command him, + He, the Lord, with whom, in his great insolence, Satan still claims to be equal, "God who wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2,4). May God the Father command him. + May God the Son command him. + May God the Holy Ghost command him. + May Christ, God's Word made flesh, command him; + He who to save our race outdone through Satan's envy, "humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death" (Phil. 2,8); He who has built His Church on the firm rock and declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail against Her, because He will dwell with Her "all days even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28,20). May the sacred Sign of the Cross command him, + as may also the power of the mysteries of the Christian Faith. + May the glorious Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, command him; + she who by her humility and from the first moment of her Immaculate Conception crushed his proud head. May the faith of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and of the other Apostles command him. + May the blood of the Martyrs and the pious intercession of all the Saints command him. +

Thus, may the cursed dragon, and also, the diabolical legions, be adjured and rebuked by the living God, + by the true God, + by the holy God, + by the God "who so loved the world that He gave up His only Son, that every soul believing in Him might not perish but have life everlasting" (St. John 3, 16); May the Lord stop him deceiving human creatures and pouring out to them the poison of eternal damnation; May the Lord stop him harming the Church and hindering her liberty. May the Lord command: 'Begone, Satan, inventor and master of all deceit, enemy of man's salvation'. May Satan give place to Christ in Whom he has found none of his works; May Satan give place to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church acquired by Christ at the price of His Blood. May Satan stoop beneath the all-powerful Hand of God; May Satan tremble and flee when we invoke the Holy and terrible Name of Jesus, this Name which causes hell to tremble, this Name to which the Virtues, Powers and Dominations of heaven are humbly submissive, this Name which the Cherubim and Seraphim praise unceasingly repeating: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord, the God of Hosts.

V. O Lord, hear my prayer.

R. And let my cry come unto Thee.

V. May the Lord be with thee. [or: May the Lord be with us.]

R. And with thy spirit. [or: And with our spirits.]

Let us pray.

God of heaven, God of earth, God of Angels, God of Archangels, God of Patriarchs, God of Prophets, God of Apostles, God of Martyrs, God of Confessors, God of Virgins, God who has power to give life after death and rest after work: because there is no other God than Thee and there can be no other, for Thou art the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, of Whose reign there shall be no end, we humbly prostrate ourselves before Thy glorious Majesty and we beseech Thee to deliver us by Thy power from all the tyranny of the infernal spirits, from their snares, their lies and their furious wickedness. Deign, O Lord, to grant us Thy powerful protection and to keep us safe and sound. We beseech Thee through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.

V. From the snares of the devil,

R. Deliver us, O Lord.

V. That Thy Church may serve Thee in peace and liberty:

R. We beseech Thee to hear us.

V. That Thou may crush down all enemies of Thy Church:

R. We beseech Thee to hear us.

(Holy water is sprinkled in the place where we may be.)

END OF THE PRAYER

"Inde Ab Aliquot Annis" of 29 September 1985 says:

For some years there has been an increase in the number of ecclesial gatherings which seek liberation from demonic influences, even though they are not properly and truly exorcisms. These groups, even when a priest is present, are led by lay persons.

Since the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has been asked what ought to be thought about this, this dicastery is of the opinion that all other ordinaries should have the following response:

1 - Canon 1172 of the Code of Canon Law declares that no one is able to legitimately undertake exorcisms of the possessed unless expressed and individual permission has been obtained from the ordinary of the place (section 1). The canon also establishes that this permission ought to be conceded by the ordinary of the place only to priests who are distinguished in piety, knowledge, prudence, and integrity of life (section 2). Bishops are, therefore, strongly urged to see to the observance of these norms.

2 - From these prescriptions it follows, therefore, that no member of the Christian faithful can use the formula of exorcism against Satan and fallen angels, extracted from that which was made law by Leo XIII, and even less are the able to use the entire text for exorcism. Bishops are to bring this to the attention of the faithful as it is deemed necessary.

3 - Finally, for the same reasons, bishops are asked to be vigilant that -- for even cases in which true diabolical possession is excluded, diabolical influence nevertheless seems in some way to be revealed -- those who do not have the required faculty not serve in the leading of meetings where, in order to gain freedom, prayers are used which dignify demons by directly questioning them and in searching to make known their identity.

The announcement of these norms, however, ought not to keep the faithful from praying that, as Jesus taught us, they might be delivered from evil (cf. Mt. 6:13). Finally, pastors ought to avail themselves of this occasion to recall what the tradition of the Church teaches about the proper function of sacraments and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the angels and the saints in the spiritual fight of Christians against evil spirits.

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## APPENDIX II

One of the most efficacious of the Church's Sacramentals against the influence of Satan is the Saint Benedict Medal.

The Saint Benedict Medal has these symbols and prayers:

The vertical beam of the Cross has five letters: C.S.S.M.L., meaning *Crux Sacra Sit Mihi Lux* (May the holy Cross be for me a light).

The horizontal beam of the Cross also has five letters: N.D.S.M.D., meaning Non Draco Sit Mihi Dux (Let not the dragon be my guide).

The four large letters at the angles of the Cross: C. S. P. B. stand for Crux Sancti Patris Benedicti (The Cross of the Holy Father Benedict).

Encircling the Cross in a circle around the right margin are these letters: V.R.S.N.S.M.V., meaning Vade retro Satana; nunquam suade mihi vana (Begone [go behind me] Satan! Suggest not to me {thy} vain things {the Latin does not have 'thy' in the sentence}).

Around the left margin of the circle are these letters: S.M.Q.L.I.V.B., meaning Sunt mala quae libas; ipse venena bibas (The drink you offer is evil; drink that poison yourself).

At the top of the circle is the word PAX (Peace).

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