

BEGONE SATAN!

A Sensational Expulsion of the Devil
which occurred in Iowa in 1928

By Celestine Kapsner, O.S.B.

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* The film *The Exorcist* (1973; Director's Cut, 2000), and the book which inspired it were in part based on this actual case of diabolical possession and exorcism, as well as another exorcism which took place in Silver Spring, Maryland and St Louis, Missouri in 1949 involving a 14 year old boy.

CONTENTS:

Foreword

Letter from a doctor

Introduction

- 1. The Case of Possession and Expulsion in Earling, Iowa**
- 2. The Lady in Question**
- 3. The Decisive Moment Had Arrived**
- 4. One or More Devils**
- 5. The Demons Jacob and Mina**
- 6. Acute Cause of the Devil's Pain**
- 7. Holy Water**
- 8. St. Therese of the Child Jesus**
- 9. St. Michael the Archangel**
- 10. Crucifix and Relic of the Cross**

11. The Pastor's Antipathy Against the Whole Procedure

12. The Experience of His Life

13. Satan's Speeches

14. Satan's Knowledge Can Be Embarrassing

15. Dumb Devils

16. Avenging Spirits

17. Night Prowlers

18. How the Possessed Woman Fared

19. Exorcism Lasted Twenty-three Days

20. High Commander

21. Antichrist

22. More Atonement

23. Battle Between Good and Evil Spirits

24. The Little Flower of the Child Jesus

25. The Devils Depart

26. Theresa Neumann

Supplement

Testimony of Theresa Wegerer, Father Steiger's Housekeeper

Appendix I. The Devil, by Fr. John Hardon, S.J.

Appendix II. The Diabolical Spirit, by Fr. Jordan Aumann, O.P.

Foreword

In regard to *Begone Satan*, some persons have asked the question: "Why publish a story of this kind in our age and civilization?" One could answer this by replying that our age and civilization needs to learn anew a lesson that was vainly laughed to scorn in past generations.

During His sojourn here on earth Christ cast out devils at various times. The powers of Christ were transmitted to the Apostles and their successors; and the Church's ordinary rite of ordination to the Priesthood includes the order of exorcist [now in the "extraordinary rite", sometimes called the Tridentine rite - ED.] , in which Christ's power to cast out devils is transmitted. The Church, moreover, has a special rite for such exorcisms, and throughout the ages she has witnessed the effective use of it. Her long experience also explains her extreme caution, her extensive investigation of a case, before permitting any exorcism. For a time it was fashionable to scoff at demoniacal possession as part and parcel of an outmoded superstition of bygone ages of ignorance—like the attitude of a lifetime ago in regard to the miracles of Lourdes [where the Blessed Virgin appeared in France in 1858]. But facts are stubborn, also against the scoffing of so-called enlightened criticism. Stubborn facts cannot be denied even when they baffle all natural explanation. The absurd thing about such a position is that the critics "just know" that supernatural or preternatural phenomena simply "cannot be."

We have become much more sober in our day. And it is a healthy sign that the man of education no longer scoffs so readily at that which he cannot explain. So much has been gained for perennial common sense.

To a great extent the essential matters of Christian faith are beyond the field of natural knowledge. However, any viewpoint that is flatly contradicted by true natural knowledge cannot be a matter of Christian faith. In regard to sin and the Kingdom of Satan, Christian faith teaches Christ's conquest of Satan and Satan's dominion by His death and resurrection. Now this conquest is shared by individual souls in the sacrament of Baptism, the rite of which contains several solemn exorcisms as well as renunciation of Satan and his pomps. In the light of this Christian faith, it is not at all surprising that Satan should be regaining something of his hold on men in our day. For we have in several past centuries witnessed the increased abandonment by men of the Church of Christ, and among non-Catholic denominations the increased abandonment of the sacrament of Baptism. What is this but a great surrender to the powers of evil ?

For a succinct statement of the Catholic position on possession by the devil, the reader is referred to the Catholic Encyclopedia article "Possession, Demoniacal."*

Virgil Michel, O.S.B., Ph.D.

* Fr. Michel is referring to the 1907 Catholic Encyclopedia. See Appendix I for the 1998 Our Sunday Visitor Catholic Encyclopedia articles on both the Devil and Demonic Possession.

Letter from a doctor

Dr. John Dundon,
Physician and Surgeon
1228 E. Brady St.
Milwaukee, Wis.

Rev. Celestine Kapsner, O.S.B.
St. John's Abbey
Collegeville, Minn.

Dear Father Kapsner:

We wish to endorse your pamphlet "Vade Satana" [Latin for "Begone Satan"] as a potent aid to faith in the value of sacramentals, relics of the saints, and prayer. No more vivid picture has been presented to us of the losing battle against the "camp of Christ." Nothing has made our insistent floundering from the "camp of Christ" to the "camp of the devil" appear so absurd. The memory it has instilled of the hatred of Satan and the eternal misery of his permanent army, evokes a continuous inventory of one's life, savoring of the minuteness of the final judgment. That it will save many souls we have no doubt. That some will borrow fruitless fright is also possible, but for them one must say that if the picture is terrible the real thing must be worse. Agony is the lot of all at least once.

Satan has seemed too unreal. It would be a pity if this pamphlet were to be suppressed because some weak souls have been made to sense him more vividly than the author intends. We were granted an interview with the exorcist, Father Theophilus, after reading your account of the diabolical possession. We treasure the experience as an intimate glimpse into the life of a pious priest very gifted in a specialty which should command the patronage of the medical profession, rather than to be allotted to the realm of superstition or necromancy. We anxiously await his complete report of the Earling [case].

Yours very truly,

J. D. Dundon, M.D.

Introduction

Nineteen hundred years ago, Christ, the Son of God, came upon this earth. He gained the victory over Satan, the Prince of this World, and founded His own Kingdom, the Church. He vested His Church with the same powers that He had received from the Father. "As the Father sent Me, so I send you."

When preparing her candidates for the ministry, Holy Mother Church hands these powers over to them that they may continue the mission of Christ's Kingdom on earth. Preparatory to Holy Priesthood [in the "extraordinary rite"] the candidate receives the so-called minor and major orders. Among the minor orders is one called the Order of Exorcist. When the Bishop confers this order he pronounces the following significant words: "You receive the power to place your hand upon those possessed and through the imposition of your hands, the grace of the Holy Ghost and the words of exorcism you shall drive evil spirits out of the bodies of those so possessed."

The Solemn and powerful meaning attached to this ceremony, not conferred in any of the other orders, can be gleaned from the words: "Receive and impress upon your mind that you receive the right to place your hand upon those possessed."

Later on the Bishop invites the faithful to join him in asking that he who is to receive this order may be an effective agent in expelling the evil spirit from those possessed. He continues to pray that the candidate may become an approved physician of the Church through the gift of healing conferred upon her by the Almighty Himself.

The Church bases her action on the example of Christ Himself, Who frequently drove out evil spirits and endowed His disciples with full authority to do likewise. The superficial faith of our age regards such an order as superfluous. The reality of hell, devils, and cases of possession have been denied as myths of the dark ages. Even if Christ and the Apostles repeatedly emphasized the powers of the evil spirit, these are looked upon as purely superstitious. That Satan has succeeded in making man so indifferent regarding his actions of misleading men is one of his greatest and most advantageous accomplishments. People rarely listen to anything of a supernatural nature. Actual happenings of the supernatural order in our times are all the more striking therefore and cannot so readily be dismissed by a mere shrug of the shoulders - facts such as the numerous and indisputable miracles at Lourdes, the extraordinary visions, stigmata, abstention from food, and gift of languages of Theresa Neumann, the life of the Curé of Ars [St John Vianney] who was recently proclaimed a saint of the church, to whom for 35 years the sight of hell was constantly and really an ordinary experience. No less worthy of note are the facts in the cases of possession occurring in our times: the case of a possessed boy in Wemding, Suabia, Bavaria, 1891; the case in St. Michael's Mission in Africa in 1906 of two girls possessed; the noted case of the Chinese woman Lautien in Honan, China, in 1926 and 1929, which was under the direction of Father Peter Heier, S.V.D., of Hague, ND, now a Missionary in China, and several cases in Rockford, IL since 1940.

The priest has frequent opportunities for using his power of exorcism. The blessings of holy water, its various uses in the blessing of houses and in the many other blessings and benedictions of the church in her sacramentals, are dependent upon this power. Pope Leo XIII in our own time composed a powerful and solemn prayer of exorcism for priests against the fallen angels and evil spirits. It is said that this pope, after God permitted him to see in a vision the great devastation Satan is carrying on in our times, composed the prayer of exorcism in honor of St. Michael that is now recited in the vernacular as one of the prayers after Mass [in the "extraordinary rite"; see chap. 9 below for the St Michael prayer].

1. The Case of Possession and Expulsion in Earling, Iowa

The following soul-stirring case of actual possession and successful expulsion, through the powers given to the Church over the evil one, is all the more striking in view of the above explanations. The facts herein narrated were testified to by the late Rev. Joseph Steiger, who was a personal witness of the scenes herein narrated. While conducting a mission in the parish of Earling in 1928, Father Theophilus Riesinger, O.F.M.Cap., asked the Rev. Pastor for permission to have a certain person, whom he believed possessed by the devil, brought into his parish, and to use the solemn formula of exorcism over her while she would be detained in the convent of the Franciscan Sisters who were active in the parish. Father Steiger happened to be a personal friend of Father Theophilus for many years past.

"What, another case of possession?" replied the pastor. "Are these cases still on the

increase? You have already dispossessed the devil in a number of such cases!"

"That is indeed true. However, the Bishop has again entrusted this case into my hands. The lady in question lives at some distance from Earling. I should like to have her brought here, since it would create too much excitement in her home and perhaps would be the cause of many disturbances to the person herself."

"But why just here in my own parish?"

"It is just here in an outlying country district that the case may be disposed of in a quiet manner. Two places are available, either the Sisters' convent or in the sacristy here. So it is quite possible to relieve the unfortunate person of her burden without anybody out in the world becoming aware of it."

"My dear Father, do you really think that the Mother Superior would permit anything like that to take place under her convent roof? I don't believe it. And it would be altogether out of the question to bring the person into my own house."

"My dear friend," smilingly replied the Father, "tell me this one thing. Will you give me your approval, should the Mother Superior be willing?"

"Well, all right, but only under this condition. I do not believe that you will have any success at the convent."

"Thanks for your permission. The case is therefore settled, as the Mother Superior did give her consent from the very beginning. I have already made all arrangements with her for this case, provided you give your full approval."

Thus it was agreed to have the exorcism performed at the convent. The place was situated in the country, and as it was summer time, the people were actively occupied with their work in the open fields. No one would be any the wiser. Much less would anyone bother himself about what was going on. As a matter of precaution the case was again submitted to the bishop, who called the pastor to himself to acquaint him with what he might expect to happen.

"So, my Father, you have given your consent to allow this to take place in your parish. Have you thought the matter over sufficiently?"

"Your Excellency, to be honest, I must confess that I was not very anxious to have it. I have a rather strong aversion for such unusual affairs. But Father Theophilus explained that my country parish together with the easy access to the convent would be just suitable for such an undertaking, and so I disliked to refuse."

"As Bishop I will caution you most emphatically that there may be some very serious consequences resulting to you in person. Should the Reverend Father not have enlightened you regarding the matter, then I wish to give you information based upon sound facts and similar experiences. The devil will certainly try his utmost to seek revenge on you, should you be willing that this unfortunate woman be relieved of this terrible oppression."

"Well, I hardly think that it will be as bad as all that. God's protecting hand will not fail me."

The devil has no more influence than God permits. And if God will not permit it, the devil will not be able to harm me in the least. So I have no misgivings. I shall keep my word. I have given my consent, and for that very reason I would not care to withdraw it again. And should it entail some sacrifices, I shall be only too glad to bear them, if only an immortal soul shall benefit by it and be freed from the terrible stranglehold of that infernal being."

2. The Lady in Question

The unfortunate woman was unknown to the pastor. She lived far from Earling, and up to then he had heard nothing about her. The Capuchin Father had explained to him what her actual condition was, that she was a very pious and respectable person. Throughout her youth she led a religious, fervent and blameless life. In fact she approached the sacraments frequently. After her fourteenth year some unusual experiences manifested themselves. She wanted to pray, wanted to go to church and as usual receive Holy Communion. But some interior hidden power was interfering with her plans. The situation became worse instead of improving. Words cannot express what she had to suffer. She was actually barred from the consolations of the Church, torn away from them by force. She could not help herself in any way and seemed to be in the clutches of some mysterious power. She was conscious of some sinister inner voices that kept on suggesting most disagreeable things to her. These voices tried their utmost to arouse thoughts of the most shameful type within her, and tried to induce her to do things unmentionable and even to bring her to despair. The poor creature was helpless and secretly was of the opinion that she would become insane. There were times when she felt impelled to shatter her holy water font, when she could have attacked her spiritual adviser and could have suffocated him. Yes, there were suggestions urging her to tear down the very house of God.

"Hallucination, a pure hysterical case, nervous spells." Such easy explanation one will hear to account for the experiences. True, similar happenings do occur in nervous and hysterical cases. However, many doctors had this case in charge for years, and the woman was finally examined by the best specialists in the profession. But their thorough examinations resulted in the unanimous conclusion that the woman in question did not betray the least sign of nervousness, that she was normal in the fullest sense. There was not the slightest indication suggesting physical illness. Her undeniable and unusual experiences could not be accounted for. As the doctors could not help her, it was thought to see results in another field.

Many years passed. Finally, recourse was had to the Church and the supernatural powers of the priesthood. But a reserved and skeptical attitude was maintained for some years towards proceeding with exorcism. Examinations and observations were constantly made.

It gradually became evident that strange preternatural powers were at play. The woman understood languages which she had never heard nor read. When the priest spoke the language of the Church and blessed her in the Latin tongue, she sensed and understood it at once, and at the same time foamed at the mouth and became enraged about it. When he continued in classical Latin, she regained her former ease. She was conscious at once when some one gave her articles sprinkled with holy water or presented her with things secretly blessed, whereas ordinary secular objects would leave her perfectly indifferent.

In short, when after years of trial and observation she had reached her fortieth year, the ecclesiastical authorities were finally convinced that here was a clear case of demoniacal possession. The Church must step in and deliver the poor creature from the powers of the evil one. The cause of the possession could not be ascertained. The woman herself could not give any information about this matter. Only later during the process of solemn exorcism was the cause made known.

Father Theophilus had spent many years giving missions in the United States and was familiar with cases of possession. Since he had already dispossessed the evil one in many instances, the Bishop entrusted this case to him. His stainless career, as well as his successful encounter in numerous possessions, singled him out as the one best suited to take hold of this case. He had little suspicion that he would meet with the severest experience as yet encountered by him and that matters of such a nature would confront him as would tax to the limit his physical endurance. Though this Capuchin Father is the very picture of health in his sixtieth year, yet he needed all available resources in order to carry the affair to a successful finish.

The day agreed upon and approved by the bishop for the exorcism at Earling, Iowa, was at hand. Besides the pastor and his sister, who was his housekeeper, and the venerable sisters, not a soul was aware of what was being undertaken. This secrecy had been strictly agreed upon beforehand. The main purpose of such procedure was chiefly to protect the name of the woman, lest anything of the affair might get out among the people and they might point to her and say: "This is the one who was once possessed by the devil." As she was to travel by train, it was found necessary to inform the personnel of the train. For should anything happen on the way, their help would have to be available in case the demoniacal influence should create any disturbance. This caution was not in vain, for the men had their hands full. They, however, did not know what the nature of the disturbance really was. The poor creature herself was only too willing to submit to the ecclesiastical procedure, so that she might be delivered from these terrible molestations. Yet she did not always have the necessary control over herself. She made this known after her delivery. Thus, the very night on which she arrived at the Earling station, she was so enraged over those who were there to meet her that she felt like taking hold of them and choking them.

Previous arrangements had been made for Father Theophilus to arrive that same night but by another route. The pastor took his own auto and went to meet him at the depot. Though the new car was always running in tip-top order it lacked the usual speed on this trip. Everything possible was tried, yet the car would not make any headway towards the station though no flaw could be found with it. The distance was not even worth mentioning, yet it took two hours for the pastor to arrive at the depot. He excused himself to his guest for causing such a delay and disappointment.

To which the latter replied very calmly: "My dear friend, I was not wrought up about it at all. I would have been much more surprised if everything had gone smoothly. Difficulties will arise; they must be expected to arise. The devil will try his utmost to foil our plans. While waiting I prayed constantly that the evil spirit would not be able to harm you, as I suspected that he would try to interfere with your coming, even that he would try to injure you personally." Now the pastor understood why his auto had balked. This was to be the first of many other unpleasant happenings. After such forebodings the reader can imagine

that the missionary entered the car with some misgivings. But he took his precautions. He first blessed the auto with the sign of the cross and then seated himself in the rear of the car. During the short ride to the rectory he quietly recited the rosary by himself lest something happen on the way to foil the attempt at exorcism.

The two priests arrived without the slightest trouble. Thank God, the woman also had arrived safely at the Sisters' convent. With this reassurance the difficult task could begin quietly the next day. However, that very night the enemy displayed his true colors. News was soon dispatched from the convent to the rectory next door that the woman caused difficulties from the very start. The well-meaning Sister in the kitchen had sprinkled holy water over the food on the tray before she carried the supper to the woman. The devil, however, would not be tricked. The possessed woman was aware at once of the presence of the blessed food and became terribly enraged about it. She purred like a cat, and it was absolutely impossible to make her eat. The blessed food was taken back to the kitchen to be exchanged for unblessed food; otherwise the soup bowls and the plates might have been crashed through the window. **It was not possible to trick her with any blessed or consecrated article; the very presence of it would bring about such intense sufferings in her as though her very body were encased in burning coals.**

3. The Decisive Moment Had Arrived

All was quiet. Both the pastor and missionary, having offered up Holy Mass in the parish church that morning, went over to the convent where everything in a large room was in readiness for the exorcism. Fortified with the Church's spiritual weapons, they would dislodge Satan from his stronghold in the person of the possessed woman. How long would this process last? It was not to be expected that the devil would leave his victim without a fight. Certainly a few days would pass by before the powers of darkness would give in to the powers of Light, before the devils would let loose the soul redeemed by Christ, and return back to hell. It was well that neither the pastor nor the missionary knew with what kind of horde of evil spirits they would have to do battle.

The woman was placed firmly upon the mattress of an iron bed. Upon the advice of Father Theophilus, her arm-sleeves and her dress were tightly bound so as to prevent any devilish tricks. The strongest nuns were selected to assist her in case anything might happen. There was a suspicion that the devil might attempt attacking the exorcist during the ceremony. Should anything unusual happen, the nuns were to hold the woman quiet upon her bed. Soon after the prescribed prayers of the Church were begun, the woman sank into unconsciousness and remained in that state throughout the period of exorcism. Her eyes were closed up so tightly that no force could open them.

Father Theophilus had hardly begun the formula of exorcism in the name of the Blessed Trinity, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the name of the Crucified Savior, when a hair-raising scene occurred. With lightning speed the possessed dislodged herself from her bed and from the hands of her guards; and her body, carried through the air, landed high above the door of the room and clung to the wall with a tenacious grip. All present were struck with a trembling fear. Father Theophilus alone kept his peace.

"Pull her down. She must be brought back to her place upon the bed!"

Real force had to be applied to her feet to bring her down from her high position on the wall. The mystery was that she could cling to the wall at all! It was through the powers of the evil spirit, who had taken possession of her body.

Again she was resting upon the mattress. To avoid another such feat, precautions were taken and she was held down tightly by stronger hands.

The exorcism was resumed. The prayers of the Church were continued. **Suddenly a loud shrill voice rent the air. The noise in the room sounded as though it were far off, somewhere in a desert. Satan howled as though he had been struck over the head with a club. Like a pack of wild beasts suddenly let loose, the terrifying noises sounded aloud as they came out of the mouth of the possessed woman. Those present were struck with a terrible fear that penetrated the very marrow of their bones.**

"Silence, Satan. Keep quiet, you infamous reprobate! "

But he continued to yell and howl as one clubbed and tortured, so that despite the closed windows the noises reverberated throughout the neighborhood.

Awe-struck people came running from here and there: "What is the matter? What is up? Is there someone in the convent being murdered? Not even a pig stabbed with a butcher knife yells with such shrieking howls as these."

The news travelled through the entire parish like a prairie fire: "At the convent they are trying to drive out the devil from one possessed." Larger and smaller groups were filled with terror as they approached the scene of action and heard with their own ears the unearthly noises and howlings of the evil spirits. The weaker members of the crowd were unable to endure the continued rage coming from the underworld. It was even more tense for those actually present at the scene, who with their own eyes and ears were witnesses to what was going on before them. **The physical condition of the possessed presented such a gruesome sight, because of the distorted members of her body, that it was unbearable.** The Sisters, even the pastor, could not endure it long. Occasionally they had to leave the room to recuperate in the fresh air, to gain new strength for further attendance at the horrible ordeal. The most valiant and self-composed was Father Theophilus. He had been accustomed to Satan's howling displays and blusterings from experiences with him in previous exorcisms. God seems to have favored him with special gifts and qualities for facing such ordeals. On such occasions, with the permission of the Bishop, he carried a consecrated host in a pyx upon his breast in order to safeguard himself against injuries and direct attacks by the evil one. Several times it happened that he was twisted about, trembling like a fluttering leaf in a whirl-wind.

One may ask: Does Satan dare at all to remain in the presence of the All Holy? How can he endure it? Does he not run off like a whipped dog? All we need to remember is that Satan dared to approach our Lord fasting in the desert. He even dared to take the Savior upon a high pinnacle at Jerusalem; and again he carried Him up on a high mountain top. If he showed himself so powerful then, he has not changed since. On the contrary, **the devils living in the possessed displayed various abilities and reactions. Those that hailed**

from the realm of the fallen angels gave evidence of a greater reserve. They twisted about and howled mournfully in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, acting like whipped dogs who growl and snarl under the pain of the biting lash. Those who were once the active souls of men upon earth and were condemned to hell because of their sinful lives acted differently. They showed themselves bold and fearless, as if they wanted every moment to assail the consecrated Species only to discover that they were powerless. Frothing and spitting and vomiting forth unmentionable excrements from the mouth of the poor creature, they would try to ward off the influence of the exorcist. Apparently they were trying to befoul the consecrated Host in the pyx, but failed in their purpose. It was evidently not granted them to spit upon the All Holy directly. At times they would spout forth torrents of spittal and filth out of the entrails of the helpless woman in order to give vent to their bitter spleen and hatred toward the All Holy One. You say torrents? Actually those present had to live through some terrible experiences. It was heartrending to see all that came forth from the pitiable creature and often the ordeal was almost unbearable. Outpourings that would fill a pitcher, yes, even a pail, full of the most obnoxious stench were most unnatural. These came in quantities that were, humanly speaking, impossible to lodge in a normal being. At that the poor creature had eaten scarcely anything for weeks, so that there had been reason to fear she would not survive. At one time the emission was a bowl full of matter resembling vomited macaroni. At another time an even greater measure, having the appearance of sliced and chewed tobacco leaves, was emitted. From ten to twenty times a day this wretched creature was forced to vomit though she had taken at the most only a teaspoonful of water or milk by way of food.

4. One or More Devils

During this exorcism it was necessary to find out definitely whether the exorcist had to deal with one or more devils. It was also important for the exorcist to insist upon getting control over the person and of dispossessing the devil. **On various occasions there were different voices coming out of the woman which indicated that un-numbered spirits were here involved. There were voices that sounded bestial and most unnatural, uttering an inexpressible grief and hatred that no human could reproduce. Again voices were heard that were quite human, breathing an atmosphere of keen suffering and indicating bitter feeling of disappointment.** As is common in such experiences, Satan can, through the solemn exorcism of the Church, be forced to speak and to give answer. And, finally he can also be forced to speak the truth even though he is the father of lies from the very beginning. Naturally, he will try to mislead and to sidetrack the exorcist. It is also common experience that Satan at first does his utmost to side-step the questions with clever, witty evasions, direct lies, shrewd simulations.

When Satan was asked in the Name of Jesus, the crucified Savior, whether there were more spirits involved in the possession of the woman, he did not feign in the least, but boastfully admitted that there were a number of them present. As soon as the name of Jesus was mentioned, he began through the woman to foam and howl like a wild raving animal.

This ugly bellowing and howling took place every day and at times it lasted for hours.

At other times it sounded as though a horde of lions and hyenas were let loose, then again as the mewing of cats, the bellowing of cattle and the barking of dogs. A complete uproar of different animal noises would also resound. This was at first so taxing on the nerves of those present that the twelve nuns were forced to take turns at assisting in order to save themselves and to have the necessary strength to continue facing the siege.

The exorcist: "In the name of Jesus and His most Blessed Mother, Mary the Immaculate, who crushed the head of the serpent, tell me the truth. Who is the leader or prince among you? What is your name?"

Devil, barking like the hound of hell. "Beelzebub."

Exorcist: "You call yourself Beelzebub. Are you not Lucifer, the prince of the devils?"

Devil: "No, not the prince, the chieftain, but one of the leaders."

Exorcist: "You were therefore not a human being, but you are one of the fallen angels, who with selfish pride wanted to be like unto God?"

Devil with grinning teeth. "Yes, that is so. Ha, how we hate Him!"

Exorcist: "Why do you call yourself Beelzebub if you are not the prince of the devils?"

Devil: "Enough, my name is Beelzebub."

Exorcist: "From the point of influence and dignity you must rank near Lucifer, or do you hail from the lower choir of angels?"

Devil: "I once belonged to the seraphic choir."

Exorcist: "What would you do, if God made it possible for you to atone for your injustice to Him?"

Demoniacal sneering: "Are you a competent theologian?"

Exorcist: "How long have you been torturing this poor woman?"

Devil: "Since her fourteenth year."

Exorcist: "How dared you enter into that innocent girl and torture her like that?"

Sneeringly: "Ha, did not her own father curse us into her?"

Exorcist: "But why did you, Beelzebub, alone take possession of her? Who gave you that permission?"

Devil: "Don't talk so foolishly. Don't I have to render obedience to Satan?"

Exorcist: "Then you are here at the direction and command of Lucifer?"

Devil: "Well, how could it be otherwise?"

Let it be noted, too, that **Father Theophilus addressed the devil in English, German, and again in Latin. And the devil, Beelzebub, and all the other devils, replied correctly in the very same tongues in which they were addressed.** Apparently they would have understood any language spoken today and would have answered in it. Sometimes it happened that Father Theophilus, while in an exhausted state of mind, would make slight mispronunciations in his Latin prayers and words of exorcism. At once Beelzebub would intrude and shriek out. "So and so is right! Dumbbell, you don't know anything!"

Once it happened that Father Theophilus did not catch the words the devil spoke in an articulate mumbling voice. So he asked the pastor: "What did he say?" Neither had the pastor understood the devil. Then the nuns were interrogated: "What did he say?" One answered: "So and so, I think."

Then the devil bellowed and yelped at them: "You, I did not say that. Stick to the truth!"

Father Theophilus indeed was anxious to know why the father had cursed his own daughter. But he only received a curt uncivil reply: "You can ask him. Leave me in peace for once."

Exorcist: "Is then the father of the woman also present as one of the devils? Since when?"

Devil: "What a foolish question. He has been with us ever since he was damned." A terrible, sneering laughter followed, full of malicious joy.

Exorcist: "Then I solemnly command in the name of the Crucified Savior of Nazareth that you present the father of this woman and that he give me answer!" A deep rough voice announced itself, which had already been noticed alongside the voice of Beelzebub.

Exorcist: "Are you the unfortunate father who has cursed his own child?"

With a defiant roar: "No."

"Who are you then?"

"I am Judas."

"What, Judas! Are you Judas Iscariot, the former Apostle?"

Thereupon followed a horrible, woefully prolonged: "Y-e-s, I am the one." This was howled in the deepest bass voice. It set the whole room quivering so that out of pure fright and horror the pastor and some of the nuns ran out. Then followed a disgusting exhibition of spitting and vomiting as if Judas were intending to spit at his Lord and Master with all his might, or as if he had in mind to unloose his inner waste and filth upon Him.

Finally Judas was asked: "What business have you here?"

"To bring her to despair, so that she will commit suicide and hang herself! She must get the rope, she must go to hell!"

"Is it then a fact that everyone that commits suicide goes to hell?"

"Rather not."

"Why not?"

"Ha, we devils are the ones that urge them to commit suicide, to hang themselves, just as I did myself."

"Do you not regret that you have committed such a despicable deed?"

A terrible curse followed: "Let me alone. Don't bother me with your fake god. It was my own fault." Then he kept on raving in a terrible manner.

5. The Demons Jacob and Mina

When the prayer of exorcism was renewed, the demon Jacob [not a fallen angel but a human damned to hell] made his appearance with a healthy manly voice. As in the case of Judas, one could detect at once that he had been a human being.

"Which Jacob are you?" asked the exorcist.

"The father of the possessed girl."

Later developments disclosed the fact that he had led a frightfully coarse and brutal life, a passionately unchaste and debased life. He now admitted that he had repeatedly tried to force his own daughter to commit incest with him. But she had firmly resisted him. Therefore he had cursed her and wished inhumanly that the devils would enter into her and entice her to commit every possible sin against chastity, thereby ruining her, body and soul. He also admitted that he did not die suddenly but that he was permitted to receive the sacrament of Extreme Unction. But this was of no avail because he scoffed at and ridiculed the priest ministering the sacrament to him. Later in the exorcism he made the following explanation: Whatever sins he had committed in this life might still have been forgiven him before death, so that he could have been saved; but the crime of giving his own child to the devils was the thing that finally determined his eternal damnation. Even in hell he was still scheming how to torture and molest his child. Lucifer gladly permitted him to do this. And since he was in his own daughter, he was not, despite all the solemn prayers of the Church, in the least disposed to give her up or leave her.

"But you will obey! The power of Christ and the Blessed Trinity will force you back into the pit of hell where you belong!"

Then followed a loud roar and protest: "No, no, only spare me that!"

As the prayers of exorcism were continued, Jacob's mistress, who was in hell with him, also had to face the ordeal and give answer. Her high pitched voice, almost a falsetto, had already been noticed among the many other voices. She now confessed that she was Mina.

Mina admitted that the cause of her damnation was her prolonged immoral life with Jacob while his wife was still living. But a more specific cause for her eternal woes in hell was her unrepented acts of child murder.

Exorcist: "You committed murder while you were still alive? Whom did you kill?"

Mina, bitterly: "Little ones." Evidently she meant her own children [by abortion].

Exorcist: "How many did you actually kill?"

Mina, most unwillingly, curtly: "Three--no, actually four!"

Mina showed herself especially hateful. Her replies were filled with such bitter hatred and spite that they far surpassed all that had happened so far. Her demeanor towards the Blessed Sacrament is beyond description. She would spit and vomit in a most hideous manner so that both Father Theophilus and the pastor had to use handkerchiefs constantly to wipe off the spittle from habit and cassock. Because of her unworthy communions, it was clear that the Blessed Sacrament, the Bread of Eternal Life, which should have been the source of her eternal salvation, turned out to be unto her eternal damnation. For she tried to get at the Blessed Sacrament with a burning vengeance and hatred. Out of this group of devils, Mina and Judas were the worst offenders against the Blessed Sacrament.

The reader would undoubtedly be misled if he were of the opinion that these questions and answers followed in regular order. It must be remembered that these battles and encounters with the devils extended over a number of days. At times the answers were interrupted by hours and hours of howling and yelling which could be brought into submission only by prolonged prayer and persistent exorcism. Often no further answers could be forced from the devils in any other way. Countless brats of devils also interrupted the process of exorcism by their disagreeable and almost unbearable interferences. As a result of these disturbances, the woman's face became so distorted that no one could recognize her features. Then, too, her whole body became so horribly disfigured that the regular contour of her body vanished. Her pale, deathlike and emaciated head, often assuming the size of an inverted water pitcher, became as red as glowing embers. Her eyes protruded out of their sockets, her lips swelled up to proportions equalling the size of hands, and her thin emaciated body was bloated to such enormous size that the pastor and some of the Sisters drew back out of fright, thinking that the woman would be torn to pieces and burst asunder. At times her abdominal region and extremities became as hard as iron and stone. In such instances the weight of her body pressed into the iron bedstead so that the iron rods of the bed bent to the floor.

According to the prescribed formula of the Church, the solemn exorcism began with the recitation of the Litany of All Saints. All those present knelt and answered the prayers. At first the evil spirits remained peaceful, but when the petition, "God the Father of heaven,"

"God the Son Redeemer of the World," "God the Holy Ghost," "Holy Trinity one God," were said, the regular turmoil and gnashing of teeth began. **At the petition, "Holy Mary," "St. Michael," the devils subsided as if struck by a bolt of lightning.** A murmuring and muffled groaning arose at the mention of the choir of Angels and the Holy Apostles. At the words: "From the persecution of the devil," the evil spirit jumped up as if a scourge had hit him. At the words: "From the spirit of uncleanness," how he moaned and yelped like a beaten dog!

6. Acute Cause of the Devil's Pain

As the exorcism progressed, one could see that the benediction of the Blessed Sacrament pained the devil most acutely. That was always something unbearable for him. How he spat and vomited! He twisted and raved at the blessing with the relic of the Cross. Whenever the priest approached him with the cross and the prescribed words, "Look at the wood of the cross ! Begone ye powers of hell! The lion of the tribe of Juda shall conquer," he acted terribly.

"Stop it, stop it, I cannot bear it, I cannot listen to it!" he seemed to say.

And when the exorcist approached him with the relic of the Cross hidden under his cassock, Satan became a raving maniac. "Begone, begone," he howled, "I cannot bear it. Oh, this is torture! It is unbearable!"

The intercession, "Mary, the Immaculate Conception," caused him fearful agony. When he was addressed, "I command you in the name of the Immaculate Conception, in the name of her who crushed the head of the serpent," he wilted and languished. Then he bloated up the woman's body, and suddenly relaxed as one stunned.

7. Holy Water

Holy Water was also something hateful to Satan. **Whenever he was approached with holy water he screamed: "Away, away with it, away with that abominable dirt! Oh, that burns, that scorches!"** On one occasion a piece of paper bearing the inscription of a fake Latin prayer was placed on the woman's head. Even the good nuns believed that the prayer was genuine. In reality, the prayer consisted of words taken out of a pagan classic. The nuns were very much surprised that Satan remained so quiet under the experiment. The exorcist, however, knew the cause of the devil's tranquility. Immediately afterwards, a second prepared paper was placed on the head of the woman, which had been blessed beforehand with the sign of the Cross and holy water without anybody noticing it. In an instant the piece of paper was torn into a thousand shreds.

8. St. Therese of the Child Jesus

The pastor had kept a small relic of the Little Flower of the Child Jesus [St Therese] in his sacristy in a small pyx without the knowledge of Father Theophilus. For protection's sake, he placed this in a side-pocket of his cassock one day and entered the convent where the exorcism was taking place. Just as the pastor entered the room, the devil began to rave: "Away, away with that! Away with the relic of the Little Flower, away with that

weathercock!"

"We have no relic of the Little Flower," the exorcist exclaimed.

"Certainly, he who just entered has one," said the devil, indicating the pastor. At the same time the pastor approached with the relic. How the devil began to spit and to resist!

At other times the Little Flower played a more important part. One could also notice what a terrific battle Satan had with St. Michael.

9. St. Michael the Archangel

At the very mention of St. Michael Satan began to recoil. He was tortured by that part of the prayer which refers to the solemn petition addressed to St. Michael. He absolutely refused to listen to the statement that St. Michael, as leader of the faithful angels, cast Lucifer together with his legions into the very abyss of hell. **It was astounding how much he dreaded the prayer in honor of St. Michael commonly recited at the end of the Mass. The prayer is as follows:**

"St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do Thou, O Prince of the heavenly host, by the power of God cast into hell Satan, and all the other evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen."

Would that we as Christians recited this prayer in honor of St. Michael with greater fervor and devotion.

A rather peculiar circumstance induced Pope Leo XIII to compose this powerful prayer. After celebrating Mass one day he was in conference with the Cardinals. Suddenly he sank to the floor. A doctor was summoned and several came at once. There was no sign of any pulse beating, the very life seemed to have ebbed away from the already weakened and aged body. Suddenly he recovered and said: "What a horrible picture I was permitted to see!" He saw what was going to happen in the future, the misleading powers and the ravings of the devils against the Church in all countries. But St. Michael had appeared in the nick of time and cast Satan and his cohorts back into the abyss of hell. Such was the occasion that caused Pope Leo XIII to have this prayer recited over the entire world at the end of the Mass.

10. Crucifix and Relic of the Cross

As indicated before, Satan dreaded the sign of the Cross, a crucifix, or a relic of the true Cross. On one occasion a crucifix not made of wood was handed to Father Theophilus. This time Satan broke out in a sneering and ridiculing laughter: "Ha, so you arrived with a pasteboard cross! Since when did 'He' die on a paper cross? If my knowledge doesn't fail me, He was nailed to a wooden cross."

The crucifix was examined more closely and was indeed found to be made not of wood but of papier mache. On another occasion Satan made fun of the manner in which Christ was

nailed to the cross. "Were not the feet of Jesus nailed one on top of the other, and not aside of each other?" [Blessed Anne] Catherine Emmerich gives the same information. She says that the left foot was nailed first with a shorter nail. Then a longer and stronger nail, at the sight of which our Saviour is said to have shuddered, was driven first through the right foot and then through the left. Those standing nearby at the crucifixion saw very plainly how the nail penetrated both feet.

This does not mean that we are now sure how the feet of our Saviour were placed upon the cross, even if Beelzebub's statement tends to confirm the description given by Catherine Emmerich. We do not give the father of lies credit for being a reliable witness in such matters as the crucifixion, even if there is no doubt that many devils were personal witnesses to the crucifixion of Christ. In like manner I would have no one believe that we know for certain that Judas is in hell, just because he claimed that he was one of the damned in the case of possession at Earling. Holy Mother Church has never yet given a decision regarding this matter even though the words of our Savior about Judas are thought-provoking: "It would have been better if that man had never been born."

As the days passed by, a rather odd change manifested itself in the disposition of the pastor, who began to experience a rather strong antipathy against the whole procedure of driving out of the devil.

11. The Pastor's Antipathy Against the Whole Procedure

The pastor could no longer bear the presence of Father Theophilus who had been a dear friend of his all along, and whom he had known intimately for years. If he would only be out of the way, out of sight! He now wished that he had refused to allow this exorcism to be performed in his parish, and that he had sent him directly out of his house. He became so worked up about it that he finally informed the exorcist of his ill feeling toward him and the whole affair. Father Theophilus did not show the least surprise. The case was still in the developing stages and it was only natural to suppose that the devil would have recourse to some source of temptation and annoyance in order to foil all attempts at dislodging him from the one possessed.

Furthermore, the devil used every occasion to display hatred for the pastor. "You are the cause of the whole affair, you are the one who tortures us so painfully," he burst out. The exorcist commanded Satan on one occasion as follows: "Be quiet, you hellish serpent. Let the pastor in peace once for all. He is not harming you in the least. I am doing this with the powers of exorcism."

This riled the devil all the more. He said "It is the pastor! He is at fault. Had he not given you permission to use his church and convent, you wouldn't be able to do a thing. And even today you would be helpless against us, if he would retract his assent."

This is an interesting proof of how the devil feels about and recognizes authority. He made this evident to every superior, while he acted rather civilly towards the subordinates. For that reason he never attacked the nuns nor the pastor's cook. All that the pastor or the mother superior had to do was to appear on the scene and the disturbance and raving was on. The mother superior once received such a blow across the face that she was thrust into

the corner of the room. Satan repeatedly threatened Father Steiger, the pastor:

"You will have to suffer for this."

"You can't harm me anyway. I am standing under the protection of Almighty God, and against His power you are absolutely helpless, you detestable hellhound."

"Just wait! I'll make you repent that. I'll incite the whole parish against you and I will calumniate you in such a way that you will no longer be able to defend yourself. Then you will have to pack up and leave in shame and regret."

"If that be the will of God, then God be praised! But you are powerless against Him, you vile serpent, you man-killer!"

"Just wait! I will fix both you and your Lord and Master."

"Ha, how dare you speak that away against the Almighty, you despicable worm crawling in the very dust of the earth!"

"No, I cannot harm God directly. But I can touch you and His Church." And he continued with scorn and sarcasm: "Is it not true? Do you not know the history of Mexico? We have prepared a nice mess for Him there."

"Who? You devils?"

"Who else did it? The whole credit is ours for bringing that situation about. He will learn to know us better. Lucifer is on His tracks and will make the kettle hot and heavy for Him. Ha, ha, ha!"

A week later the devil advanced a little closer with his plans of revenge upon the pastor.

"Just wait," he threatened, "until the end of the week! When Friday comes, then . . ."

The pastor did not take this threat to heart. He was getting sick of listening to the howlings and yelpings of the devil day after day. Yet the pastor did indeed have a narrow escape on a certain Friday.

12. The Experience of His Life

Friday morning after Mass the telephone rang in the parish house. It was a call from a farmer, whose mother was critically ill. Would the pastor kindly come and administer the last sacraments to the dying? He wanted to call for the pastor with his own car, but somehow it was out of order and he couldn't locate the trouble. He had been trying to start it for over an hour, but in vain. It simply would not start. So he asked the pastor to come with his own auto, or to hire a taxi at the farmer's expense.

Within a quarter of an hour the pastor was on his way to help the sick woman, carrying the Blessed Sacrament with him. After dispensing the last sacraments, Father Steiger was again on the road towards EarlIng. The road was familiar to him, for he had gone that way

hundreds of times, by night and by day, and he knew every bump and stone along the way. He drove very carefully not only because the auto was new, but also because he was mindful of the devil's threats to trick him whenever the opportunity was ripe.

He prayed to his Guardian Angel and to St. Joseph, his Patron Saint, for a safe journey home. **Suddenly as he was driving along, a dark black cloud appeared before him. It came just as he was about to pass a bridge over a deep ravine. Great God, it seemed as if his eyes were blindfolded! The next moment there was a crash, a smash-up which dumbfounded him. He found himself in a mess of ruins. The auto had crashed into the railing of the bridge with an indescribable force although he had jerked the car into low gear. The auto, now a complete wreck, was hanging on the iron trellis threatening every moment to drop into the deep abyss below.** The noise of the crash was so loud that a farmer ploughing a field some distance away heard the noise and became greatly alarmed. Full of anxiety he hastened to the scene of the accident, "Good God, it's the pastor's car! Father, Father, what has happened? Are you hurt?" The pastor, scared to death, slowly crawled out from underneath the debris. Even the steering wheel was crushed to pieces. His legs would hardly hold him up. The wonder of it was that the rod of the steering wheel had not pierced his breast as frequently happens in such accidents. The farmer hastened home at once and soon reappeared with his own car. Leaving the wrecked car behind, he took the pastor, still shaking and in a deathlike pallor, into his own car and hurried directly to the nearest doctor to ascertain if there were any internal injuries. No, he was not seriously injured. The doctor discovered some external scars and a state of nervous excitement, but there was no sign of any internal injury. Thank God for that!

Leaving the doctor's office, they drove straight to the parish house at Earling. There was no one at home, for they had all gone over to the convent to witness the exorcism. So the pastor also went there. **He had hardly entered the room when he was greeted with a roaring laughter full of vengeance and bitter spleen: "hahaha-hahaha!" as if the devil were about to burst into a fit of malicious joy at besting him. "Today he pulled in his proud neck and was outpointed! I certainly showed him up today. What about your new auto, that dandy car which was smashed to smithereens? It served you right!"**

The others looked wonderingly at the pastor. He was still pale but nothing ailed him otherwise.

"Reverend Pastor, is the devil speaking the truth?" they asked.

"Yes, what he says is true. My auto is a complete wreck. But he was not able to harm me personally." A quick reply came from the devil: **"Our aim was to get you, but somehow our plans were thwarted. It was your powerful Patron Saint who prevented us from harming you."**

News of this accident soon spread abroad and the people in deep sympathy with their beloved pastor, collected enough money to buy him a new car, so that the devil would receive no satisfaction from his pranks. Again and again the devil gleefully reminded the pastor of this incident and warned him to **"be ready for a whole lot more of fun."**

The devil also betrayed himself by saying that he is often the cause of similar accidents in

order to bring people to quicker ruin. In this way he can get his revenge and give vent to his anger because lawsuits frequently result as a consequence, which, in turn, are responsible for much hatred and misunderstanding among people. The reader may make his own conclusions and resolutions regarding this. It cannot be so readily denied that the enemy of mankind actually plays a great part in such accidents. Is he not a "man-killer from the very beginning?" Hence a timely warning to those who use the auto for evil purposes, who decorate it with all sorts of nonsense and who even display figures alluringly immoral. The Church has provided a special blessing under the protection of St. Christopher against evil and disastrous influences. Therefore, it is customary to put one of these blessed medals or medallions in cars for safety's sake. St. Paul calls attention to the fact that the very air is filled with evil spirits.

13. Satan's Speeches

It should be noted that Satan did not use the tongue of the poor possessed woman to make himself understood. The helpless creature had been unconscious during the greater part of the trial. Her mouth was closed tight. Even when it was open there was not the slightest movement of the lips, nor were there any changes in the position of the mouth. The evil spirits simply spoke in an audible manner from somewhere within her. Possibly they used some inner organ of the body.

We know from the early Christian writers of the Roman period that the heathens frequently heard voices coming out of the idols. Catherine Emmerich also states that the evil spirits took up their abode in these idols and could clearly be heard to speak from within them in order to confirm the heathens in their delusion of idolatry. So it is conceivable how even some of the highly educated heathens worshipped these statues made by the hands of man, and why they offered sacrifices to them as if they were gods. They rendered to these idols the honor that belongs to God alone.

14. Satan's Knowledge Can Be Embarrassing

The knowledge Satan had about the sins and the condition of the souls of those present was rather embarrassing to them. But in this case there were no disturbing revelations made along that line as there were only nuns and priests present. But even here he made insinuating remarks: "Is it not true that you did so and so in your past life, in your childhood days?" He made reference here to acts which were hardly remembered. The evil spirit, however, would not be quiet and tried to make a scene of things. So the answer was given. "If before God I am not guilty of greater faults in my later years than the sins of my childhood days, then I am not afraid."

Thereupon followed a most astonishing confession from the devil:

"What you have already confessed, I do not know."

What follows from this? Apparently Satan knows only the sins that have not been confessed or repented. What has been submitted to the keys of the confessional seems to be out of his reach. It would seem that the sacrament of penance blots out or obliterates sins from the soul so as not to leave the slightest possibility for Satan to discover them. Through

the sacrament of penance everything is, so to say, drowned in the abyss of God's mercy.

The rubrics in the Roman Ritual for exorcism, so wisely and so well established, demand that not only the exorcist, but also all witnesses and all those called upon to aid in subduing the possessed person, should make a thorough general confession, or at least a sincere act of perfect contrition before the process of exorcism begins. Once cleansed from sin they are more at ease in facing Satan and will not be subject to annoying remarks on the part of Satan for the sins committed in the past.

It happened about forty years ago, in a case of possession at Wemding, Germany, that during the process of exorcism the mistake was made of calling in the strongest men of the parish, men of good repute, to subdue a raving young boy. These good men did not realize with whom they had to deal. The horrible beastlike howling and yelping was far less disconcerting than the hair-raising reproofs of the devil for the secret sins and other mistakes of one or the other of these men. He described them in minutest detail. Under such circumstances it is not surprising that few people care to be present at such exorcism, even if they could make themselves useful in many ways. Furthermore, it must be remembered that Satan, the father of lies, often twists small acts into unusually and seemingly grievous ones, making mountains out of molehills, so to speak, and at times purposely distorting them, mixing up truth with falsehood with the intention of creating the greatest disorder and most lasting enmity.

In order to avoid such inconvenient consequences, Father Theophilus, richer by mature experiences, undertakes his exorcism in consecrated or religious houses with only the assistance of priests and nuns. Even then things have happened. Satan shrewdly and sagaciously disclosed hidden things which made certain persons blush for shame; yes, he made them quiver with fear by threatening to expose them still more. All the more fortunate, then, that such experience that will henceforth take place under the seal of secrecy will not be broadcast to the whole world. Thank God for that!

The meanness of the devil and the many odd happenings at Earling became common knowledge among the people in the bordering communities. The pastor of Earling, Father Steiger, had asked his people to unite in prayer and penance, and to make visits to the Blessed Sacrament so that the evil spirit might soon be mastered. Despite common knowledge of the unusual proceedings going on at the convent, not a single person asked out of curiosity to be permitted to witness the scene. Even if any one had asked, permission would not have been granted, except to priests from the neighborhood.

It has been intimated above that out of the voices coming from the possessed woman, four different ones could be very clearly distinguished. They announced themselves as Beelzebub, Judas Iscariot, Jacob, the father of the possessed woman, and Mina, Jacob's concubine.

The possessed woman had a clear memory of when her godless father cursed her and handed her over to the devil. She did not mention any further details about her unfortunate father, but it was learned from other sources that he was one of the worst persecutors of priests and of the Church. In sensual lust and excesses he was a monster of the worst type. He kept his distance from the Church and her sacramental ministration, and used every

opportunity to ridicule spiritual things. Occasionally, he attended divine services on solemn feast days, but only to acquire new material from the sermons of the solemn functions to feed his ridicule and so bolster up his criticisms among friends and companions. Hence we can understand how he persisted in ridiculing the priest and his actions when, even in his last moments, a merciful God granted him the grace of receiving the last sacrament of Extreme Unction. As you live, so you die. And his concubine, Mina, was fully his equal in this respect. Birds of a feather flock together. What was most surprising was that such a wicked and blasphemous father was blessed with such a virtuous child. Her sincere piety, her pure and innocent disposition, her diligent application, all were very apparent. Even during the period of possession the devil could not disturb her inner basic disposition because the devil has no power over the free will of a human being.

It was evident that, in addition to the above mentioned devils, there were also a great number of other unclean spirits in her. Among these the so-called dumb devils and avenging spirits made themselves especially prominent.

15. Dumb Devils

The number of silent devils was countless. Apparently they were from the lower classes, for they displayed no marks of strength or power. Their voices were rather a confusion of sounds from which no definite answers could be distinguished. There was no articulate speech, rather a pitiful moaning and subdued howling. They could put up little resistance against the powerful effects of exorcism. It seemed as though they came and left in hordes, one crowd being relieved by others of the same type. They reminded one of a traveller who is suddenly overtaken by a swarm of mosquitoes. A few puffs of tobacco drive them away, but in short order they return and pester him again.

16. Avenging Spirits

The avenging spirits were wild and violent, of rough and ill-mannered character. They were filled with hatred and anger against all human beings. Their very presence suggested an ugly and disgusting attitude - a mixture of hatred and envy, meanness and revenge, deception and trickery. These were precisely the ones that threatened to make the pastor regret his consent to this exorcism. They had in mind to stir up the whole parish against him by their misrepresentations, so that he would have to pack up and leave in disgust. One might presume from this that the devils are much to blame for bringing about misunderstandings between the pastor and the people [of a parish]. Not infrequently pastors tell of how they sacrificed themselves, even ruined their health, for the good of the people, but despite all their untiring efforts, some of the most inconceivable misinterpretations and misrepresentations had taken place in their parishes. Some people seem to find it their business to make the life of their shepherd so miserable that he is brought almost to the point of despair. All his good intentions bring him nothing but persecution of the worst sort. Hence it would not be amiss for pastors to use the small formula of exorcism periodically in order to protect their flocks from such meddlings of the devil, or to use the prayers composed by Pope Leo XIII for just such an emergency.

The scheming and plotting of these avenging spirits almost succeeded in inciting the pastor of Earling to white heat against Father Theophilus, his friend of long standing, doubtless

with the intention of preventing the success of the exorcism. He was so wrought up over the procedure at times that he thought of bringing the whole affair to an abrupt close by driving Father Theophilus from his church and convent with the sharpest words of reproof.

17. Night Prowlers

During the process of exorcism, the evil spirits repeatedly made statements to the effect that they would tire and exhaust the pastor. One time in the middle of the night he was suddenly awakened by a disturbance in the room. Were rats gnawing somewhere? It seemed to be between the walls near his bed. Was there so much room there that the rats could run about so freely? During his fourteen years in this same house he had never experienced anything of the kind. Was he to be bothered with such miserable pests at last? He pounded the wall with his fist to scare away the rodents. But to no avail. He first used his cane, then his shoe, to pound on the wall. Instead of letting up, the noise became worse. Perhaps the night prowlers would disappear of their own accord. He waited and waited. They continued up and down between the walls, and even threatened to ruin them.

Father Steiger was in need of a good night's rest after all the disturbances during the day. An idea came that seemed altogether too foolish. Could there be some relation between these night prowlers and the evil spirits of the exorcism? Had not the devils threatened to tire him out? Perhaps this is what they meant after all. If so, then there is only one thing to do, and that is to use spiritual weapons against these intruders. Fortifying himself with his stole, the pastor again tried to sleep. At last the noise let up, but not altogether. "Wait, you cursed hellrats, I'll get rid of you yet!" Getting up again, he lit two candles before a crucifix and recited the small formula of exorcism against evil spirits. Aha! That was the language these hellrats understand. They took to flight and all was quiet. They seemed to have been spirited, blown off now, although all previous thumping and pounding on the walls had brought no results.

A few nights thereafter the pastor again spent a restless night. Are the doors rattling? Is the house quaking? Oh, it's only a heavy express train going through the village, and these noises are only the after rumblings of the jarred earth. The railroad track was only a short distance away. He waited for the train to start from the depot, but he heard no move. Perhaps it's the rattling of machinery in the nearby electric shop!

Finally, the noise ceased. But suddenly it was heard again, this time right above the door. Maybe the door is ajar so that draft is swaying it back and forth. There was no door-stop to catch it, and so he had to get up again. But lo, the door was closed firmly. He took hold of the knob with a firm grip and pulled hard; it did not yield. What, is the devil again at his pranks to tire him out, to rob him of his night's rest? The pastor took the holy water, sprinkled the door, windows, and room, and recited the short formula of exorcism. Again all was quiet. There was not a stir after that. "O you miserable Satan, now I know your stealthy cunning. Just wait, I'll soon teach you good manners."

It was learned later that other priests, who had attended the process of expelling the devil, experienced similar inconveniences and annoyances. Even worse things had happened to them. They would not retire after that without having holy water and the stole with them. The noises were often so persistent that one or the other of the priests was obligated to get

up at night and seek the place and cause of the disturbances, and only after praying was he able to find peace again. Night prowlers of this kind have been met with in other cases of exorcism even long after the evil spirits had been driven out of the possessed person.

18. How the Possessed Woman Fared

Every day the woman lost consciousness and became utterly helpless shortly after the formula of exorcism had begun. When the exercises ceased, she woke up and was herself again. She declared that she was unaware of what transpired during the exercises. Quite exhausted, she had to be carried to and from the place where the exorcism was performed. During all this time she could not eat solid foods, but nourishment in liquid form was injected into her. It was surprising to note how such a weak creature could vomit forth such quantities of material as indicated above. It was not unusual for her to vomit twenty to thirty times a day.

The fact that, in her weakened condition, she could bear up under the daily strain of exorcism for three weeks seems incredible, especially when the terrible abuses upon her body inflicted by the devil are taken into consideration. She suffered so intensely on one occasion that she assumed a death-like color, and seemed ready to pass away at any moment. "Great God, she is dying. I will hasten to get the holy oils!" broke out the pastor, who realized the terrible consequences for all concerned if she died under these conditions. The charge that the priest had caused her death through the strain of exorcism would certainly have been launched against them. Father Theophilus calmly replied on the basis of his long experience: "Just remain here, my friend; the woman will not die. Absolutely not. This manifestation is only one of Satan's cunning tricks. He cannot and will not be permitted to kill her. Absolutely not."

19. Exorcism Lasted Twenty-three Days

The period of exorcism extended over an unusually long period of time. Never before did it take so long, as far as we know. It lasted just twenty-three days, however, in three different stages. And remember, the exorcism went on from early morning until late night. The devil tried his utmost to weaken the priests and nuns and to induce them to let up in their untiring efforts. The pastor could not always be present. His care of souls in the parish kept him away at times. Neither was he physically able to sacrifice so many hours of the night for this purpose. Thus it happened that many interesting and also terrible things took place in his absence to which, however, the others were trustworthy witnesses.

The solemn formula of exorcism was in progress for more than two weeks before there were any indications that the devil could be forced to depart from the poor helpless possessed woman. Even though Father Theophilus had succeeded in delivering her from a large number of devils through the great powers of the prayers and exorcisms, the four meanest and most persistent ones could not be dislodged for a long time. Satan seemed to have gathered up all the forces of hell to gain a final victory in this case.

20. High Commander

It was very evident that the forces of hell were under the direction of a high

commander who, like a general and field marshal, sent forth new recruits for battle whenever the veterans, in their exhausted condition, were forced to retire. What pitiful sighs and pleadings they sent forth. One could hear voices to this effect: "Oh, what we have to put up with here; it is just terrible, all that we have suffered." There were other voices that kept on urging their fellow-devils not to let up: "And how we will again have to suffer and cringe under him, how he will torture us again if we return without having accomplished our task." They clearly referred to Lucifer as the torturer.

In order not to give Satan and his hordes any peace whatever, Father Theophilus finally decided to continue the exorcisms himself throughout the night, expecting thereby to achieve his victory. He was blessed with a muscular body and with nerves of steel. He had tested these out by a rigorous and abstemious life of self-denial, which had given him great powers of endurance. And indeed it was something almost superhuman that was demanded of him. For three days and three nights he kept on without any intermission. Even the Sisters who alternated were on the verge of a breakdown. Yet the desired effect did not come. It was only with the summoning of his last strength that the exorcist dared to continue. And at the close of the twenty-third day he was completely spent. He had the appearance of a walking corpse, a figure which at any moment might collapse. His own countenance seemed to have aged twenty years during those three weeks.

21. Antichrist

The reader may at this time be inclined to ask if the devil disclosed things that would be of general interest. For instance, the question of the Antichrist. What did Satan have to say about him?

It must be clearly borne in mind that the questions directed to the devil and the answers given by him were by no means an entertaining dialogue between the evil spirits and the exorcist. On occasions a long time intervened before an answer could be forced out of Satan. For the greater part, only a ghastly bellowing, groaning and howling was the result, whenever he was urged to answer under the powers of exorcism. It was often such a terrible drudgery, so exhaustingly tiresome and irritating, that on some days the exorcist was completely covered with perspiration. He had to make a complete change of attire as often as three to four times a day. Towards the end of those terrible days he became so weak that he felt he could continue only with the special help of God. Yes, he even pleaded for the grace to be spared his own life. **Curious questions not related to the present exorcism were never purposely asked. At times, however, it happened that some of the answers given by the devil himself suggested other questions not strictly pertinent to the case. On such occasions Father Theophilus was snubbed by the devil with coarse and harsh replies: "Shut up, that is none of your business!" Satan often used the crisp Latin expression: "*Non ad rem!*" Which means, "not to the point," "that has nothing to do with this affair."**

At one time Satan became rather talkative about the Antichrist. Remember the time he had so triumphantly referred to the Mexican situation, when he said that he would stir up a fine mess for Him (Jesus) and His Church, far more detrimental than hitherto. When asked whether he meant that the furious rage of the Antichrist would be directed against the

Church of God, he asserted that that was self-evident and insolently continued: "Yes, Satan is already abroad, and the Antichrist is already born in Palestine. (On another occasion he also mentioned America.) But he is still young. He must first grow up incognito before his power can become known."

It is strange that Catherine Emmerich mentioned a similar period, when she gave a description of Christ's descent into hell after His death upon the cross. She related that "when the portals of hell were opened by the angels, there was a terrible uproar, cursing, scolding, howling and moaning. Individual angels were hurling hordes of evil spirits aside. All were commanded to adore Jesus. This caused them the greatest pain. In the center of it all there was a bottomless abyss as black as night. Lucifer was bound in chains and cast into this depth of darkness. All this happened in accordance with set laws. I heard that Lucifer, if I am not mistaken, would again be freed for a time about fifty or sixty years before the year 2000 A. D.

A number of other devils would be released somewhat earlier as a punishment and source of temptation to sinful human beings."

On one occasion, when Father Theopholus insisted that the devil should depart and return to hell, **the devil replied in a growling tone: "How can you banish me to hell? I must be free to prepare the way for the Antichrist."** And again he spoke out of the possessed woman: "We know a lot. We read the signs of the times. This is the last century. When people will write the year 2000 the end will be at hand."

Whether the "father of lies," as our Lord Himself styles Satan, spoke the truth, it is impossible to judge. At all events, we shall do well if according to our Lord's suggestion, we try to understand the signs of the times. That the powers of hell are putting up a desperate attempt to ruin the Church of Christ in our own times cannot be denied.

At one time **the evil spirits howled and yelped fearfully when the prayers of exorcism were solemnly pronounced and when the blessings with the relic of the cross and the consecrated Host were given: "Oh, we cannot bear it any longer. We suffer intensely. Do stop it, do stop it! This is many times worse than hell!"** These groans, indicating the attendant pain and suffering, cut to the quick.

"Therefore, depart at once, ye cursed! **It is entirely within your power to free yourself from these sufferings. Let this poor woman in peace!** I conjure you in the name of the Almighty God, in the name of the Crucified Jesus of Nazareth, in the name of His purest Mother, the Virgin Mary, in the name of the Archangel Michael!"

"Oh, yes," they groaned, "we are willing. But Lucifer does not let us."

"Tell the truth. Is Lucifer alone the cause of it?"

"No, he alone could not be. God's justice does not permit it as yet, because sufficient atonement has not yet been made for her."

This admission was valuable. It offered a greater inducement to arouse the members of the parish to increase their acts of expiation for the woman.

22. More Atonement

In accordance with the request of their pastor, the parishioners gladly went to church to keep regular hours of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. They prayed fervently for the destruction of the powers of Satan, and for the victory of the Church in delivering the victim from the tenacious grip of the devil. Following the directions of the ritual, the pastor kept on encouraging his people to private fasting and penance in order that their petitions would be more effective in strengthening the prayers of the exorcism. Our Lord Himself, when putting the devil to flight, and after beseeching all to pray, had told the Apostles that this kind of devils can only be driven away by prayers and fasting. The devil's own statement, that sufficient penance had not been done, helped to bring about more fervent prayers and more rigorous penances. The faithful flocked to church in large numbers from early morn until late in the evening in order that, by their prayers, they might add their mite to the work of the Church in this her mission. The exorcism could not continue much longer as the reserve strength of those actually assisting was being vitally sapped.

23. Battle Between Good and Evil Spirits

It was during this time that the poor woman admitted during her periods of rest that she had visions of horrible battles between the good and evil spirits. Countless numbers of evil spirits continually arrived. Satan tried his utmost not to be outdone this time. The good angels came to assist at the exorcism. Many approached seated on white horses (Revelation 19:15) and under the leadership of St. Michael, completely routed the infernal serpents and drove the demons back to the abyss of hell.

24. The Little Flower of the Child Jesus

The Little Flower of Jesus [St Therese] also appeared to the woman during these crucial days and spoke these consoling words to her: "Do not lose courage! The pastor especially should not give up hope. The end is soon at hand."

This occurred on a certain evening when, to their surprise, the nuns and the pastor's sister suddenly noticed a cluster of white roses on the ceiling. After a while the vision gradually disappeared. The pastor noticed the anxious gaze of these ladies directed towards the ceiling, but he himself did not see the flowers.

The words of encouragement from the Little Flower gave a new impetus to the priests. Now they knew that victory was not far off. **During the latter days the devils betrayed great fear lest they be forced to return to hell. Father Theophilus insisted upon their departure again and again. They pleaded pitifully: "Anything but that, anything but that!" To be banished to another place, or into another creature would have been more bearable. They did not want to be driven back to hell.**

"But you are already in hell."

"True, true," they groaned, "we drag hell along with us. Yet it is a relief to be permitted to roam about the earth until (at the last judgment) we shall be cast off and damned to hell for eternity."

25. The Devils Depart

Gradually the resistance of the devils began to wane. They seemed to become more docile. Their bold, bitter demeanor gave way to more moaning and despairing tones. They could not bear the tortures of exorcism any longer. With great uneasiness they explained that they would finally return to hell. But how often they are deceptive and unreliable! Experience teaches us that at times they pretend to leave the possessed entirely at ease for a while, in order to sidetrack the unwary observer and thus outwit him. For this reason Father Theophilus, almost completely exhausted, demanded in the name of the Most Blessed Trinity that at their departure the devils should give a sign by giving their respective names.

"Yes," they promised emphatically.

It was on the twenty-third day of December, 1928, in the evening about nine o'clock that, **with a sudden jerk of lightning speed the possessed woman broke from the grip of her protectors and stood erect before them. Only her heels were touching the bed. At first sight it appeared as if she were to be hurled up to the ceiling. "Pull her down ! Pull her down" called the pastor while Father Theophilus blessed her with the relic of the Cross, saying: "Depart, ye fiends of hell! Begone, Satan, the Lion of Juda reigns!"**

At that very moment the stiffness of the woman's body gave way and she fell upon the bed. Then a piercing sound filled the room causing all to tremble vehemently. Voices saying, "Beelzebub, Judas, Jacob, Mina," could be heard. And this was repeated over and over until they faded far away into the distance.

"Beelzebub, —Judas, —Jacob, —Mina." To these words were added: "Hell—hell—hell!"

Everyone present was terrified by this gruesome scene. It was the long awaited sign indicating that Satan was forced to leave his victim at last and to return to hell with his associates.

What a happy sight it was that followed! The woman opened her eyes and mouth for the first time, something that had never taken place while the exorcism itself was going on. She displayed a kindly smile as if she wanted to say: "From what a terrible burden have I been freed at last!"

For the first time in twelve years she uttered the most holy name of Jesus with child-like piety: "My Jesus, Mercy! Praised be Jesus Christ!"

Tears of joy filled her eyes and those of all in attendance.

Amid the first rejoicings, the witnesses were not aware of the terrible odor that filled the room. All the windows had to be opened. The stench was unearthly, simply unbearable. It was the last souvenir of the infernal devils who had to abandon their earthly victim.

What a day of joy it was for the whole parish! *Te Deum laudamus!* Holy God, we praise Thy name! Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but to Thy name be glory and praise!

From that time on the woman, always sincerely good, pious and religious, frequently visited the Blessed Sacrament and assisted at Holy Mass. She received Communion in a most edifying manner. That which was so terrible for her while she was under the torturing powers of Satan is now the peaceful joy of her heart and soul.

26. Theresa Neumann

Theresa Neumann of Konnersreuth [a stigmatist who miraculously suffered the wounds of Christ] was also concerned in this affair.

A Bishop of Switzerland, who had been well informed about the above case, paid a visit to Theresa Neumann. And since it was Friday, he asked her while she was in one of her ecstatic visions whether she was aware of the terrible case of demoniacal possession in America. She immediately answered:

"Is it not so? You mean the case in Earling, Iowa, at which some priests scoffed, and about which others were indifferent?"

Then followed an astounding announcement: **"The good woman will later be possessed. This will be for her own personal benefit, for her own purification and complete atonement."**

Furthermore, the stigmatic woman of Konnersreuth had a terrible vision on the Feast of St. Michael, pertaining to the exorcism that had taken place in Earling. She witnessed the frightful battle between the angels of heaven under the leadership of St. Michael and the infernal demons under the command of Lucifer. She was so shocked and confused by it that she said:

"If it be not against the will of God, I will ask Him never again to permit me to witness anything so terrible."

It was by far the worst vision she had ever experienced.

Father Theophilus, basing his opinion on his numerous experiences with cases of possession, believes that the hour of the Antichrist is not far distant. **Lucifer himself was present for about fourteen days in the Earling case. With all the forces of hell at his disposal he tried his utmost to make this a test case. Once Father Theophilus saw Lucifer standing visibly before him for half an hour - a fiery being in his characteristically demoniac reality. He had a crown on his head and carried a fiery sword in his hand. Beelzebub stood alongside of him. During this time the whole room was filled with flames. Lucifer was cursing and blaspheming in a terrible rage:**

"If I could, I would have choked you long ago. If I only had my former powers, you would soon experience what I could do to you."

Through the powers of Christ he had been deprived of his original might as even now through exorcism his influence was further diminished. Father Theophilus asked him one time: **"What can you accomplish, you helpless Lucifer?"**

To which he replied: "What could you do, if you were bound as I am?"

Father Theophilus, who has had nineteen cases of possession under his care within recent years, seems convinced that present indications point to the beginning of a great battle between Christ and Antichrist. He also seems to have learned that Judas will appear as Antichrist in this manner, that a human person, soon after birth, will be controlled and completely ruled by him. Besides the Antichrist, there will be the false prophet, in reality Lucifer, who will perform wonderful deeds and false miracles. He will not be born of a woman, but will construct a body for himself out of earthly matter in order to plot as a man among men. But the faithful need not fear, for all the powers of heaven with its countless angels will be fighting on their side.

Supplement

The above account gives only the exorcisms that took place at Earling, Iowa. She was possessed the first time in 1908 through her aunt, Mina, known among the people as a witch. The latter had placed a spell on some herbs which she placed among the woman's food. Father Theophilus freed her from this possession June 18, 1912. She became possessed again due to the curses hurled against her by her wicked father. The Earling exorcism was in three stages: Aug. 18-26, 1928; Sept. 13-20, 1928; Dec. 15-22, 1928. There were still later possessions but of a milder nature.

This woman was born in 1882, is of small stature and had but an elementary education. She preserved her virginity though she had been exposed to severe trials. She is still among the living [i.e., in 1935], and recently through private revelations from Christ has been advocating the spread of perpetual adoration of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament as a remedy for a lasting peace.

The purpose of this pamphlet is not to frighten timid souls but rather to encourage those of strong faith to continue to give battle to the evil one. It is also a timely warning to sinners to amend their lives from sin to virtue. It is precisely through the cooperation of sinners that the devil has such power on earth. It also gives all of us the assurance that the prayers of the Church and the penance of the faithful in cooperation with her today have still the same effect over our enemies as did Christ's personal dealings with the evil spirits during His early sojourn.

Holy Mother Church has not made any official decision regarding the Earling case and hence the statements made in this pamphlet are only of a private nature and are to be accepted merely on their face.

Testimony of Theresa Wegerer, Father Steiger's Housekeeper

"I was a witness to almost the whole period of the exorcism of the Earling possession case and I can truthfully say, that the facts mentioned in *Begone Satan* are correct. Some of the scenes were even more frightful than described in the booklet. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind, that the devils were present and I will never forget the horrible scenes, vile, filthy, and dirty, as long as I live. All the nuns asked for a change and were transferred the next year.

"The woman came back to Earling over a distance of a thousand miles four months after

the exorcism to make a novena of Thanksgiving. This was at the bidding of Christ Himself. During her stay she boarded with the Schimorowsky family. She told me how our Blessed Lord appears to her frequently and encourages her to be faithful."

Appendix I. The Devil, by Fr. John Hardon, S.J., from *The Catholic Catechism*

All the living religions of the world, including Islam and Mahayana Buddhism, believe in the existence of what Christianity calls the devil. But only in the Christian religion is the evil spirit clearly identified as an integral part of revelation.

Somewhat remarkably, the first and last books of the Bible are most eloquent in describing the devil and his activity. In Genesis, he tempts Eve, who in turn tempts her husband to disobey a command of the Lord. Characteristically, the devil disarms Eve's protestations by assuring her that if she, and Adam, disobey God they will become God. Since then the pattern has not changed; it has only become more sophisticated: Manifest your autonomy, even of God, and thus prove to yourself that in your own way you are a god!

In the Book of Revelation, St. John depicts the evil spirit in the role permitted by God, essentially the same work of envy, only now not on the first progenitors of the human race but on all the followers of Christ. As John saw the sequence, there were four stages in the fallen angels' resistance to God: their primordial disobedience, which drove them into hell; their successful seduction of the first ancestors of man; their assaults on the people of Israel; and their continued opposition to the followers of Christ, typified as offspring of the woman who is the Church or bride of Christ. In this present stage, "the dragon was enraged with the woman and went away to make war on the rest of her children, that is, all who obey God's commandments and bear witness for Jesus" ([Rev. 12.17](#)).

The Gospels are filled with descriptive narratives about the activity and strategy of the devil. Time and again Christ drove out demons from persons who were possessed. St. Mark's Gospel is especially detailed in the number of exorcisms performed by the Master, and the effortless ease with which he delivered those who were under the influence of the evil one. Already in the first chapter of Mark, after the Savior cured a demoniac in the synagogue, the people were amazed at Christ's power. "Here is a teaching that is new," they said, "and with authority behind it. He gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him" (Mk. 1.27).

Not only are the Gospels explicit about the existence and machinations of the evil spirits, but they also state that their number is "legion," which is a biblical synonym for an immense multitude. Some of the Fathers of the Church go so far as to speak of a "Mystical Body of Satan," animated by Satan and his minions and composed of such human beings as are willfully co-operating in the work of the devil on earth. Their success then takes on superhuman, in the sense of preternatural, proportions.

In the mysterious plan of providence, evil spirits are meant to: serve a distinctive function toward mankind. Yet immediately we must distinguish between the purpose that the devil

has, and the purpose of God.²⁹

The devil's purpose is to seduce. He consciously and deliberately wants to lead people astray from their faithful service of the divine majesty. Consequently his intention is always malicious. Everything he does with respect to man is wantonly evil. His purpose is to harm man, spiritually and supernaturally, and, if possible, eternally.

God's purpose, on the other hand, is always good. He permits the devil to tempt us but not to harm us; rather the divine intention is that, by resisting the evil spirit, we might draw closer to God. God allows us to be tempted in order to try our loyalty by giving us the opportunity to show our faith and trust in God; to test our virtue by giving us the chance to grow because of the struggle that this costs; and to prove our fidelity by resisting the devil's blandishments and thus more generously serving God.

Against this common teaching of the faith, we are in a better position to assess some of the ascetical implications for the spiritual life. In each case, we shall briefly state a principle and then make an appropriate comment.

1. "The devil is never permitted to tempt us beyond our strength." This means that we always have enough grace to overcome the devil which, at root, means that we have the grace to pray for light to recognize the evil spirit and strength to resist his advances.
2. "The devil is a consummate deceiver." Three names for the evil spirit are regularly used in the Bible, and each has a profound revealed meaning. He is Satan (Hebrew, satan) because he is an "adversary," especially one who plots against another. He is a demon (Greek, daimon) because he is a spiritual being possessed of extraordinary powers. He is a devil (Greek, diabolos) because he is a calumniator who then accuses those he had deceived by charging them with the sins they committed. Given his deceptive character, we should expect him to hide his real designs; hence the cardinal importance of shrewdness in identifying what may seem to be a divine inspiration but is actually a demonic instigation. The best protection here, on the witness of such masters as Augustine, is humility of mind, because the devil always poses intelligent reasons for what he urges people to do. Proud persons are no match for the devil.
3. "The devil's strategy is eminently logical." He first approaches us with a suggestion in the imagination; this can grow into a specious reason in the mind; if dwelled on, it influences the will by motivating us to do something that is actually bad but apparently good. Thus deceit, hiding the real evil, falsehood, and cunning are basic to the devil's technique. He never reveals his true intentions, but masks his purpose under various disguises. He adapts himself to people's temperaments and character, even to their tastes. If they are meek and submissive, he tries to seduce them along self-effective lines. If they are bold and headstrong, he urges them to evil under an aggressive guise. If they are worldly and pleasure-seeking, he will enter their door with temptations of the flesh. If they are prayerful and spiritual-minded, he will appear "as an angel of light." If they tend to be emotional, he adjusts his tactics to where his intended victims give least resistance to their passions. If they are intellectual, he will accommodate himself and tempt them to pride and sins of the mind.

4. "The devil uses human beings and human institutions as agents." Here we must be careful to distinguish different ways in which the evil spirit can operate in or through people on earth.

There are such things as possession, when the devil exerts his influence over a person by an inner control of his body; and obsession, when he attacks their bodies from the outside. The victim's liberty of soul always remains intact. Although the Church's ritual for exorcism mentions as probable (not certain) signs of possession certain phenomena like speaking or understanding an unknown language or showing strength above one's natural capacity, it warns against concluding hastily that a person is possessed by the devil. Many so-called possessions (or obsessions) are no doubt to be attributed to illusion, hysteria, or fraud. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that these experiences occur.

Completely different from possession or obsession is the devil's capacity to so use people or human institutions that they become, in effect, instruments of a demonic will. Masters of the spiritual life intimate this when they describe how Satan "summons innumerable demons and scatters them, some to one city and some to another, throughout the whole world, so that no province, no state of life, no individual is overlooked. Consider the address he makes to them, how he goads them on to lay snares for men, to seek to chain them. First they are to tempt them to covet aches (as Satan is accustomed to do in most cases) that they may the more easily attain the empty honors of this world, and then come to overweening pride." The devil's strategy by which he can "chain" people to his will is to incite them to aches (whether material or otherwise) in order to obtain honor and human recognition, and thus to induce pride. "From these three steps the evil one leads to all other vices."³⁰

This "enchainment" is a form of virtual slavery. Held in the devil's shackles, a person (whether individually or corporately) becomes the unwitting tool of the powers of darkness.

Satanism and demonology have suddenly become popular issues, as mounting literature on the subject testifies. They indicate, in a dramatic way, what Christians have always been told: "Be calm, but vigilant, because your enemy the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand up to him, strong in faith and in the knowledge that your brothers all over the world are suffering the same things" (1 Pet. 5.8-9).

The devil is very active in the world today, warns the Church, when she sadly admits that for many people it borders on superstition even to talk about the evil spirit as though he were anything else than a symbol. Yet, in our day as in the apostolic age, the devil is "the treacherous and cunning enchanter, who finds his way into us by way of the senses, the imagination, lust, and utopian logic." Those who take him lightly or smile at his existence are the easiest prey of what the apostle called "the mystery of iniquity." (Pope Paul VI, Address to General Audience, Nov. 15, 1972)

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Appendix II. The Diabolical Spirit, by Fr. Jordan Aumann, O.P., from Chapter 14 of *Spiritual Theology* (1982)*

Normally diabolical influence on the individual Christian is restricted to simple temptation, although it is not likely that the majority of temptations proceed from the immediate and direct intervention of the devil. At other times, with God's permission, the devil may concentrate his power on an individual by means of diabolical obsession or diabolical possession.

Diabolical Obsession. Obsession occurs whenever the devil torments a person from without and in a manner that is so intense that there can be no doubt about his presence and his action. In simple temptation the diabolical action is not so evident; absolutely speaking, it could be due to other causes. But in true and authentic obsession, the presence and activity of Satan are so clear and unequivocal that neither the soul nor the director can have the least doubt of it. The soul is aware of its own vital activity and government of its faculties, but it is at the same time clearly aware of the external activity of Satan, who tries to exert violence on the individual.

Obsession can affect the interior faculties, especially the imagination, or the external senses in various manners and degrees. The attack on the imagination differs from ordinary temptation only by reason of its violence and duration. Although it is difficult to determine exactly where simple temptation ends and true obsession begins, we can say that when the disturbance of the soul is so profound and the tendency to evil is so violent that the only possible explanation lies in some external force (even when there is nothing evident externally), it is certainly a case of diabolical obsession. It can take many different forms.

Sometimes it is manifested as a fixed idea that absorbs all the energies of the soul; at other times the images and representations are so vivid that the subject feels that he or she is dealing with concrete reality. Again, it may refer to one's duties and obligations, toward which one feels an almost insuperable repugnance, or it may be manifested by a vehement desire for something one is obliged to avoid.

This seizure has repercussions in the emotional life because of the intimate relation between the emotions and the cognitive faculties. The soul, even in spite of itself, finds itself filled with obsessive images that arouse doubt, resentment, anger, antipathy, hatred, despair, or dangerous tenderness and an inclination to sensuality. The best remedy against such assaults is prayer, accompanied by true humility, self-disdain, confidence in God, the protection of Mary, the use of the sacramentals, and obedience to one's director, from whom none of these things should be hidden.

Bodily obsession is usually more spectacular, but in reality it is less dangerous than internal obsession, although the two normally occur together. External obsession can affect any of the external senses, and there are numerous examples of this in the lives of the saints. The eye is filled with diabolical apparitions. Sometimes they are very pleasant, as when Satan transforms himself into an angel of light to deceive the soul and fill it with sentiments of vanity, selfcomplacence, etc. By these and similar effects the soul will recognize the presence of the enemy. At other times Satan may appear in horrible and frightening forms in order to terrify the servants of God and to withdraw them from the practice of virtue, as

one can discover in the lives of numerous saints. Or the devil may present himself in a voluptuous, form in order to tempt souls to evil.

Other senses besides sight are also affected. The ear is tormented with frightful sounds and shouts, with blasphemy and obscenities, or with voluptuous songs and music to arouse sensuality. The sense of smell sometimes perceives the most pleasant odors or an unbearable stench. The sense of taste is affected in various ways. Sometimes the devil arouses feelings of gluttony by producing a sensation of the most delicious food or most exquisite liquors the individual has never actually tasted. But usually he arouses a most bitter taste in the food that is taken, or he mixes repulsive objects with the food so that it would be dangerous or impossible to swallow or to digest.

Finally, the sense of touch, which is diffused throughout the whole body, can be subjected in countless ways to the influence of the devil. Sometimes there are terrible blows upon the body; at other times there are sensations of voluptuous embraces or caresses; or God may permit that his servant be tested by extreme experiences of sensuality, without any consent on the part of the one who suffers these things. Obsession may be due to any one of the following causes:

1. The permission of God, who wishes thereby to test the virtue of a soul and to increase its merits. In this sense it is equivalent to a passive trial or a mystical night of the soul.
2. The envy and pride of the devil, who cannot bear the sight of a soul that is trying to sanctify itself and to glorify God to the best of its ability, thereby leading a great number of other souls to salvation or perfection.
3. The natural predisposition of the person obsessed, which gives the devil an occasion to attack the individual at his weakest point. This reason is of no value in regard to external obsession, which has; nothing to do with the temperament or natural predispositions of the obsessed, but it is valid for internal obsession, which finds a fertile soil in a melancholy temperament or in one inclined to scruples, anxiety, or sadness. Nevertheless, however violent the obsession, it never deprives the subject of liberty, and with the grace of God he or she can always overcome it and even derive benefit from it. It is only for this reason that God permits it.

One needs much discretion and perspicacity to distinguish true obsession from the various kinds of nervous illnesses and mental unbalances that are very similar to it. It would be foolish to deny the reality of diabolical action in the world, especially sine it is expressly mentioned in the sources of revelation and has been proved countless times by the experiences of many saints. In modem times there has been a tendency to exaggerate the purely natural causes of all phenomena, and perhaps the greatest victory of the devil is that he has succeeded in destroying the belief in his terrible power. On the other hand, many apparently diabolical phenomena are due to natural causes, and it is a fundamental principle advocated by the Church that one may not attribute to the preternatural order anything that can probably be explained by purely natural causes.

The director will proceed prudently by bearing in mind the following observations and

guidelines:

1. Obsession usually occurs only in souls that are far advanced in virtue. As regards ordinary souls, the devil is content to persecute them with simple temptations. Therefore, the director should first investigate the type of soul with which he is dealing, and in this way he will be able to conjecture as to the diabolical or purely natural origin of the apparent obsession.

2. It is important to investigate carefully whether one is dealing with a soul that is normal, balanced, of sound judgment, and an enemy of any kind of exaggeration or sentimentality; or whether, on the contrary, one is dealing with a disquieted, unbalanced, weak spirit, with a history of hysteria, tormented by scruples, or depressed by reason of an inferiority complex. This rule is of exceptional importance, and very often it is the decisive rule for making a judgment. It will be very difficult to differentiate between the manifestations of diabolical influence and those that follow from a nervous disorder, but-it is possible to do so. The director should not yield to the temptation of oversimplifying the matter by attributing everything to one cause or the other. He should give to the patient the moral counsels and rules that pertain to his office as a director of souls and then refer the individual to a trustworthy psychiatrist, who can treat the other manifestations that proceed from a mental disorder.

3. The authentic manifestations of true diabolical obsession will be sufficiently clear if they are revealed by visible signs such as the moving of an object by an invisible hand, the marks of bruises or wounds that proceed from an invisible attack. These effects cannot be attributed to any purely natural cause, and when the person who suffers them gives all the signs of equanimity, self-possession, sincerity, and true virtue, the director can be certain that he is dealing with a case of obsession. We have already said that the devil does not usually obsess the ordinary soul; nevertheless, God sometimes permits diabolical obsession in these souls or even in hardened sinners, as a salutary expiation for their sins or to give them a vivid idea of the horrors of hell and the necessity of abandoning sin to be freed from the slavery of the devil. But ordinarily only souls of advanced virtue suffer the obsessive attacks of the devil.

4. Once it has been proved that one is dealing with a case of diabolical obsession, the director should proceed with the greatest possible patience and tenderness. The tormented soul needs the assistance and advice of someone to whom it can give its complete confidence and one who will in turn speak to the soul in the name of God. The director's principal concern should be to encourage the soul and make it understand that the attacks of hell are futile so long as the soul places all its confidence in God and does not lose its interior serenity. He will remind the soul that God is with it and will help it conquer: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

Also, at the side of the suffering soul is Mary, our tender Mother, as well as the guardian angel, whose power is greater than that of the devil. The director will advise the soul never to lose its tranquillity, to hold the devil in utter disdain, to

fortify himself or herself with the sign of the cross and with other sacramentals, especially holy water, which has great efficacy against the attacks of the devil. Above all, he will warn the soul never to do anything that the devil suggests, even if it appears good and reasonable. He will demand a detailed account of everything that happens and will never permit the soul to conceal anything, however difficult and painful it may be to reveal it. Finally, he will try to make the soul understand that God can use the devil as an instrument for purifying the soul and that the best way of cooperating with the divine plan is to abandon oneself entirely to God's holy will, ready to accept anything that God may decree, and asking' the grace of never yielding to the violence of the temptations.

5. In more serious and persistent cases, the exorcisms prescribed in the *Roman Ritual* are used, or other formulas approved by the Church are put into effect. But the director will always do this in private and even without advising the penitent that he is going to exorcise him or her, especially if he fears that this knowledge would cause a great disturbance to the soul. For a solemn exorcism it is necessary to obtain express permission from the local ordinary and to follow the prescribed precautions.

Diabolical Possession. Diabolical possession is a phenomenon in which the devil invades the body of a living person and moves the faculties and organs as if he were manipulating a body of his own. The devil truly resides within the body of the unfortunate victim, and he operates in it and treats it as his own property. Those who suffer this despotic invasion are said to be possessed.

However it may be manifested, the presence of the devil is restricted exclusively to the body. The soul remains free, even if the exercise of conscious life is suspended. Only God has the privilege of penetrating into the essence of the soul. Nevertheless, the primary purpose of the violence of the devil is to disturb the soul and to draw it to sin. But the soul always remains master of itself, and if it is faithful to the grace of God, it will find an inviolable sanctuary in its free will.

Two periods can be distinguished in diabolical possession: the period of crisis and the period of calm. The periods of crisis are manifested by the violent onslaught of evil, and its very violence prevents it from being continual or even very prolonged. It is the moment in which the devil openly reveals himself by acts, words, convulsions, seizures of anger or impiety, obscenity, or blasphemy. In the majority of cases, the victims lose consciousness of what is happening to them during this seizure, as happens in the great crises of certain mental disorders. When they regain consciousness they have no recollection of what they have said or done or, rather, of what the devil has said or done in them. Sometimes they perceive something of the diabolical spirit at the beginning of the seizure when he begins to use their faculties or organs. In certain cases the spirit of the possessed remains free and conscious during the crisis and witnesses with astonishment and horror the despotic usurpation of its body by the devil.

In the periods of calm there is nothing to manifest the presence of the devil in the body of the possessed. One would think that the devil had gone. Nevertheless, his presence is often manifested by some strange chronic illness that exceeds the categories of pathological

disorders known to medical science and resists every form of therapeutic remedy. Moreover, diabolical possession is not always continuous, and the devil may leave for a time and then return later to continue his possession. The devil can come and go as he pleases, so long as he has God's permission to take possession of the person.

Lest we expose ourselves to derision, it is necessary to be extremely cautious and prudent in making pronouncements concerning diabolical possession. There are countless nervous disorders presenting external symptoms very similar to those of possession, and there are also some poor unbalanced souls or perverse spirits that have a remarkable facility for simulating the horrors of possession. Fortunately, the Church has given us wise rules for discerning fraud and for making judgments that are certain. The first thing to be recognized is that authentic cases of possession are very rare, and it is much better to make a mistake on the side of incredulity than to be too anxious to admit diabolical possession. The extreme agitation of the victim, the blasphemies that are uttered, the horror manifested for holy things—none of these are of themselves sufficient proof. These symptoms give nothing more than a conjecture of the possibility of diabolical possession, but they are never infallible signs because they could proceed from malice or from some natural cause.

Remedies for Possession. The *Roman Ritual*, after recommending prudence and discretion before making a judgment, indicates certain signs that allow for a diagnosis to ascertain the authenticity of diabolical possession: speaking in a, strange and unknown language or understanding perfectly one who speaks in an unknown language; perceiving hidden or distant things; manifesting strength beyond one's age and condition. There are other similar symptoms, and the more numerous they are the greater proof they offer of a true diabolical possession.

Ordinarily, possession occurs only in sinners and precisely as a punishment for sin. There are exceptions, however, when diabolical possession is used by God as a means of purification.

Whatever will weaken the power of the devil over a person can be utilized as a remedy against diabolical possession, but the *Roman Ritual* specifies certain principal remedies:

Sacramental confession. Since the usual purpose of diabolical possession is punishment for sin, it is necessary above all to remove the cause of possession by a humble and sincere confession. It will have a special efficacy if it is a general confession of one's whole life, because of the humiliation and renewal of soul it presupposes.

Holy Communion. The *Roman Ritual* recommends frequent Communion under the direction and advice of a priest. Holy Communion, however, should not be given to a possessed person except in moments of calm, and one must also take great care to avoid any danger of irreverence or profanation, as the *Ritual* prescribes.

Fasting and prayer. A certain type of devil cannot be cast out except through fasting and prayer (Matt. 17:20). Humble, and persevering prayer, accompanied by fasting and mortification, obtains from heaven the grace of a cure. This particular remedy should, never be omitted, even when all the others are used.

The sacramentals. Objects blessed by the prayers of the Church have a special power against the devil. Holy water has particular efficacy, as has been verified on countless occasions.

The cross. The Ritual prescribes that the exorcist should have a crucifix in his hand or before his eyes. It has been verified many times that the devil will flee merely at the sight of a crucifix. The sign of the cross has always been used by Christians as a safeguard against the devil, and the Church makes special use of it in the rite of exorcism.

Relics of the saints. The Roman Ritual also recommends the use of relics in the rite of exorcism. The most precious and venerated of all relics, and those that inspire the greatest horror in the demons, are the particles of the true Cross because they remind the demons of the definitive victory that Christ won over them on Calvary.

The holy names of Jesus and Mary. The name of Jesus has a sovereign power to put the devil to flight. He himself promised in the Gospel: "They will use my name to expel demons" (Mark 16:17). The apostles used the Holy Name in this respect: "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you, come out of her!" Then and there the spirit left her" (Acts 16:18).

The name of Mary is also terrifying to the devils. The examples of its salutary efficacy are innumerable and fully justify the practice of Christian piety that sees in the invocation of the name of Mary a powerful remedy against the attacks of the devil.

In addition to these remedies, which any Christian can use against the power of the devil, the Church has instituted other official means whose use is reserved to her ministers. These are the various exorcisms.

In private any priest may use the rite of exorcism, but for solemn exorcism it is necessary to verify with certainty the reality of diabolical possession and then obtain the express permission of the bishop for the exorcism. In addition, the exorcist should prepare himself carefully by means of sacramental confession, fasting, and prayer, and then perform the rite in a church or chapel (and only in exceptional circumstances in a private home), in the company of serious and pious witnesses (but only a few), and with sufficient assistants who will be able to control the patient in moments of crisis. The interrogations should be made with authority, but they should be few in number, as is indicated in the *Roman Ritual*. The witnesses will observe silence and remain in prayer but should never interrogate the devil. The sessions should be repeated as often as is necessary until the devil is cast out. Once this has taken place and the liberation of the patient is verified, the exorcist should petition God to command the devil never again to enter the body he has just left. The exorcist should give thanks to God and exhort the liberated patient to bless God and carefully to avoid sin lest he or she fall again under the domination of the devil.

A person may also come under the power of the devil by reason of the habitual practice of evil or the uncontrolled desire to experience extraordinary mystical phenomena or receive charismatic graces. In the first case a confessor may, unknown to the penitent, apply an

abbreviated form of exorcism when giving absolution to habitual sinners. In the second case it is necessary to exercise discernment of spirits when the person claims to have received some special grace or favor from God.

Signs of the Diabolical Spirit. ...Since the devil may disguise himself as a good spirit and even cause what appears to be authentic mystical phenomena, it is helpful to mention briefly the various signs of the diabolical spirit.

1. *Spirit of falsity.* The devil is the father of lies, but he cleverly conceals his deceit by half-truths and pseudo-mystical phenomena.
2. *Morbid curiosity.* This is characteristic of those who eagerly seek out the esoteric aspects of mystical phenomena or have a fascination for the occult or preternatural.
3. *Confusion, anxiety, and deep depression.*
4. *Obstinacy.* One of the surest signs of a diabolical spirit.
5. *Constant indiscretion and a restless spirit.* Those who constantly go to extremes, as in penitential exercises or apostolic activity; or neglect their primary obligations to do some personally chosen work.
6. *Spirit of pride and vanity.* Very anxious to publicize their gifts of grace and mystical experiences.
7. *False humility.* This is the disguise for their pride and self-love.
8. *Despair, lack of confidence, and discouragement.* A chronic characteristic that alternates with presumption, vain security, and un-'founded optimism.
9. *Disobedience and hardness of heart.*
10. *Impatience in suffering and stubborn resentment.*
11. *Uncontrolled passions and strong inclination to sensuality,* usually under the guise of mystical union.
12. *Hypocrisy, simulation, and duplicity.*
13. *Excessive attachment to sensible consolations,* particularly in their practice of prayer.
14. *Lack of deep devotion to Jesus and Mary.*
15. *Scrupulous adherence to the letter of the law and fanatical zeal in promoting a cause.* This characteristic readily opens the door to diabolical influence in reformers and demagogues.

Once the spiritual director is certain that a person is acting under the influence of a diabolical spirit, he should: (1) make the individual realize that he or she is a toy of the devil and must resist his influence; (2) encourage the individual to pray to God for the grace to overcome the devil; (3) advise the person to act quickly and with disdain for the devil as soon as the influence is perceived, performing the opposite from what is suggested or felt. (....)

Diabolical Causes of Extraordinary Phenomena

The study of the preternatural is so vast and complicated that a thorough treatment of the subject would take us far beyond the scope of the present work. We shall content ourselves with an enumeration of the main points of theological doctrine concerning diabolical influence.

1. It is *de fide* ["of the faith", i.e., part of God's revealed truth] that devils exist, that is, a number of angels who were created good by God became evil through their own sin.
2. With God's permission the devils can exercise an evil influence over us, even to the extent of invading and tormenting us in a bodily manner.
3. In the midst of the assaults of the devil, the human will always remains free because the will can be moved only in two ways: by the individual or by God. The most that any other extrinsic power can do is to persuade, and this is what the devils do.
4. The angels and devils can act upon the imagination and other internal and external senses because these are all organic powers, and the devil has power to exercise his influence on anything material.
5. The devils cannot work true miracles because by definition a miracle surpasses the power of all created nature. But since the angelic powers far surpass human powers, the devils can perform prodigious feats that arouse our admiration.

By reason of some contradiction involved or because they surpass the power of an angelic being, the devils cannot do the following:

1. Produce any kind of truly supernatural phenomenon because the supernatural by definition exceeds all natural created powers.
2. Create a substance because creation requires an infinite power, and no creature of any kind can be used even as an instrument of creation.
3. Raise a dead person to life, although they could produce the illusion of doing so.
4. Instantaneously cure wounds, fractures, lesions, etc., because this is something only the Creator can do.
5. Make truly prophetic predictions, since the devil does not by his own powers of intelligence know future contingencies, although he knows so many things in their causes that it may appear to human beings that what was predicted was a true prophecy.
6. Know the secrets of a person's mind and heart, since the devil does not by his own power have access to the human intellect and will. Because of his superior intelligence, however, he can conjecture much more easily and can know the temperament and character of individuals as well as the numerous circumstances of their life.
7. Produce in human beings extraordinary phenomena of the purely intellectual or volitional type because he does not have free access to the human intellect and will.

These are the principal things the devils are unable to do, and they should be kept in mind when evaluating mystical phenomena involving the miraculous, or the activity of the

human intellect and will. The following mystical phenomena, however, can be falsified by the devil.

With God's permission the devil can do any of the following:

1. Produce corporeal or imaginative visions (but not intellectual visions).
2. Falsify ecstasy.
3. Produce rays of light in the body and sensible heat. (There have been examples of "diabolical incandescence.")
4. Cause sensible consolations and tenderness.
5. Instantaneously cure sicknesses that have been caused by diabolical influence.
6. Produce the stigmata and all other kinds of bodily extraordinary phenomena, and any phenomena dealing with physical objects, such as crowns, rings, etc.
7. Simulate miracles and the phenomena of levitation, bilocation, and compenetration of bodies.
8. Cause persons or objects to disappear from sight by placing an obstacle in the line of vision or acting directly on the sense of sight; simulate locutions by means of sound waves or immediate action on the sense of hearing; cause a person to speak in tongues.
9. Produce bodily incombustibility by interposing some medium between the fire and the body of the individual.

To summarize: all phenomena resulting from the activity of any natural power or physical law, even if the human being is unable to produce them, can be produced by diabolical power, with God's permission. Whatever the activity of diabolical powers, however, it can never be essentially supernatural.

* *Spiritual Theology* is a complete and definitive work on Christian spirituality available online in separate chapters at www.domcentral.org/study/aumann/ and as one complete pdf or text file at archive.org. It was first published in 1982 by University of Santo Tomas Faculty of Theology, Manila, while some sections are taken substantially from *The Theology of Christian Perfection* by Antonio Royo and Jordan Aumann, published in 1962 by Priory Press.

For further reading: Duane F. Watson, "Devil," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 2:183-184; "Christian Faith and Demonology", Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, July 10, 1975, etext at www.vatican.va; "Spiritual Warfare: The Occult has Demonic Influence," a Pastoral Letter by Most Rev. Donald W. Montrose, Bishop of Stockton, CA, etext at www.ewtn.com

