

Are there many angels?

There is a countless multitude of angels; and Holy Scripture mentions nine choirs or orders of angels, divided into three hierarchies.

The number of the angels is exceedingly great; it is represented in Scripture by thousands of thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand; and in the book of Job it is written: "Is there any numbering of his soldiers" (Job. xxv, 3.) These numberless armies of glorious spirits are the bright ornament of the heavenly Jerusalem. They are called, by St. Clement of Alexandria, "the first-begotten of God." and by St. Sophronius, "the living images and representatives of God." (Orat. de Angel, excel.)

Name the three hierarchies of angels?

1. *The seraphim, the cherubim, and the thrones.*
2. *The dominations, the virtues, and the powers.*
3. *The principalities, the archangels, and the angels. (Col. i, 16; Eph. i, 21; Ezech. x; Isa. vi, 2.)*

The fathers of the Church, according to Holy Scripture, distinguish nine orders of these holy spirits, namely: the seraphim, burning with love, and transformed, as it were, into God by the fire of charity; the cherubim, endowed with intelligence inferior only to that of God; the thrones, on whom the Eternal reposes with complacency; the dominations, whose authority extends to all the works of God's hands; the principalities, who are crowned in heaven like kings; the powers, who make the devils tremble; the virtues, by whom Almighty God works the wonders of his right hand, awakes the tempests and whirlwinds, and hurls his thunderbolts; the archangels, whose office it is to announce to men the mighty things which the Lord is pleased to do; the angels, who are the ordinary ministers of his behests, and who preside over the destinies of man. This whole heavenly hierarchy surround and assist at the throne of God, adoring his wisdom, his goodness, his power. They receive his orders with joy, and perform them with a holy eagerness.

Were the angels at their creation, in possession of eternal glory?

No; though created "holy and happy, they were put on trial, to merit eternal glory.

The angels were created from the beginning of the world, but, on what day they were created, we cannot tell for certain. Some of the fathers of the Church are of opinion that they were created when God said, "Be light made" others think that they were created when God made the firmament. But it is a matter of very little importance to us to know at what time the angels were created. It is enough to know that there are angels, and what their office is. God created them in the state of grace and holiness. They were not, however, immediately after their creation, admitted to the beatific vision of God. They were to make themselves worthy of eternal glory by remaining faithful under the trial to which God subjected them.

According to St. Alphonsus (see Commandments, chap. i) and other fathers of the Church, this trial of the angels was the command of God to pay divine honor to his Son, who was to be made man. Hence Cornelius a Lapide, commenting on the words, "When He (God the Father) bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith: And let all the angels of God adore him" (Heb. i, 6), says: "After God had created the angels, he showed to them in spirit the future incarnation of his divine Son, and then commanded them to adore Christ incarnate,"

Did all the angels remain faithful, when put on trial?

No; Lucifer and many others revolted against God, and were opposed by St. Michael the Archangel and his host.

God, in his infinite wisdom, created the angels, and gifted them with intelligence and free will. Hence they were capable of acting wrong as well as right; they could, if they wished, persevere in grace and holiness, and thus render themselves eternally happy; or they could abuse their intelligence and free will, by refusing to do what God commanded them, and so forfeit their right to heaven. God made their eternal happiness depend on their submission to his will. Many of the angels remained obedient to the will of God; but many others refused obedience through pride, and rendered themselves most unhappy.

What was the revolt of the angels?

They wished to be like unto God, and refused to serve him.

The angels as spirits do not have the same temptations as we do. The two sins they could have committed are pride and envy.

Lucifer wished to be as God. He would have known that for a creature to be equal to the creator is impossible. The angelic intellect, with its clear knowledge, makes such self-deception impossible. Lucifer knew that to be equal with God, he would have to be God, and he knew perfectly that this could not be. What he wanted was to be as God; he wished to be like God in a way not suited to his nature, such as to create by his own power, or to achieve final beatitude without God's help, or to have command over others in a way proper to God alone.

Lucifer, the chief of those angels, was the most perfect of all. He was proud of his brilliant qualities, forgetting that he owed all his perfections to God. He wished to be placed higher in rank; he even wished to be on an equality with God himself. He said in his pride: "I will be like the Most High." (Isa. xiv, 14.) Incited by pride and ambition, Satan protested against the authority of God, against the right God has to reign and govern alone. He asserted the right of private judgment; he set himself up as the master and leader of a new kingdom; he commenced a warfare against the established order of the universe. He was followed in his rebellion by thousands of angels. "There was a great battle in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon" (Lucifer), "and the dragon fought, and his angels." (Apoc. xii, 7.) St. Michael the Archangel, full of zeal for the honor of God, cried: "Who is like to God!" The other good angels joined St. Michael's standard, and fought against the rebel angels. These could not resist, and their place was no longer found in heaven and a loud voice was heard: "Rejoice, heavens, and you that dwell therein! Woe to the earth and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you full of anger and rage." (Apoc. xii, 10.)

The faithful angels are a greater multitude than the fallen angels. The angels were created good and the majority were faithful to how God created them. The Apocalypse speaks of 1/3 of the stars falling, perhaps that is in relation to the fallen angels, but there is not a certain number known.

How were the rebellious angels punished?

They were forever deprived of God's grace, changed into devils, and cast into the everlasting torments of hell.

No sooner had the bad angels rebelled against God, than they were severely punished. They lost the grace and friendship of God forever. They were cast out of paradise into the everlasting torments of hell. All their brightness and beauty were at once changed into ugliness; all their love into hatred of God, their Creator. They will be evil spirits for all eternity. They will never enjoy the beatific vision of God. Their everlasting home is hell, a place of unspeakable torments.

If we were to see a good and holy man, renowned for his wisdom, for his justice, who loved his children with the most tender affection, cast some of these beloved ones into a fiery furnace, into a prison of frightful torments, and then suffer them to linger on, in the most excruciating torments, in the agony of despair, and never to take pity on them, relieve them, to deliver them from their place of suffering, what should we think or say? How enormous must be the crime which could deserve such a punishment! But this just, wise and loving father is God. He loved the angels with unspeakable love, and yet, for one mortal sin, he cast them into hell, to burn there for all eternity. And it is God who does this, whose justice cannot inflict greater punishments than are deserved; whose mercy always punishes less than is deserved; whose wisdom can do nothing inconsiderately and without reason, and whose sanctity cannot admit of either passion or imperfection. And yet it is this God, so just, so wise, so holy, and so good, who punishes those heavenly spirits with so much severity as soon as they commit a mortal sin. Those princes of heaven, masterpieces of the divine omnipotence, adorned with all the gifts of nature and grace; whose number surpasses the imagination; who would have loved God, had they been able to repent (Note: They can't repent because their choice was final, not because God wouldn't allow it.), with an eternal and unbounded love, they are all, without a single exception, cast into the eternal flames of hell for one single sin! the first sin ever committed was committed in an instant, and in thought alone! Alas! they suffer for this single sin a chastisement most frightful in its intensity, eternal in its duration, and the most dreadful, as to the pain of loss, which an Almighty God can inflict in his vengeance. It is impossible to picture the reality of their pains in hell. Whatever is related of hell in the Sacred Scriptures, in the writings of the fathers of the Church, or in the sermons of holy missionaries, is nothing compared to the reality. God made hell as a particular place of punishment for the wicked. It is therefore the center of all evils. "I will heap evils upon them." (Deut. xxxii, 24.) As in heaven God has united every good, so in hell he has united every evil. Let us never lose sight of hell.

Was there a hell before the angels sinned?

No; God made hell only to punish sin.

Before the angels rebelled there was no hell. But no sooner had they revolted against God, than hell was made to punish Lucifer and all the other rebellious angels. But someone may say, "I am not a Catholic, and I hold that there is no hell." The question is: Are you perfectly sure of this? Can you prove it? There have been men, far more learned probably, and far more wicked, too, than any who will read this book, and they tried very hard to prove that there is no hell. But they could never succeed. The infidel J. J. Rousseau was asked if there was a hell, and all he could say was that he did not know. The impious Voltaire wrote to a friend that, though he had tried long to prove that there is no hell, he could not succeed. All that such wicked men can say, with all their arguments, is that, perhaps, there is no hell. But to this "perhaps" is opposed a terrible "yea." It is the assertion of the living God himself. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, asserts, in the clearest language, that there is a hell. He asserts it at least fifteen times in the Holy Gospels. And is it more reasonable to believe a man who doubts of what he says, or God, who knows what he asserts? Is it more reasonable to believe a man who has never thoroughly studied that

which he denies, or the God of truth, who assures us that the heavens and the earth shall pass away; but that his words shall never pass away? Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, in the most solemn manner, that there is a hell, that the just shall go into everlasting life, and that the wicked shall go into everlasting fire; that the damned in hell shall be salted with fire; that "their worm shall not die, and their fire shall never quench." Consider who it is that speaks: it is Jesus, the blessed Savior, who is so good and merciful.

Many a sinner wishes that there were no hell. But what do wishes avail? Whether you believe it or not, there is a hell, there is an eternal punishment. If we are told that there is a city called Rome, we may deny it, we may bring the most subtle arguments to our aid; but, for all that, the city exists: it is a fact. And if we are told by Christ that there is a hell and an eternal punishment, we may deny it, and bring the most subtle arguments to the contrary; still hell an eternal hell is a fact that cannot be ciphered away.

Holy Church, the pillar and ground of truth, declares, in the clearest terms, that hell exists, and she strikes with her anathema all those who dare deny its existence. All ages, all nations, unite in proclaiming that there is a hell. The demons themselves bear witness to it; reason requires it. The soul that quits her body in the state of mortal sin, at enmity with God, remains in that state for all eternity; she is fixed, unalterable, and for this reason she can no more repent. "Wherever the tree falleth, there it shall lie." As she can no more repent, her sin can never be forgiven, it will always remain; and, on this account, she continues to be forever a subject of punishment.

This ought to be sufficient proof for the existence of hell, of everlasting punishments. However, if there be anyone who still doubts, let him look upon Jesus on the cross. The cross, the blood, the wounds of Jesus preach most eloquently the dread reality of these never-ending torments. An eternal God suffers, an eternal God dies a most cruel, shameful death. And why! Certainly not to save man from temporal punishment, but to save him from eternal torments.

Again, let him who doubts the existence of an everlasting hell look into his own conscience. Call to mind that secret sin, committed when the darkness and silence of night surrounded you, when only God's all-seeing eye beheld you. Whence came the fear and shame that then overwhelmed you; Did not your conscience torture you with remembrance of hell, of the torments reserved for the wicked?

But someone may ask: Would it not argue cruelty and a want of mercy in God were he to punish the wicked forever? The answer is plain: God has decreed that the rewards destined for the just in heaven, in return for their good lives on earth, should surpass all that the eye has seen, the ear has heard, the heart has conceived. In like manner, has God decreed that the punishments which the wicked have to suffer in hell for their bad lives should surpass all that we can see, all that we can hear, all that we can conceive in our heart. God has decreed that the rewards of the just should last forever, and he has also decreed that the punishments of the wicked shall be everlasting. It is the will of the Lord that, by the everlasting rewards of the just, his infinite mercy should be glorified for all eternity; and it is also his will that, by the everlasting punishments of the wicked, his infinite justice should be made manifest for ever and ever. Let us "think well of the Lord" that is, we must believe that the justice of God is just as great as his mercy. Let him who doubts of hell, of its everlasting punishments, remember what our Lord said of Judas the traitor: "Woe to that man! It were better for him if he had not been born." (Matt, xxvi, 24.) Why? Because he went into hell. Today, hell may seem the greatest folly. He who believes not in hell now, when he can escape it, shall believe in it hereafter, when he can no longer escape it.

It may here be asked, where is hell? It is the common belief of the Catholic Church that God has fixed a certain place for the devils and the reprobates, as appears from several passages of Holy Scripture. St. Jerome proves this doctrine from the book of Numbers (c. xvi), where it is said Dathan and Abiron were cast into hell through a chasm which opened under their feet.

Moses went and told the people to come away from those men, and the people obeyed him. Then Moses said to them: "By this you shall know that God has sent me: if these wicked men die like other men, then do not believe me; but if the earth opens and swallows them, and they go down alive into hell, then you shall know that they are wicked."

No sooner had Moses done speaking, than the earth opened under the feet of Core, Dathan, and Abiron. It drew them in with all they had, and they went down alive into hell. Then the earth closed up over them again. The same thing happened to the cruel king, Theodoric, who lived in Ravenna. At the same time Pope John was living in Rome. The pope went one day to the town where Theodoric was living. When the king heard that the pope was come, he had him arrested and put in prison, where he was soon after killed by Theodoric's order, as was also another good man called Symmachus. Soon after this, as St. Gregory relates, the cruel king, Theodoric, himself died. In the Mediterranean Sea there is a little island called Stromboli, and on this island a great mountain, from the summit of which fire was wont to issue. A holy hermit lived on the island in a small cell. It happened that on the night, when King Theodoric died, the hermit was looking out of his window. He saw three persons, whom he knew to be dead, near the top of the fiery mountain. The three persons were: Theodoric, who had died that night, and Pope John and Symmachus, who had been unjustly killed by Theodoric. Theodoric was between the other two. When they came to the place where the fire was coming out, he saw Theodoric leave the two, and go down into the fiery mountain. So, says St. Gregory, those who had seen the cruel king's injustice saw also his punishment.

In speaking of hell, the inspired writers often use the expression, "go down" "Let death come upon them, and let them go down alive into hell." (Ps. liv, 16.) Hence it is probable, says St. Alphonsus, that hell is in the bowels of the earth.

All this is confirmed by St. Luke when he says: "That rich glutton died, and he was buried in hell" (xvi, 22). He says he was buried, because men are buried under the earth. The rich man called hell a place of torments. (Luke xvi, 28.) And Almighty God has said that he will "turn the wicked into the bowels of the earth." (Ecclus. xvii, 19.) Hence we infer that hell is a fixed place, in the center of the earth.

What are the fallen angels called?

They are called demons, devils, the powers of hell, evil spirits.

The fallen angels differ in rank; they form a kind of hierarchy, and some are worse than others. They are called the princes or angels of darkness, because, in punishment of their pride, they have lost their beauty and brightness, and have been cast into hell the place of horror and darkness. Their prince is sometimes called Lucifer (bearer of light), sometimes Belial (the rebel), sometimes Beelzebub from the chief idol of the Accoronites; sometimes Satan (the great enemy). The fallen angels are also called demons or devils words signifying enemies, calumniators; because they are the implacable enemies of God and man. They are sometimes called evil spirits, because they are obstinate in evil, and hate whatever is good. Our Lord has also called the devil the prince of this world, because he succeeded,

before the coming of Christ, in having himself worshipped as God by the greater part of mankind. Even to this day, Satan is worshipped by pagans and by many other wicked people. He is the prince of the wicked, for he rules and governs them, fills them with his own malice, and renders them his slaves.

The Angels still have the natural knowledge which they were created with, they did not lose their natural powers, or their natural intellect.

Have the fallen angels any power over us?

Yes; they can tempt us to sin.

St. Peter says that “the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Pet. v, 8.) It was this arch-enemy that persuaded Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit; it was he that prevailed on Cain to slay his innocent brother, Abel; it was he that tempted Saul to pierce David with a lance; it was he that stirred up the Jews to deny and crucify Jesus Christ, our Lord; it was he that induced Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Ghost; it was he who urged Nero, Decius, Diocletian, Julian, and other heathen tyrants, to put the Christians to a most cruel death; it is he who inspired the authors of heresies, such as Arius, Martin Luther, and others, to reject the authority of the one true Catholic Church.

In like manner, the devil at the present day still tempts all men, especially the just, and endeavors to make them lose the grace of God. He tempts numberless souls to indifference towards God and their own salvation; he deceives many, by representing to them, in glowing colors, the false, degrading pleasures of this world; he suggests to others the desire of joining certain bad secret societies; he tempts many even to conceal their sins in confession, and to receive holy communion unworthily; others, again, he urges to cheat their neighbor; he allures others to blind their reason by excess in drinking; others, again, he tempts to despair. In a word, the devil leaves nothing untried, in order to make men fall into sin.

The rage, malice, and envy of the devils against man, and their enmity to all good, are implacable. Satan, the chief of the fallen spirits, makes his attacks upon men by putting on all shapes: sometimes by craft, or by snares and stratagems, as the old serpent; sometimes by disguises, transforming himself into an angel of light, and assuming the air of piety; sometimes by open assaults and violence, as the roaring lion.

He studies and observes every one’s character, natural disposition, inclinations, virtues and vices, to find out, and make his attacks on, every one’s weakest point.

The natural subtlety and strength of Satan are exceedingly great, as appears from the perfection of his being, which is purely spiritual, and from examples, when God has suffered him to exert his power in a more remarkable manner. Holy Scripture tells us that the devils hurried the swine into the lake; that they killed the first seven husbands of Sara; that they have slain armies in one night; have often disturbed nature, and stirred up tempests, which struck whole provinces with terror, and ravaged the whole world.

What did not Satan do against holy Job? He killed his cattle and his children. He covered Job himself with ulcers from head to foot. And, in our own day, what did he not do against the saintly Cure of Ars, in France, for the space of thirty years?

Moreover, by clear proofs, it is also manifest that Satan can, by divine permission, enter our bodies, compel, as it were, the human being to stand aside and use our organs himself, and do whatever he pleases with them. But he cannot annihilate the human being, or take from the soul its free will. It is always in the power of the possessed to resist, morally and effectually, the evil intentions of the devil. The possessed person retains his own consciousness, his own intellectual and moral faculties unimpaired, and he never confounds himself with the spirit that possesses him. He always retains the power of internal protest and struggle. Whenever this power is exercised, and there is clearly a struggle, there is no responsibility whatever of attaching to him the crimes which the body, through the possession of the devil, is made to commit. But, unfortunately, it very often happens that this power to protest is not exercised, and the possessed person yields his moral assent to the crimes committed by the demon that possesses him.

Such diabolical possessions have been more or less frequent in different times and places. This is confirmed by the testimony and experience of all ages, and of all nations, even to the remotest Indies. Such facts both the Old and the New Testament evince.

When the angels go through the world to tempt mankind they still suffer the pains of hell. These will follow them wherever they go. They tempt because of their immense hatred for God and His creatures.

Why does God permit the devil to tempt us?

1, To try our fidelity ; 2, to reward us if we resist the temptation.

God permits the devil to tempt us, in order to try our faithfulness in the practice of virtue. It is in great storms that we see whether a young tree has taken root; it is not in time of peace, but in time of war, that we see the courage and valor of a soldier. In like manner, it is not in time of prosperity and sensible devotion, but in time of temptation, that we see the zeal and faithfulness of a true servant of the Lord. "I am ready," says holy David, "and I am not troubled that I keep thy commandments." (Ps. cxviii, 60.) Upon these words St. Ambrose remarks: "As a pilot must be very skillful to steer a ship in a great storm, so, in like manner, we show ourselves skillful if we behave well in time of temptation, being carried away neither by pride in prosperity, nor by want of courage in adversity, but exclaiming with holy David : I am ready, and I am not troubled that I keep thy commandments."

Now, it is for this very reason that God permits us to be tempted, namely, to try us, as he tried his people whom he left surrounded by many enemies, "in order," as Holy Scripture says, "that he might try Israel by them, whether they would hear the commandments of the Lord which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses, or not." (Judg. iii, 4.) Does not St. Paul also tell us that "there must be heresies, that they who are approved may be made manifest?" (1 Cor. xi, 19.) Temptations are like strokes of the hammer, which show the value of the metal. They are the touchstones by which God tries his servants. True friends are found out when put to the test. So, God puts our faithfulness to him on trial. "As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace, so the Lord trieth the hearts by the temptation." (Prov. xvii, 3.) When a man begins to practice virtue, it is difficult to know whether he does so out of true love for virtue, or for some other reason. But let him, like Job, be tempted and assaulted by the devil, and it will soon be known whether he is a faithful servant of the Lord.

God rewards us if we resist the temptation. An earthly monarch rewards his soldiers if they fight valiantly for him. To resist the temptation of abandoning God's service is to fight valiantly for God, who,

according to his promise, never fails to reward us for the least good action. The oftener we resist temptation, the greater will be our reward. The oftener a man becomes drunk, the more he will be confirmed in the vice of drunkenness. In like manner, the oftener we practice a certain virtue, the more our will is confirmed in that virtue; and the more a will is confirmed in virtue, the holier it is in the sight of God; and the holier it is, the greater will be our reward in heaven. God, therefore, shows us greater love, by permitting us to be often tempted, and giving us strength to overcome the temptations, than by delivering us wholly from them; for, were we not to be exposed to temptation, we would lose many degrees of heavenly glory. Therefore, it is said in Holy Scripture: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for, when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him." (James i, 12.)

How can we resist the temptations of the devil?

By watchfulness and prayer, for Christ says : "Watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation." (Matt, xxvi, 41.)

God has given us prayer as the great, infallible means to overcome all temptations. To pray is to ask God to come to our assistance. Now, God has promised to come to our assistance if we ask him to do so. It is in temptation that we need his assistance to overcome it, because, of ourselves, we can do nothing; but, with the assistance of God, we can do all things. Let a temptation, then, be ever so strong, the help which God grants to our prayer to overcome temptation is always stronger. To defeat these temptations, we must be watchful over ourselves to notice the temptations of the devil, and then pray for help to overcome them. He who is watchful over himself and prays to God whenever he is tempted, will always be victorious. Our Savior Jesus Christ teaches us this truth by his words and by his example. He teaches it by his words, when he says: "Watch ye and pray that you enter not into temptation;" that is, that you may not give way to the temptation. He teaches us this truth by his example; because by prayer he prepared himself in the Garden of Olives for all his sufferings. He prayed, not because he needed prayer, but because he wished to teach us by his example to have recourse to prayer in all our temptations. "Which of the just," asks St. John Chrysostom, "did ever fight valiantly without prayer? Which of them ever conquered without prayer?" (Sermo de Mose.) None of the apostles, none of the martyrs, none of the confessors, none of the holy virgins and widows.

Father Segneri relates that a young man named Paccus retired into a wilderness, in order to do penance for his sins. After some years of penance he was so violently assaulted by temptations, that he thought it impossible to resist them any longer. As he was often overcome by them, he began to despair of his salvation; he even thought of taking away his life. He said to himself that, if he must go to hell, it were better to go instantly than to live on thus in sin, and thereby only increase his torments. One day he took a poisonous viper in his hand, and in every possible manner urged it to bite him, but the reptile did not hurt him in the least. "God!" cried Paccus, "there are so many who do not wish to die, and I, who wish so much for death, cannot die!" At this moment he heard a voice saying to him: "Poor wretch! do you suppose you can overcome temptations by your own strength? Pray to God for assistance, and he will help you to overcome them." Encouraged by these words, he began to pray most fervently, and soon after lost all his fear. He ever after led a very edifying life. Those, on the contrary, who do not pray in temptation, are generally overcome by the temptation.

St. Thomas Aquinas asserts "that Adam committed sin, because he neglected to pray when he was tempted." St. Gelasius says the same of the fallen angels: "In vain," says he, "did they receive the grace

of God; they could not persevere, because they did not pray.” (Epist. 5, ad Ep. in P.) St. Macarius tells us that a certain monk, after having been favored with a wonderful rapture and many great graces, fell, by pride, into several grievous sins. A certain rich nobleman gave his estate to the poor, and set his slaves at liberty; yet afterwards fell into pride and many enormous sins. Another, who, in the persecution, had suffered torments with great constancy for the faith, afterwards, intoxicated with self-conceit, gave great scandal by his disorders.

Would to God that all might learn, from these sad examples, that our salvation depends on our perseverance in praying to God for aid to resist temptations, and to bear patiently the sufferings and adversities of this life!

Why does God sometimes allow the devil to injure men in their bodies and in their temporal goods?

To try their virtue, or to punish them for their sins, or for other wise purposes.

Although Satan, with implacable envy and malice, studies to disturb our temporal happiness, and to compass our eternal ruin both by stratagems and open assaults, yet it is certain that he can tempt and assail us only to a certain degree; he can go only the length of his chain, that is, as far as God permits him. This is evident from the history of Job. The devils could not enter into the swine of the Gerasenians without permission. Before Satan was bound, or his power curbed by the triumph of Christ over him, and the spreading of the happy light and influence of the gospel throughout the world, the empire which Satan exercised on earth was much greater than since that time. However, there can be no doubt that, in our own days, the power and influence of Satan over an immense number of men is great, very great; and it will increase in proportion as they approach heathenism and infidelity, and leave the true religion.

However, with regard to the effects of magic and possessions of devils; the Catholic Church says; in the Ritual, that such extraordinary effects are not to be easily supposed; that superstition, credulity, and imposture are to be guarded against; and that natural distempers, such as certain species of madness, extraordinary palsies, epilepsies, or the like, are not to be construed into effects of enchantments or possessions, which are not to be presumed upon ridiculous compacts and signs, nor upon vulgar prejudices and notions of the manner in which such things are done, but must be made apparent by circumstances.

The criteria of demoniac invasion or possession, as laid down by the Catholic Church for the guidance of exorcists, are the following:

1. The understanding of unknown languages.
2. Power of speaking unknown or foreign languages.
3. Knowledge of things passing in distant places.
4. Exhibition of superior physical strength.
5. Suspension of the body in the air during a considerable time, etc.

If the devils could not enter into the swine, without permission from Jesus Christ, it is evident that Satan cannot touch or hurt men, without the same permission. The devils are called, in Holy Scripture, the thieves of God. They are called thieves, says St. Gregory, on account of their great desire to hurt men in body and soul; and they are called the thieves of God, to give us to understand that they receive power from God to hurt us. If God permits the devil to afflict and persecute the just, it is for the purpose of

trying their virtue. Witness holy Job, whom the devil stripped of his health and of all his possessions. But Job bore most patiently all the afflictions which Satan caused him to suffer. "The Lord" he exclaimed, "gave, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done." (Job. i, 21.)

But if God permits the devil to injure the wicked, it is for the purpose of punishing them: "The evil spirit of our Lord," says Holy Scripture, "seized upon Saul." (1 Kings xvi, 23.) Upon these words St. Gregory remarks, that the same spirit is called the spirit of our Lord, and an evil spirit. This spirit is called evil, because he is always bent upon doing injury to men; and he is called the spirit of the Lord, to give us to understand that God made use of him to punish Saul, for, in the same place of Holy Scripture, it is said: "The evil spirit was sent to trouble him."

God may also, for other wise purposes, permit Satan to injure men in their bodies, as is evident from the history of Mrs. Nicola Aubry. In the sixteenth century, it was not enough for Protestants to deny the Real Presence of our dear Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; they committed even the most abominable outrages on his sacred person in this mystery of love. In France particularly, the Calvinists entered the Catholic churches, overturned the altars, trampled the Blessed Sacrament under their feet, drank healths from the consecrated chalices, smeared their shoes with holy oil, defiled the church vestments with ordure, threw the books into the fire, and destroyed the statuary. They assaulted and massacred the Catholic clergy in the very discharge of their sacred functions, with cries of, "Kill the priests," "Kill the monks." In France alone, the Calvinists destroyed 20,000 Catholic churches. They pillaged and demolished monasteries and hospitals. The monks at Chartres were all murdered, with the exception of one, who concealed himself; but, as soon as discovered, he was buried alive. In Dauphiny alone they murdered 255 priests, 112 monks and friars, and burnt 900 towns and villages.

Those were trying times for the Catholics in other countries as well as in France. Although the bishops and priests did all in their power to strengthen their flocks in the faith, yet it required an extraordinary miracle to confirm the faith of many, and confound the impiety of the heretics. This miracle was wrought by Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament at Laon, in France, on the eighth day of February, 1566. It occurred in presence of more than 150,000 people; in presence of all the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of the city, of Protestants and Catholics alike. The account of this stupendous miracle we published a few years ago. It is very interesting and instructive. The title of the little volume is, "Triumph of the Blessed Sacrament; or, The History of Nicola Aubry." It is, indeed, a remarkable fact that, as the devil made use of Luther, an apostate monk, to abolish the Mass and deny the Real Presence, in like manner God made use of his arch-enemy, the devil, to prove the Real Presence. He forced him publicly to profess his firm belief in it, to confound the heretics for their disbelief, and acknowledge himself vanquished by our Lord in the blessed sacrament. For this purpose, God allowed a certain Mme. Nicola Aubry, an innocent person, to become possessed by Beelzebub and twenty nine other evil spirits. The possession took place on the eighth of November, 1565, and lasted until the eighth of February, 1566. To read the torments which the devil made this innocent person endure, is enough to make the hair stand on end. When the Bishop of Laon held the blessed sacrament before the face of the poor possessed woman, and conjured the devil, in the name of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, to depart from this innocent person, the devil felt horribly tormented: he made the poor woman writhe most fearfully. Her limbs cracked, as if every bone in her body were breaking. The fifteen strong men who held her could scarcely keep her back. They staggered from side to side; they were covered with perspiration. Satan tried to escape from the presence of our Lord in the blessed sacrament. The mouth of Nicola was wide open, her tongue hung down below her chin, her face was shockingly swollen and

distorted. Her color changed from yellow to green, and became even grey and blue, so that she no longer looked like a human being. It was rather the face of a hideous, incarnate demon. All present trembled with terror, and turned away their eyes in horror, especially when they heard the wild cry of the demon, which sounded like the loud roar of a wild bull. They fell on their knees, and, with tears in their eyes, began to cry out: "Jesus, have mercy!"

The bishop continued to urge Satan. At last the evil spirit departed, and Nicola fell back senseless into the arms of her keepers. She still, however, remained shockingly distorted. In this state she was shown to the judges and to all the people present. She was rolled up like a ball. The bishop now fell on his knees, in order to give her the Blessed Sacrament as usual. But suddenly the demon returns, wild with rage, endeavors to seize the hand of the bishop, and tries even to grasp the Blessed Sacrament itself. The bishop starts back, Nicola is carried into the air, and the bishop rises from his knees, trembling with terror, and pale as death.

The good bishop takes courage again; he pursues the demon, holding the blessed sacrament in his hand. Satan endeavors to escape, and hurls the keepers to the ground. The people call upon God for aid, and Satan departs once more with a noise which resembles a crash of thunder.

Suddenly he returns again in a fury, but the bishop pursued and urged Satan, holding the blessed sacrament in his hand, till at length the demon, overcome by the power of our Lord's sacred body, went forth amidst smoke and lightning and thunder. Thus was the demon at length expelled forever on Friday afternoon at three o'clock the same day and hour on which our Lord triumphed over hell by his ever-blessed death.

It may appear strange that, although Satan was repeatedly expelled by the presence of our divine Savior in the sacred Host, nevertheless it appeared as if our Savior was forced to yield to Satan, when he again took possession of Nicola's body. Why this struggle between our Lord and Satan, since our divine Savior is his Lord and Master?

It is true that our Lord is the Master of Satan; and yet we read in the Gospel how he permitted the devil to touch him and carry him up to the pinnacle of the temple, and to the top of a high mountain. On these occasions it must be remarked that he suffered himself to be touched by the devil, only, when, and as long as he gave him permission so to do. As soon as our Lord said to him, "Begone, Satan!" he took to flight. In like manner did he permit Satan to take possession of Nicola's body, sometimes even for a considerable time, not only to sanctify this innocent woman, but also to confirm, by these repeated miracles, the Catholics in their faith in his Real Presence in the holy Eucharist, and to convert or confound the Protestants, who denied that Real Presence, and committed so many shocking outrages on his sacred person. For this reason, also, did our Lord force Satan to make a public profession of his faith in the Real Presence, not once only, but on several occasions, and in several places, in presence of thousands of Catholics and Protestants.

Many of those who witnessed the repeated miracles wept for joy, and sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving in honor of God, and of our dear Lord in the blessed sacrament. On all sides were heard the exclamations: "what a great miracle! thank God that I witnessed it" "Who is there now that could doubt of the Real Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the altar?" Many Protestants present also said: "I believe now in the presence of our Lord in the blessed sacrament. I have seen it with my

eyes. I will remain a Calvinist no longer. Accursed be those who have hitherto kept me in error! now I can understand what a good thing is the holy sacrifice of the Mass!"

Here we have an innocent person tormented by the devil in a most frightful manner; yet it is certain that the devil could only torment her to the extent of the permission which he had received from God; but hell is his domain, and there he has full permission from God to torment and strike the damned souls as much as he pleases. This permission is given him, not for a few hours, or months or years, but for all eternity. No human or heavenly power can go to rescue the damned soul from the ferocious barbarity and cruelty of the devil. Her place, like her torment; is eternal.

Let us in this life, by constant watchfulness and prayer, keep out of the power of the devil, I mean, that power which he gains over us by sin, in order that we may not fall into his power in hell.

Can the devil be prevented from exercising his power over creatures ?

Yes; by the prayers and exorcisms of the Church.

Before the coming of our Redeemer mankind was groaning under the tyranny of the devil. He was lord, and even caused himself to be worshipped as god, with incense and with sacrifices, not only of animals, but even of children and human lives. And what return did he make them? He tortured their bodies with the most barbarous cruelty, he blinded their minds, and, by a path of pain and misery, led them down to torment everlasting. It was to overthrow this tyrant, and release mankind from its wretched thralldom, that the Son of God came; that the unfortunate creatures, freed from the darkness of death, rescued from the bondage of their eternal enemy, and enlightened to know the true way to salvation, might serve their real and lawful Master, who loved them as a Father, and, from slaves of Satan, wished to make them his own beloved children. The Prophet Isaias had long ago fore told that our Redeemer should destroy the empire which Satan held over mankind: "And the scepter of their oppressor thou hast overcome." (Isa. ix, 4.) Why does the prophet call Satan oppressor? It is because this heartless master exacts from the poor sinners who become his slaves heavy tribute in the shape of passions, hatreds, disorderly affections, by means of which, while he scourges, he binds them in a still faster servitude.

Our Savior came to release us from the slavery of this deadly foe: but in what manner did he effect this release? By offering his sufferings and death in satisfaction to the divine justice for the punishment due to our sins; by the sacrifice of his life upon the cross, he overthrew the empire of Satan over mankind. "At the moment when our Lord received his cross," said the Blessed Virgin to blessed Mary of Jesus d'Agreda, "Lucifer and his demons lost all strength: they were vanquished and enchained, when Jesus, upon the cross, pronounced these words, 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit' and bowing his head, expired. The ground opened, and the demon, with all his companions, was, in a terrific manner, swallowed up by the bottomless pit of hell, more quickly than a flash of lightning passes through the air. He fell, disarmed and vanquished, and his head (that is, his power) was crushed beneath the feet of my Son and of myself." Now, Jesus Christ left to his Church all the merits that he has obtained for us by his life and death; and the Church applies the merits of our Lord to the souls of men by the sacraments, by holy Mass, by the sign of the cross, by her prayers and blessings; and wherever the blessings of our Lord's death are thus applied, the power of the devil is of no avail. Hence it is that the devil trembles at the sight of all those means of grace. He fears and curses that power which Christ gave to his apostles, and, through them, to all their lawful successors. Christ said to his apostles: "To me is given all power in

heaven and on earth. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." He who bestows all power, excludes none. Christ, therefore, gave to his apostles power to cast out devils from possessed persons, and to prevent the evil spirits from hurting men in their bodies or property: "And calling together the twelve apostles," says St. Luke (ix, 1), "he gave them power and authority over all devils." And the same evangelist tells us, also, that the disciples cast out the devils from possessed persons, at which power they were greatly amazed, and said: "Lord, the devils, also, are subject to us in thy name." (Ibid, x, 17.) In virtue of this power, the Catholic bishops and priests can cast out devils from possessed persons; they can prevent them, by the prayers of the Church, from exercising their powers over creatures, as we have just read in the case of Mrs. Nicola Aubry. This power of expelling demons and of preventing them from hurting creatures is found in the Catholic Church alone, because she alone is the true Church of Christ. Were any Protestant minister to attempt to exercise power over the devil, he would be laughed at by the evil spirit, as all those know who have read the account of Nicola Aubry's possession. As the strange circumstance of her possession became known everywhere, several Calvinist preachers came with their followers, to "expose the popish cheat," as they called it. No sooner had they entered than the devil saluted them; he called them by name, and told them that they had come in obedience to his inspiration. One of the preachers took his Protestant prayer-book, and began to read it with a very solemn face. The devil laughed at him, and, assuming a most comical air, said: (Ho! ho! my good friend, do you intend to expel me with your prayers and hymns? Do you think that they will cause me any pain? Don t you know that they are mine? I helped to compose them!"

"I will expel thee in the name of God," said the preacher, solemnly.

"You!" said the devil, mockingly. "You will not expel me, either in the name of God, or in the name of the devil. Did you ever hear, then, of one devil driving out another?"

"I am not a devil," said the preacher, angrily; "I am a servant of Christ."

"A servant of Christ, indeed!" said Satan, with a sneer. "What! I tell you you are worse than I am. I believe, and you do not want to believe. Do you suppose that you can expel me from the body of this miserable wretch? Ha! go first and expel all the devils that are in your own heart!"

The preacher took his leave, somewhat discomfited. On going away, he said, turning up the whites of his eyes, "Lord! I pray thee, assist this poor creature!"

"And I pray Lucifer," cried the spirit, "that he may never leave you, but may always keep you firmly in his power, as he does now. Go about your business. You are all mine, and I am your master."