

# DIABOLIC WARS

by

*H.H. Pope Shenouda III*



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## HISTORY OF THIS BOOK

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Many are the lectures which I delivered on "Spiritual Wars". This part about "Diabolic Wars" is based on 9 lectures delivered on the following dates:

- 1 - 2 Two lectures on "Diabolic Wars" delivered on Friday 27 March 1970, and 10 April 1970.
- 3 - 5 Three lectures which are contemplations on the words, "Deliver us from the intrigues of the adversary". These are part of my contemplations on the eleventh hour prayer delivered on Friday 4 August 1972, 11 August 1972, and 18 August 1972.
- 6 A lecture on the war of the devil, delivered in Lent on Friday evening 2 March 1973 and entitled, "We begin and he begins with us".
- 7 A lecture entitled, "Get thee hence, O, Satan", delivered in Lent of the year 1974.
- 8 A lecture on "spiritual Wars" delivered on the evening of Friday 7 March 1980.
- 9 Selections from some lectures on "The life of purity", "War of nomenclatures", and "The devil modifies his plans".

# CHAPTER 1

## THE NATURE OF DIABOLIC WARS

**S**piritual wars are allowed by God for our benefit... and for the crowns gained through them as one of the saints said,

"None shall be crowned except the one who conquers, and none shall conquer except the one who fights."

God intends these wars to test the freedom of our will, and to give us the opportunity to deserve the riches of the heavens if we conquer... As for the devil, it is his nature to resist God's kingdom and fight those who seek it. He fights God through His children and accuses them as in the case of Job the just (Job 1,2). He envies those who lead a life of righteousness, that they may not gain the divine blessing which he himself was deprived of.

**Diabolic wars fight all; no one escapes from them.**

When we speak of these wars, we mean the wars waged by the devil and all his forces and supporters.

Since the days of Adam and Eve and their son Cain the devil has been fighting, trying his best to throw men under the condemnation of eternal death. He overthrew prophets, apostles, and persons who had the Spirit of the Lord such as David and Samson who repented, and King Saul whom God refused and the Spirit of the Lord departed from, " *and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him.*"(1 Sam. 16:14).

**So, do not think that diabolic wars are directed only at beginners or sinners.**

Satan fights all, including those who may be growing in grace, he fights them even more. Thus, everyone must be on guard and not think themselves above certain wars. Let us remember how David the prophet was fought by adultery and fell into that sin in spite of having the Spirit of the Lord and in spite of having been the anointed of the Lord... the devil seeks any prey.

St. Peter described him using some grave words, " ... *your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*"(1 Pet 5:8).He wanders about continually to catch his prey. When the Lord asked him (in the story of Job), "From where do you come?" , he answered plainly, "*from going to and fro on the earth and from walking up and down on it*" (Job 1:7, 2:2). Of course the purpose of this wandering is seeking any prey to overthrow.

**The devil does not get desperate however strong the person whom he fights is.**

It is even said of sin, "*For she has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men.*" (Prov 7:26). The devil did not even hesitate to fight the twelve disciples of Christ. The Lord spoke to St. Peter the apostle about this, "*Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat , But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail* " (Luke 22:31, 32 ). We also remember Elijah, the great prophet whom God lifted to the heavens, of whom St. James the apostle said, "*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours* " (James 5:17)

The devil even dared to tempt the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

He offered Him three temptations on the mount (Matt. 4). He was not dissuaded by what he knew about Christ or by the divine revelations which preceded this at the time of His baptism (Matt. 3:13-17); he fought Him throughout the forty days (Mark 1:13, Luke 4:2).

Thus, it was said that the Lord Jesus Christ, *"Was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb. 4:15), and, *"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."* (Heb. 2:18).

Indeed, the temptation of Christ by Satan is a comfort for us in all our trials... If a temptation befalls you, do not be troubled, for Christ has been tempted before, and as He has conquered, you will conquer as well.

**Diabolic wars are aimed against God Himself, against His kingdom, and against us who are His blessed temples.**

The devil wants to resist God's Kingdom by every means and rejoices when he is able to overthrow *"if possible, even the elect."* (Matt 24:24).

Just as *"there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* (Luke 15:10), undoubtedly the devils rejoice when one righteous person falls and delight over anyone who submits to them.

St. Paul the apostle explains these spiritual wars, *"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the*

*wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."* (Eph. 6:11, 12).

He explained that these spiritual wars need spiritual weapons to resist them, which the apostle mentioned in the same chapter in detail. They require Gods' help, as He says, "*without Me you can do nothing.*" (John 15:5) . In these spiritual wars, how nice it would be to remember the words of David the prophet, "*... the battle is the Lord's*" (1 Sam 17:47)

**Spiritual wars are continuous; they may vary but never end.**

As long as you are in the flesh, you are subject to these wars which continue with you until death. Thus, St. Peter the apostle says, "*.... conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*"(1 Pet 1:17). By "fear" he does not mean the dread of devils, but he means the kind of fear which leads to precaution and always being on guard.

For individuals, the war continues till death, but as for the world, the war continues for ever until the end of all ages. Even when the devil is loosed out from his prison, he shall go out to deceive the nations (Rev. 20:7,8). "*In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith*" (1 Tim. 4:1), and, "*perilous times shall come*" (2 Tim. 3:1).

Before the coming of Christ, there shall come a falling away first (2 Thess. 2:3), and the devil will do his best and will come

down to earth, " *having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.*" (Rev 12:12).

**This continuing war of the devil may become more severe during holy times.**

The devil gets very annoyed when we start any spiritual work and uses all his means lest the prey should escape him. Thus, when we start spiritual work, he starts using his wars, devices, and many obstacles.

**We start spiritual work, and he begins resistance.**

He is not comfortable as long as we have any relationship with God, knowing that this endangers his kingdom. Here are some wonderful words from "The Paradise of the Fathers", "When the bell rings in the middle of night for prayers, **it does not only awake the monks to pray but the devils are also aroused to fight monks and prevent them from praying...**" And thus, St. Evagrius said,

"When you begin a holy prayer, be ready for whatever may befall you."

Whenever we start spiritual practices, whether prayers, contemplation, hymns, spiritual reading, or kneeling down in worship, the devil does not stand tied up or merely watching but he also works and he has certain wars with which he fights. True indeed are the words of the Book of Joshua the Son of Sirach,

**"My son, if you come to serve your God, be ready for all temptations." (Sirach 2:1)**

This verse is a part of a chapter recited on the ordination of a new monk. It is also included in the reading of the third hour of Tuesday of the passion week. Of course the devil gets ready to fight those who get ready to resist him. Thus, do not be astonished at the wars which accompany spiritual work. Never let such wars make you turn back... but be vigorously steady not withstanding any trouble you undergo, remembering the words of St. Paul the apostle, "*... be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*" (1 Cor 15:58).

**We start the struggle, and he starts fighting. We start spiritual matters, and he starts resistance.**

An example of this is that the devil gets annoyed at fasting because through it "*... I discipline my body and bring it into subjection*" (1 Cor 9:27), so that your soul may rise and attain God... the devil does not accept this. He gets annoyed at lent in particular, because people are very devout during it, and it reminds the devil also of the fasting of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of his own defeat (Matt. 4). Thus, the devil struggles to hinder this fasting or raises problems during it so that people may be engaged in those problems and neglect spiritual work.

Hence, some find a relation between this fast and problems and trails.

**Undoubtedly, spiritual work stirs up the envy of devils...**

The devil envies a spiritual person for his attachment to God which he is deprived of. He envies man because though he is earthy and has flesh, he tries to make his soul rise high and be elevated, while the devil in spite of being a spirit (Matt. 12:45), is far away from God and is an unclean spirit (Mark 1:27).

From the beginning the devil envied Adam and Eve, making them fall in sin and into the condemnation of death. Thus, we say in the Divine Liturgy, "And death which entered into the world through the envy of Satan".

### **The devil envies only those who are successful in their spiritual work.**

He envies those who are near to God and favoured by Him. He envies the penitents for the zeal of their repentance and the worshippers in their deep attachment. He envies the humble, the meek and the pure-hearted and fights all of them. But what about those who are under his domination and under the domination of sin, or who are languid in their spiritual life? Why would he fight them? He is satisfied with their condition or puts them under his watch or leads them into what is worse.

### **Here we mention three main kinds of spiritual wars:**

- a) the person whom the devil fights lightly or heavily.
- b) the person fought by his own desires, where the devil might have given the starting point and left this poor prey to be fought by his inner corruption, or by the habits dominating him. Someone might be fought by the body or by his instincts, another by his own self or his own thoughts.

c) the person fought by false brethren, by wicked people or evil surroundings which we call "supporters of the devil" or "the devil's powers".

Thus, the church teaches us to say at the end of the thanksgiving prayer, "All envy, all temptation, all works of Satan, all intrigues of the wicked, and the rising up of enemies, visible and invisible, cast them away from us, and from all your people..."

**There is another kind of these wars which we may call the test, or trial.**

**An example of this kind is given in the Holy Bible,** *"Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him ..Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love ..and offer him there as a burnt offering .."*(Gen 22:2). Here, God was not fighting our father Abraham, God forbid... but He was testing his heart to know the depth of his love and his obedience to Him... and our father Abraham succeeded in this test.

**The saint and the sinner are both liable to be fought; but what is the difference between them?**

The main difference is that a saint is exposed to external war only, while his inner self is pure. He does not accept this external war, but rather refuses it and resists with all his power in order to overcome it.

On the other hand, a sinner or a wicked person may be exposed to a double war both external and internal. He is exposed to the

devil's temptations from the outside and is fought internally from the lusts of his own heart and mind. Thus, he yields to the devil opening his interior gates for him, welcoming and accepting his thoughts and suggestions. Even if he still has some conscience to resist, it will be a weak resistance which will not continue long nor will it seriously repel the thoughts of the outer enemy.

When saints are fought, their power is revealed and they conquer; but sinners are defeated.

**However, God may sometimes allow that saints be defeated - temporarily - for their own benefit.**

For a person who always conquers, may be fought by pride and may think highly of himself! Thus God sometimes permits that saints be conquered so as to make them feel humility of heart and be humbled. Besides, this would make them realize the enemy's power and severity in his wars so they would have compassion towards their brothers who are exposed to such wars. As St. Paul the apostle says ,

*"Remember the prisoners as if chained with them; those who are mistreated; since you yourselves are in the body also."* (Heb 13:3).

A person who does not experience diabolic wars, may condemn or despise those who fall, but one who suffers and gets weary is kind and compassionate to those who fall, and prays for their salvation as the apostle says, "*knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.*"(1 Pet

5:9)... Indeed, how frightful are the words of Revelation about the beast,

*"It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them..."* (Rev 13:7)

And how frightful is what follows *"... And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation ,All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* (Rev. 13:7,8).

However, lest some should despair, it is stated that those who shall worship him are those whose names are not written in the book of life since the establishment of the world...

That is the sons of perdition.... though they are undoubtedly abundant, a matter which shows the severity of the wars of the devil and his powers. We are comforted in this matter by the statement that the beast and the devil were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 20:10).

**Yet, we mention all this so that we may be cautious.**

Since our enemy is so fierce, let us then hearken to the words of the apostle, *"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise , redeeming the time, because the days are evil."* (Eph. 5:15,16).

The victories of the devil do not frighten us but make us circumspect and cautious. They make us not depend on ourselves but:

**In our wars, we must cleave to the Lord for help and triumph.**

He fights the devil in us, and conquers the world in us. Does He not say, *"... be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33). Yes, He conquered the world when He was tempted by the devil, and He still conquers and will conquer the world in all ages as long as the devil is fighting us. So, *"Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ ..."* (2 Cor 2:14)

He conquered the devil in our human nature for He has sanctified and blessed it giving it the spirit of victory. So, we address Him in the Liturgy of St. Gregory, "You have blessed my nature in You". The devil had previously conquered this human nature, but the Lord Jesus Christ has restored to it its Divine Image and its dignity before the devils when He conquered the devil while being in this nature.

**Thus, the devil no longer considers this nature his game, which he can overcome whenever he wants; for since he was been defeated by it, he began to fear it.**

The Lord has saved us from the spirit of failure and given us power to support us against the wars of the devil. We now have hope that Christ will conquer the devil in us when St. Paul says, *"... Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith "* (Eph 3:17)

Thus, we do not get troubled by the diabolic wars as long as the hand of the Lord is with us during them, fighting on our behalf and conquering.

**God does not repel diabolic wars for us but gives us victory over them.**

He fights on our behalf, conquers the devils and then gives us crowns because we yield our wills to Him while He is fighting devils for us.

The above is only a simple introduction from which we will proceed to speak about the devil and his craftiness.



# CHAPTER 2

## THE DEVIL'S ATTRIBUTES IN HIS WARS

**W**e ought to know the attributes of our enemy and the manner in which he fights in order to know how to fight him.

What then are the attributes of the devil? How does he fight? Does he have a constant manner of fighting, or does he change his methods according to the circumstances? This is the subject which we want to examine so that we may resist him as St. Paul the apostle says, "*lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.*" (2 Cor 2:11)

According to the Holy Bible, we know the following about the devil:

### **1. He is an unceasing fighter:**

Since his fall, the devil's main concern has been to fight and combat. He has always been a fighter, even before overthrowing our forefathers Adam and Eve he overthrew multitudes of heavenly angels who followed him and became his various powers.

**Since then, it has become his hobby to overthrow others.**

He began to fight all, and as he overthrew some of the angelical Cherubim, principalities, dominions, and powers, we saw him fight God's prophets, apostles, and anointed. He also fights the secluded hermits, anchorites and monks and anyone who loves God. He fights whoever he knows to be in good condition or living in righteousness.

He is called the opponent and resistant because he always resists God's kingdom and opposes His will. He is also called the dragon, the old serpent, Satan and the devil (Rev.12:9); and before the crucifixion he was given the name " *the ruler of this world* " (John 14:30)

**He never stops fighting, never tires nor takes a rest.**

He always, "*walks about like a roaring lion* " (1 Pet 5:8). In the story of Job, he told God twice that he was busy, "*From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it.*" (Job 1:7, 2:2). He watches his victims continuously and throws his seeds everywhere. Wherever the Lord plants wheat, he comes and plants tares, "*but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way.*" (Matt 13:25).

**Not only does he fight men, but he even fights even angels.**

He contended with the Archangel Michael disputing over the body of Moses the prophet (Jude 9), and resisted one of the angels of the Lord who tried to save Joshua the high priest from him (Zech. 3:1,2). He also resisted the angel whom the Lord sent to Daniel the prophet for 21 days until the Archangel Michael interfered to help him (Dan. 10:12,13). We find what is more amazing in the Divine Revelation,

***"And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon ... and his angels "* (Rev 12:7).**

He fights on earth and in the heavens, and although all his wars end in his destruction and defeat, he cannot stop fighting because this has become a part of his nature.

Another attribute of the devil is that:

## **2. He is powerful:**

That is because he is one of the angels, "*Who excel in strength*" according to the description of the psalmist in (Ps. 103:20).

**As an angel, he lost his purity, but did not lose his powerful nature.**

Thus, the apostle described him as "*a roaring lion*" (1 Pet. 5:8); and in the story of Job, he "*struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.*" (Job 2:7) He could also raise a violent wind which smote the corners of Job's house and it fell upon the young men and they died (Job 1:19). Many spiritual matters prove his power, among these are the following:

✚ **He was able to mislead the whole world in the days of the flood.**

Only one family was saved, that is the family of our father Noah (Gen. 6). God found that the only solution to cleanse the earth from corruption was to destroy every living being from the face of the earth.

✠ **The same is said of Sodom.**

God did not find even 10 righteous persons for whose sake he would have had mercy on that city (Gen.18:32). He found only the family of Lot (4 people), one of whom was Lot's wife who perished outside the city. Lot's two daughters sinned after leaving Sodom, and Lot himself, "*dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds*" (2 Pet 2:8)

✠ **The power of the devil appears also in beguiling the whole world into paganism.**

How could he lead the whole world, except one nation, into paganism in the old times! It is a dangerous matter. Even that one nation fell into the worship of idols. When Moses the prophet was on the mountain his people made for themselves a molded calf and offered burnt offerings to it saying, "*This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!*" (Ex.32:1 - 6).

In the days of Elijah the prophet during the reign of Ahab the king, there were among Gods' people 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the groves. This means that there were 850 false prophets who ate at queen Jezebel's table (1 Kin.18:19). The Books of Kings and Chronicles tell us that many of the kings of Judah and Israel fell into the worship of idols.

✠ **The power of the devil appears also in overthrowing Solomon the wise into the worship of idols.**

Solomon, the wisest man on earth, who was granted wisdom from God Himself (1 Kin. 3:12), to whom God appeared twice

(1 Kin. 3:5, 9:2) is said in the Holy Bible to have become a worshipper of idols, *"For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites..."* (1 Kin. 11:4-8).

Indeed, what a striking and dangerous tragedy which shows us the extent of the devil's power.

✠ **Among the proofs of the devil's power is what he will do in the last days.**

That is when, *"... Satan will be released from his prison ,and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth ..."* (Rev. 20:7,8). He shall even deceive the elect, if possible, through the false christs and prophets whom he will send with great signs and wonders (Matt. 24:24).

The danger of his violent work throughout that hard time is expressed by the Lord, *"... unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened."* (Matt 24:22).

In those days, the devil will also send the anti-Christ, the man of sin who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, *"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders ,and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish "* (2 Thess. 2:9,10).

**As a result of the devils' power, there will come a falling away first.**

This will take place before the coming of Christ (2 Thes. 2:3). But we thank God that those hard days will be shortened and the wicked anti-christ will be consumed with the spirit of the mouth of the Lord and be destroyed with the brightness of His coming (2 Thes. 2:8).

**Among the other examples of the devil's power are the following:**

He could speak through a great apostle like St. Peter. Thus, the Lord rebuked him, "*Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me* " (Matt. 16:22, 23).

He also sifted the twelve apostles, so the Lord prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:21, 32).

He overthrew men of valor like David and Samson. He destroyed the prophet Balaam, and ruined one of St. Paul's disciples i.e. Demas... all his victims are strong, "*All who were slain by her were strong men.*" (Prov 7:26). The words of David the prophet are true indeed, "*How the mighty have fallen, And the weapons of war perished!*" (2 Sam 1:27).

**Another example of his power is throwing down many people.**

Some people needed that the devil be cast out from them, of whom it was said that they had evil spirits, and about whom the Lord said to His disciples, "*Cast out devils* " (Matt. 10:8). One

of these people had "Legion" (Mark. 5:9), and "*neither could any man tame him*". At that time, the disciples of the Lord were unable to cast out some of these devils, so the Lord said to them, "*...This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting.*" (Mark 9:29).

**Perhaps because of this power of the devil, God bound him a thousand years.**

*"...and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while."* (Rev 20:2,3).

This talk about the power of the devil should not make you fear him!! No.

**Though the devil is powerful, God is more powerful than him.**

Not only did God subdue the devil for us but He let many of the fathers conquer him and the devil even feared them. We'll return to this point in due time if God wills.

Another important aspect of the devil's character as our opponent is:

### **3. He is experienced in fighting and knows our nature:**

The devil has been fighting man for more than seven thousand years, since Adam... imagine what experience he has gained

from his fight with humanity. Undoubtedly, he is the creature most capable of understanding the human soul and how to fight it. He has examined the human soul very well and knows the strong and weak points in it, as well as the way to fight it.

### **The devil is the greatest psychologist and psychoanalyst.**

Psychology to him is not mere theories but an experience on the practical and scientific levels and on a great scale which includes humanity as a whole. Thus, he knows when he should fight, how to fight, and when to wait. He knows the gates to the mind and to the heart.

Other qualities which appear in the devil's wars are:

#### **4. He is intelligent and resourceful:**

He is called, "*the old serpent*" (Rev. 20:2, 12:9), and the Holy Bible says that "*Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field* " (Gen 3:1). He is intelligent and wise in evil, and the Bible requires us to be, "*wise as serpents*" (Matt. 10:16). The wisdom of the devil is all mischief, malice and subtlety.

The devil's intelligence appears in that he changes his plans and methods according to the circumstances. Among his dangerous wiles are: lying, deceit, and beguilement which he weaves so intelligently that the person fought cannot be aware of it. He may also introduce sin disguised as virtue.. and so on.

How abundant are the wiles of the devil! We shall allocate for them a special chapter in this book, which may be its main chapter.

Among the other attributes of the devil is the following:

### **5. He is a liar:**

He lied when he said to our forefathers Adam and Eve, *"You will not surely die."* And, *"you will be like God ..."*(Gen. 3:4,5). Lying is a distinctive characteristic of the devil; so the Lord said about him, *"He is a liar and the father of it."* (John 8:44). It was said so that we might not believe or be deceived by anything said by the devil. The lies of the devil are not only the words which he utters, but there is also something far more dangerous:

**There are the false prophets and false christs whom he sends.**

The Lord warns us against them saying, *"Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!'" do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*" (Matt 24:23,24). Of course, the signs and wonders which they will give are from the devil as it is said of the anti-christ, *"The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,"* (2 Thess. 2:9).

**An example is the devil's speaking through the mouths of the false prophets.**

He says about persuading King Ahab to make him perish, "*I will persuade him.....I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.*" (1 Kin 22:21,22). Just as the Holy Spirit speaks through the mouths of the holy prophets, so the devil speaks through the false prophets.

**The devil also tells his lies in false dreams and visions.**

How abundant are the wars faced by the monks through such false dreams and visions. Some of these are included in "The Paradise of the Fathers". An example of this is the appearance of the devil to a monk saying: "I am the angel Gabriel. The Lord sent me to you". But the monk replied humbly, I am a sinner; I don't deserve to see an angel. Perhaps you are sent to another one and you missed the way." The lie was revealed and the devil departed and disappeared.

Another example is his appearance to a monk saying to him, "I am Christ. Worship me." The monk said in his heart, "I worship my Lord Christ everyday. Why then does he ask me to do so?" In this way, the wile and the lie were discovered; the monk rebuked him and he departed.

How abundant also are the false dreams, by which the devil misleads people making them think that the dreams are from God! St. Paul the apostle said of these false visions of the devil,

*" For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."*  
(2 Cor 11:14).

In the story of father Galion the anchorite, the devils appeared to him in the form of roaming fathers wishing him to join them. He did not discover that they were devils except when they led him astray in the wilderness, mocking and leaving him scornfully. However, God's mercy saved him due to his devoutness, purity of heart and his previous toil.

**The lies of the devil appear also in the words of magicians and diviners... etc.**

Thus, the Lord commanded, "*you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you.*" (Deut. 18:9-12). Perhaps this verse reveals to us another thing :

**The falsehood of the devil in consulting spirits of the dead and necromancy.**

In such meetings, he may pretend to be the spirit of a certain person, giving those present some deceiving information which he knows about that person and his family. If they believe him, he begins to tell them gradually things to mislead them... all of which is falsehood and feigning of the devil to deceive people.

**Among his lies also is what he says through the mouths of astrologers and those who claim the knowledge of the unknown:**

Whether through astrology, palmistry, geomancy, reading coffee-cups, or fortune-telling by various ways and methods.

It is theologically evident that no one but God alone knows the unknown. So, whoever claims knowledge of the unknown is untrue.

**All the temptations of the devil are kinds of falsehood:**

He makes man imagine some happiness to be gained from sin, whether it be pleasure, authority, benefit, dignity or glory.. and when one fails, one discovers that all the temptations of the devil are merely a vanishing mirage and falsehood. This is what he did with Adam and Eve making them imagine that they would be like God; and making Solomon imagine that he would be happy with the abundant joys and luxury surrounding him, but Solomon found that all was vanity and vexation of spirit (Ecc. 2).

It is always the method of the devil, that he adorns the way of sin, and gives it beautiful qualities to tempt whoever falls in his nets. Yet, all his ornaments are falsehoods through which he hides the ugliness of sin and its evil results.

**The day-dreams which he offers to his victims are all falsehoods as well.**

He offers them these dreams as a kind of pleasure which would drug them against positive work. Thus, they live through these

dreams in false imagination, building palaces of sand, imagining glories, pleasures and joys. Then, they awake and find nothing of all this but that the devil has wasted their time, detained them from useful work and given them false comfort.

**Among the lying schemes of the devil is deluding the person who commits suicide into thinking that death will relieve him from his troubles.**

He concentrates on the point that there is no use in this life, and there is no solution for the person's problems but death, the only solution by which he can get rid of all his troubles and have comfort. When the person believes him and kills himself, he finds no rest but finds himself in hell, in weariness and pain, inevitable and incomparable with any worldly troubles. He discovers then that death does not put an end to his troubled life but is the beginning of a more troublesome one. The devil has deceived him through lies, misled him and destroyed him.

**Almost all sins are hidden behind one of the devil's lies.**

The devil suggests to the thief that no one will see him or discover his theft. He suggests the same thing to the smuggler, the briber and the fraudulent. In all this, the devil lies because God sees, and everything is revealed before him even though the human eye cannot see.

He suggests to the murderer that the victim deserved to be killed and that his life was a mistake which needed to be corrected or that murder washes out shame which stains his honor or that it comforts the soul of a deceased relative.

**Perhaps atheism is the greatest falsehood offered by the devil to humanity.**

He lied when he suggested to the existentialists that God's existence hinders their own existence; and when he suggested to the Marxists that God lives in a high tower and does not care for the human society letting the oppressor oppress and the rich enslave the poor!

Another attribute of the devil is:

#### **6. He is insistent:**

He is very insistent, never getting weary. He may offer a certain thought many, many times and continues to offer it even though it is refused by people.

**A person may yield and submit due to the continuous pressure and insistence.**

It is stated in "The Paradise of the Fathers" that the devil fought one of the monks with one sin for 50 years without ceasing, getting desperate or getting weary.

Even when he was fighting the Lord Jesus Christ, he did not cease after his failure in the first, second, and third temptation. Though the Lord rebuked him and he departed, it was not for ever as St. Luke the Evangelist says, *"Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time."* (Luke 4:13). The term "for a season" means

that he returned to tempt him another time and many more times.

**The devil never gets desperate due to any failure, and never gets ashamed but always returns!**

When he failed in the first temptation of Job, he demanded again to tempt him harder; and when he failed in all his temptations to the Lord Jesus Christ, he came to Him when He was on the cross and said, "*If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*" (Matt 27:40).

**The devil, insisting to overthrow people, does not acknowledge any obstacles.**

He does not care that Adam and Eve are created after the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1).

He does not care that David is the anointed of the Lord, nor that Solomon is the wisest man on all earth, nor that Peter the apostle is very enthusiastic for Christ, nor that Joshua is the high priest (Zec. 3), nor that Aaron is the chief priest (Ex. 32), and Samson a nazirite of the Lord "*and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him*" (Judg. 13). He does not care about the positions or spirituality of people, but strikes whatever the result may be. Since he dared to tempt Christ the Lord of Glory, would he not dare to tempt mortals?

**He casts his poisons every now and then on everyone and perhaps he who does not perish by it today, perishes the next day, next year or even after 20 years.**

The devil is persistent, active, importunate, and persevering. He is not disheartened by failure nor does he get desperate due to the high spirituality of people. He proceeds in his plan to destroy God's kingdom, and to mislead even the elect. If he cannot defile someone's body, he defiles his thoughts at least, and whoever refuses his attacks on their spirituality, is given at least a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:7). If he cannot overthrow God's children, he at least accuses them, thus, he is called:

## **7. The accuser:**

In Revelation, he is said to be, "*... the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night ..*" (Rev12:10)

**He accuses saints, claiming that he did not have the opportunity to fight them!**

**Or that the opportunity which he did have was not sufficient!**

Formerly, he stood before God to accuse Job claiming that he did not have the opportunity to fight him. He said to God, "*Have You not made a hedge around him ....You have blessed the work of his hands ...But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!*" (Job 1:10,11).

God faced the devil revealing to him the cruelty and falsehood of his accusation and said to him about Job, "*still he holds fast to his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to destroy him without cause.*" (Job 2:3). However, the devil

continued to accuse him a second time asking for a wider chance and for permission to smite Job with sore boils (Job 2:7).

It is amazing that the devil performs whatever he wants and still complains!

He complains in spite of his numerous talents.

### **8. He has numerous talents:**

He has numerous far-extending abilities. He knows and masters many things.

**God did not withdraw from him the talents granted to him while he was an angel.**

His knowledge is very wide, in every field. He even knows the verses of the Bible very well and uses them in fighting **people such as theologians**. In the temptation on the mount, he used the Holy Bible in his own way (Matt. 4:6). He is even the author of all heresies and heterodoxies. He put them in the minds of heretics and offered them wrong concepts for the verses of the Bible. True are the words of St. Athanasius the apostolic, "Our enemy is not the Arians but the devil."

The devil **knows poetry**, and many poets speak of the devil of poetry which inspires them with ideas. It is not strange then that one of the spiritualists says that he has fetched the spirit of a famous poet and heard from him a poem in his usual style. It

is probable that the devil interfered and dictated the poem to the mediator, in the same style!

**The devil also knows music, art, carving, drawing and songs.**

He can inspire those who are concerned with amusement with whatever they need in their arts to entice people, overthrow them or lead them astray from their spiritual course.

**The devil is considered among the distinguished psychologists**, and even at the head of them due to his practical experience. As this experience helps him in his wars, his wars add also to his experience and his knowledge. As the devil is among the psychologists, he is also among the spiritualists because he is a spirit and knows things concerning spirits more than human beings do.

**However, the knowledge of the devil serves his own purposes.**

For pure knowledge is one thing, and using it to fulfil an objective is another thing. The purpose of the devil is known, it is to resist God and His Kingdom. So, he uses all his knowledge to realize this diabolic aim.

Another attribute of the devil is:

## **9. He is cruel:**

He works with all cruelty, and without mercy.

### **His cruelty is very evident in the story of Job the just.**

He also led many to perdition and loss, such as those who were destroyed by the flood, and by the fires of Sodom, and those who were swallowed up alive by the earth (Num. 16).

**His cruelty is also evident in the cases of those who became lunatic and insane** on his account, such as the mad man of the country of Gadarenes who, *" had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs... and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness."*(Luke 8:26-29); and, *"... he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones."*(Mark 5:5). There are many others resembling him.

### **His cruelty appears also in fighting saints and in frightful scenes.**

When fighting St. Anthony the Great, he used to appear in very terrible forms, sometimes in the form of fearful beasts crying around him in horrible voices. Once he struck the saint hard with very painful blows leaving him half dead. Similarly, whoever reads the story of St. Keriakos, the roaming anchorite, will find other examples which resemble or surpass this kind of war.

## **He is cruel in the wars, calamities and crimes which he instigates in the world.**

The results of all this are known, yet the devil is pleased with all the calamities of the world and counts this as a victory for himself. Besides destroying souls and minds, spreading contentions, causing disruption and dispersion, he is a destructive factor that destroys unceasingly and violently and is happy about the destruction he spreads.

Believe me, if we read about the cruelty of the devil in his terrifying wars against saints, we would say that we've never been fought by the devil because our present wars are trifles when compared to theirs.

What is amazing about the devil's cruelty is that he pretends sometimes to be kind, but...

## **10 . He is malicious in his pretended kindness:**

His kind words are a malignant means to overthrow people.

He "shows sympathy" for you when you fast and calls you to eat, for your own health! He warns you against diseases and weakness! He says to you, "Beware lest you should kill your body which is a talent with which you may glorify God. Harken to the apostle saying, *"For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it...."* (Eph 5:29).

He "sympathises" with you when you become spiritually active and when you keep awake in prayers, reading and kneeling

down in worship (Metania) and calls you kindly to go to sleep and have rest.

**He is so 'kind' that he is anxious about you, fears that you may fall into 'extravagance' and calls you to limit your struggling.**

When you are in deep spiritual practices, he says to you, "there is no need for all this, the fathers teach us that the medium way has saved many...". Accordingly he says, "Beware of extravagance lest the devil should strike you with a right blow which is harder, and lest you should fall in vain glory which is the worst evil of all vices." He even proceeds to say, Undoubtedly, this extravagance in struggling is the work of the devil and he does not intend any good for you! Hearken to the words of the Holy Bible, "*Do not be overly righteous, Nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself?*" (Eccl 7:16).

**The 'kind-hearted' devil pities you when you weep for your sins...**

He says to you, "Why do you weep and live in sadness, this is not the way of God... Did not God forgive your sins and wipe them out with His Blood? Why then do you weep for them? Do you want to keep weeping till you destroy your nerves and your soul and be shown up before people? Did not the Holy Bible say, "*Rejoice in the Lord always...*" (Phil. 4:4). He goes on pressing till you lose the humility of heart, lose the tears of repentance and cool down.

Thus, it becomes easy for you to sin and perhaps you return to sinning. Of course, he makes you forget the words of the Bible,

*"... by the sadness of the countenance, the heart is made better." (Ecc. 7:3).*

**The 'kind-hearted' devil justifies your mistakes for you so that your conscience may not be weary.**

He prevents you from rebuking yourself, having regard for your feelings! He is 'compassionate' for you lest you should fall into sorrow and despair! Thus, in all your mistakes he offers you various excuses and justifications advising you, "Do not say of everything, 'that it is wrong' , and do not rebuke yourself exceedingly or this will lead you into suspicions. Indeed, this is wrong, but you did not mean it. Your intentions are good and they intercede for you and God looks into intentions... It is wrong, but what could you have done? The circumstances were pressing and believe me, if I had been in your place I would have done nothing else. God does not require from you that which is beyond your ability; so do not be distressed.. "

By justifying your mistakes, he puts your conscience at ease, so that you are able to swallow a camel, He gets you away from repentance, from caution and from being on guard and from honesty in the little things.

The 'kindness' of the devil is not charity, but a means of overthrowing people. So beware of him, do not listen to him, be firm with yourself and behave cautiously. Be sure that the devil is dishonest in all his wars against you; all his pieces of advice are not faithful even though they may have a good appearance. He wants nothing but your perdition.

Another attribute of the devil is:

### **11. He is envious:**

His heart never rests whenever he sees a successful or a righteous person. He tries his best to overthrow such a person.

#### **In his envy, he deals his blows without any mercy...**

He envied Joseph the righteous for the visions which he saw and put envy in the hearts of Joseph's brothers so they sold him as a slave. Then, he envied him for his success and for the confidence he gained from Potiphar; so he arranged a scheme by which Joseph was put into prison as a wrongdoer.

He envied the world for the faith in God and made the world fall into paganism, polytheism and atheism. For this purpose he worked out all kinds of thoughts and philosophies and even primitive worship. True are the words of the psalm, "*For all the gods of the peoples are idols*" (Ps 96:5)

#### **The devil envies knowledge and wisdom, envies chastity, and envies humility...**

He spreads ignorance, adultery and pride in the world with all the malevolence he has. He turned Solomon from his wisdom and made him fall; and threw many a wrong knowledge into the world until, "*The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."*" (Ps 14:1); and adultery became one of the dangerous wars which fight the whole world. Pride also has become a war

which traps whoever escapes other sins and whoever falls in them also.

**The envy of the devil is destructive and not mere sentiments.**

For when the devil envies, he fights with all power, as in the case of Job. He envied him for his integrity and he beat him very hard and accused him before God. He also envied the inhabitants of the wilderness for their hermitage and asceticism and aroused the most severe wars against them. He envied Origen, the most learned of his age and the first professor of Theology at that time, he threw him into many heresies for which the church ex-communicated him and it was said of him, *"Ye, the high tower, how did you fall?"*.

**Thus, when you do any act of righteousness, expect the envy of the devils.**

Expect that they will never leave you in righteousness, but will try to make you fall by all their means. So, when they strike you on a day of deep spirituality, do not be desperate but say, "this is what I expected. However, I pray for God's mercy to help me not to fall again."

**If God gives you a gift, expect the envy of the devils in this case also.**

They will either try to make you fall into pride, or make you use that gift out of place, thus losing its spiritual aim and its benefit to you and others.

Another attribute of the devil is:

## **12. He is an opportunist.**

The devil tries to seize every opportunity to cast his temptations as he took advantage of the hunger of the Lord Jesus Christ after fasting forty days and tempted Him with bread.

He also benefited from the fear of St. Peter and led him to deny Christ.

He also took advantage of the Jews who held fast to the Sabbath and made them deny the miracles of Christ which no one ever did before, and further to accuse him of being sinful (John 9:11).

## **13. The devil is unfaithful and dishonest:**

As we have said before, the devil may show compassion for your health whether in respect to fasting, watchfulness or any physical weariness. He advises you to give rest to your body for the sake of your health... !

**But he is not truly honest in showing concern for your health.**

He advises you to take rest and prevents you from watchfulness only if you keep awake for prayers, contemplation or spiritual reading or for prayer nights. However, if you keep awake in

amusement or other means of entertainment, he will not warn you against the harms of wakefulness for your health!

**When you get tired because of vain worldly matters, he does not advise you to have rest.**

If you tire in collecting money, in seeking fame and dignity, in running after your lusts and joys, in arranging clamorous parties, in games and sports and any other worldly activities... nothing of this would arouse his compassion for you nor would he ask you to have rest... !

He advises you to take rest only when you are tired in a spiritual practice. Your spiritual struggle is the only thing that arouses his compassion for you and your health!

**So, if he asks you to have rest in time of spiritual struggle do not obey him.**

It is in fact a call for laziness and slackening... But God's children rejoice in labor and even take pride in it (1 Cor. 15:10), and as St. Paul says, "*... in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, ...in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often...*" (2 Cor 11:23, 27). He says also, "*Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor*" (1 Cor. 3:8).

**Knowing this, labor for God's sake as far as you can.**

Know that the devil's advice for you to have rest, is not faithful advice, nor honest, nor true. St. Paul of Tamouh tired himself in asceticism till our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him saying,

"Leave off labor, my beloved Paul." But the saint replied, "What is my labor compared to all your labors, O Lord, for our salvation! "

**It is better for you to weary yourself here on earth and attain crowns of struggle** than to have rest here and be tired in eternity.

Know that your labor here is not forgotten by God because, "*God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love .*" (Heb 6:10). Any labor you pass through here is stored for you in eternity.

**Here is not a place of rest but a place of struggle and labor.**

Thus, when one dies, they say that he reposed i.e. took rest.

The devil is not honest in calling you to have rest; he deceives you.

**He talks to you about health in time of asceticism and not in time of corruption!**

When you fast, the devil puts on the dress of physicians and gives a lengthy lecture on the importance of animal protein and the main amino acids showing his concern for your body and its health.

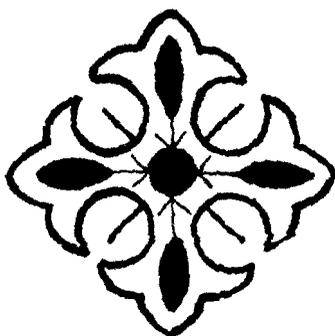
But he does not talk about your health if you keep smoking and drinking or practicing youthful lusts which destroy your health because he is not honest in calling you to take care of your health.

**So, if he fights you with the comfort and health of the body, say, "it is no time for this."**

**If the war of comfort is of the devil, the war of laziness is more severe.**

When we are tired in body, we feel comfort in our souls and vice versa.

When we fulfil our duties, we feel comfort and joy however tired our bodies may be. Also, overcoming our bodies in fasting, watchfulness, kneeling down in worship or in chastity, gives us indescribable comfort.



**CHAPTER 3**

**THE INTRIGUES OF THE DEVIL**

"Deliver us from the intrigues of the adversary..."  
"and annul all the snares he sets against us"

From the eleventh hour prayer

=====

**H**ow abundant are the intrigues of the devil! They have no end. If one fails, he changes his wile for another one, then a second, and a third, and so on, untill he achieves his purpose. He has no definite plan to attain his goal but takes what he deems suitable for every situation without being restricted by anything.

However, there are among his well known and obviously repeated plans some methods which have become known and recognized such as:

### **1. A sin hidden in the guise of virtue:**

**How easy it is for the devil to offer you some sins under different names, in a style which can be easily accepted so that sins become disguised as virtues.**

As the Lord has said, "*... come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.*" (Matt 7:15)

Mocking or sneering at people is introduced as gentleness and courteousness, affection, familiarity, wittiness and an attempt at humour.

He calls cunning, intelligence!

He offers you harsh treatment of your children and young brothers under the name of discipline, good-breeding and correction. He even makes your conscience blame you if you do not do so.

He also offers the unbecoming ornament and adornment in the name of elegance and cleanliness.

**The devil does not introduce sin revealed, otherwise a person would refuse it.**

He gives it another name while it remains the same sin, without any difference.

He says, "I shall fight (so-and -so) with nomenclature and make him fall into what I want; perhaps without being aware...or he may be aware but his conscience will not blame him.

"If I offer him hypocrisy under this hateful name, he will not accept it. What shall I do then? I shall make him as a whitewashed tomb which indeed appears beautiful on the outside (Matt. 23:27) so as to be from within completely different from what he is without. I shall give hypocrisy an acceptable name; let it be disguised as keeping others from stumbling, or call it a good example for others."

It is not 'wisdom' of the devil to call the sin by its name otherwise his plans would be revealed and his goals fail!

The Lord said to His disciples,

**" The time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service." (John 16:2)**

Certainly, the devil presented murder to those people as 'zeal' or 'defending religion', 'holy struggle' or 'purifying the earth from sinners'. This might have been the feeling of the scribes, the Pharisees and the elders when they presented the Lord Jesus Christ to be crucified.

Those who rebuked the children and forbade them from going to Christ (Luke 18:15) did not consider this cruelty or indifference towards them but their behavior took the clothing of sheep and the name of virtue whether it be 'keeping discipline' or 'regarding the dignity of the good master'.

**The devil can also offer lies under the name of "wisdom"!**

He offers them as a kind of good conduct, or as saving situations. A physician may tell the patient many lies, justifying this before his conscience as "keeping up the patient's morale" and protecting him from collapse so as to be cured.

Some people call certain lies "white lies" and on the first of April they call these lies jests, jokes or some other similar name.

**In this way, how easy it is for the devil to call dancing an art!**

And to call rude and shameless pictures an art as well; and the same with rude statues. Acting in the theatre and cinema is included under this name 'art', however sinful it may be. Singing

or music is also called art though it may be tempting or exciting...

Under the name 'art', the devil conceals a large collection of sins and stumbling blocks which do not deserve that beautiful name!

**Hiding sin under the guise of virtue is a cunning wile of the devil.**

Do you imagine that the devil calls avarice by its name? No one would have accepted it. He may call it "good economy", "saving money for future needs", "non-thriftiness", or "non-extravagance". If the devil wants to prevent a rich person from giving something to the poor, he will say to him, "it is not good to make them get used to begging, vagrancy, and dependence. Not giving them is wisdom, even the heart of wisdom in order that they may search for work and eat their bread by the sweat of their faces according to the commandment of the Lord God (Gen. 3:19)."

**Giving sin the name of virtue makes people continue doing it...**

Not only does this deceit stop people's conscience from rebuking them with respect to the past, but it also leads them to continue with the same sin in the future.

**Would the devil have called the ideas of Arius, Macdonius, Sabilius and others, heresies?**

No, he convinced them that their heresies were defending the right faith!! He provided them with wrong interpretations for

verses of the Holy Bible in order that they might accept his thoughts and convince others of them as well.

**Beware then** of wrong nomenclature, and do not allow the devil to deceive you; for sin is sin whatever other name it may go by.

Beware also of another war of the devil i.e.

## **2. Destroying one virtue to gain another:**

The devil gets annoyed with your stable virtues, those that have become part of your nature. He tries to destroy them by every means and the easiest way to do this is to offer you another new virtue. If you practice the new virtue without discrimination - for lack of experience - you will lose the first stable virtue. Here is an example of this:

**a) A person leading a life of meekness, quiet, calmness, peace of heart and decent manners...**

The devil wants to make this person lose all his gentleness, good words and humility of heart. What can he do? Of course he can not abuse the person's meekness nor say to him, "Leave your meek nature which is loved by all..." But he achieves this by displacement. He offers another virtue without saying that it is a substitute... How?

**First, he explains to the person the importance of the verse, "the zeal for your house has eaten me up."**

He tells him that it was said by David who was known for his meekness (Ps. 132:1), and that the disciples remembered these words when the Lord Jesus Christ, the meek, "*had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables.*" (John 2:15-17) , and said to them, "*And He said to them, 'It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*" (Matt 21:13)

**He even calls the person to fight the faults of others and provides him with all the necessary verses.**

He tells him that the Lord Jesus Christ severely rebuked the scribes and Pharisees through a whole chapter of the Bible, "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites...*" (Matt. 23). He confronted them with all their faults calling them more than once, "**blind guides**" and saying to them, "*you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly.*" and, "*See! Your house is left to you desolate;*" (Matt 23:27,38). John the Baptist also reproved the leaders of the Jews in his days saying, "*Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*" (Matt 3:7)

The devil says to this person then, "Hearken to the words of St. Paul the apostle. What he says is an order.

**He commands you, 'Convince, rebuke, exhort' (2 Tim. 4:2).**

But he does not complete the verse, "*with all longsuffering and doctrine.*" He does not tell him that these words are said to St. Timothy (bishop of Ephesus) and not to everyone. He does not explain to him how St. Paul himself used to reprove, or to say to the priests of Ephesus, "*I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.*" (Acts 20:31). Thus, the devil presses so that such a person may reprove and rebuke others...

**As if he were Christ or the Baptist, St. Paul or Timothy the bishop.**

The poor victim is then convinced, goes on reproving everyone not knowing the spiritual way to do so nor who should reprove whom, nor what his authority to do so is! While reproving others, he falls in condemning them, in anger, cruelty and defaming people. The image of people becomes black in his eyes and perhaps many would leave the church because of his conduct... He becomes an exploding bomb casting its shrapnel everywhere... !

**In that way, he loses his meekness, gentleness and decency; he hates people and becomes hated by them.**

Then, he soon gets weary of that conduct which does not conform with his nature and tries to return to his first condition but he finds his heart a different heart and his thoughts not the same. He finds that he has lost his simplicity, purity of heart and mind, as well as his good relations with others, and no longer is the good example who benefits others.

**The devil has lured him with a virtue which he misunderstands and made him lose his previous virtue.**

Neither did he keep the first nor gain the second but he fell into confusion!

He allows him to practise the second virtue because it is not firmly rooted in him and shall not annoy the devil for he can shake him easily from it.

Hence, our fathers used to advise their children saying, "Refuse any virtue which the devils offer with the intention of destroying another virtue which you have, and say to them,

**'This virtue is good, but for the sake of God I do not want it.'**

Indeed, any work of God does not destroy another work of God, and everyone has his own personality which differs from that of others. What fits one may not fit another, neither has everyone the authority to arrange and organise, to reprove and rebuke, nor to judge and condemn. Whoever is given this authority by God is certainly also given the way to use it properly without doing wrong.

Not everyone can say, "*Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.*" These words are said by St. Paul who explained the reason for this, "*Necessity is laid upon me*" and, "*I have been entrusted with a stewardship.*" (1 Cor 9:16,17). But you, what is the necessity laid upon you? Who committed unto you a dispensation as St. Paul had committed to him by Christ Himself or a mission as the Baptist received through the announcement

of the angel to his father (Luke 1:15-17), or a responsibility as St. Timothy undertook through the laying on of hands (2 Tim. 1:6).

Another example of a new virtue by which another virtue is destroyed:

**b) A person who lives in purity of heart away from carnal offences.**

He lives entirely on guard, he does not read anything which may cause him to stumble. He neither looks at any offensive scenes nor associates with any persons who may cause him to stumble, nor listens to any offensive talk. Thus he keeps his thoughts pure and nothing unholy enters his heart. The devil wants to fight this chaste person, but cannot offer him a visible stumbling block because he would refuse it surely. What would he do then?

**He opens the way for him to be a spiritual guide to lead the youth to chastity.**

He argues with him that he should not live in chastity alone, leaving the poor youth to fall everyday without offering them good advice which may save them from what they are in. He tells him to hearken to the words of the apostle, "*He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.*" (James 5:20). He goes on convincing him to accept this vital spiritual service until he is convinced and agrees to guide those who come to him... Then comes the next step: **In order that his guidance be practical, he ought to listen to their problems and faults.** They proceed to fill his ears with their news and tales of their failing

which may be in details and perhaps some of these tales are offensive. The chaste guide listens to what he used to keep away from hearing, and gets acquainted with what he never liked to know; what he tried to avoid, now fills his ears with his complete approval... and everyone offers him a new picture or various pictures of sin.

**Through guidance, our man finds his mind filled with foul pictures.**

He comes to know things which spoil the purity of his mind and defile him with news and tales which, "*...it is shameful even to speak of* " (Eph 5:12). Even if they do not offend him or arouse sinful emotions within him, they would at least defile his mind as if he has picked strange fruits from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**If he tries to move away, the devil would say to him, "And what about those youth?"**

They might have got attached to him, and found comfort in his guidance. They might trouble his conscience by telling him that they would return to their sins if he left them; and they might insist that he go on helping them to stand on their feet... Thus, what happened to Lot the righteous would happen to him, "*for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds.*" (2 Pet 2:8). Our brother here may be vexing himself with hearing only and not by seeing; yet what he hears may fill his mind with pictures which he has never seen before, as if he has seen in reality.

**Who knows, perhaps this guide would fall, at least by thought and heart!**

He could have sent them from the beginning to a spiritual father and relieved himself but the devil involved him or threw him onto the beginning of the way and he accepted in good faith not knowing how the matter would develop with him.

He may succeed in the end to transfer them to spiritual fathers, but after his mind has stored many tales and news which destroy his initial purity and put new knowledge in his mind, of which Solomon the wise says, "*... he who increases knowledge increases sorrow.*" (Eccl.1:18).

**c) The wiles of the devil may come in other forms through guidance, where rather than offering no news which defiles the heart, he offers doubts which trouble the mind.**

Here the heart may have faith in simplicity, reading nothing but that which is spiritual, deepening his attachment to God; then he is asked for guidance from someone with respect to doubts which trouble him. The doubts follow each other from every direction seeking solutions till the faith of this guide moves gradually from the heart, to the mind and scientific research. Only a few can keep both together, and he finds doubts increasing upon him but he has not the talent to refute them.

**We must know that not everyone is qualified for giving guidance.**

Those who have such a talent are not injured due to spiritual problems or hearing carnal sins, or due to problems pertaining to beliefs or hearing doubts.

In such a case, the resourcefulness of the devil lies in that:

**He offers the service of guidance to persons who do not have the talent for it, and who may be injured by it.**

The devil persists in offering such a service so as to make those persons feel that it is an urgent necessity and a holy duty and, *"Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."* (James 4:17). However, it is so easy for a humble heart to say in humility, "but in this case, I do not know... I was not able to guide myself, how can I guide others?"

**The devil may offer some spiritual work by which he eliminates the impact of another spiritual work.**

When he finds someone raising a deep spiritual prayer and pouring himself before God in hearty contemplation, he may send him a person to ask him to make peace between some quarrelling people. As he sits with them trying to reconcile them and hearing the noise, fuss, the quarrelling or the harsh reproach, the effect of prayers and contemplation fades away. This person returns home with nothing in his mind but the hot discussions which may make him absent-minded while praying. Such cases need to be combined with prayers and some spiritual preparation is needed before standing in front of God for prayer.

**The devil may find your prayer full of contemplation, so he wants to distract you.**

What would he do? While you are praying, he says to you, "this is a wonderful and deep contemplation. If others hear it, they will benefit from it. Rise now and write it down lest you should forget it." Thus, he takes you away from prayers to writing and ends your solemn standing before God in order to sit, write, and be interested in others more than being interested to stand in the presence of God.

Regarding all virtues that the devil attracts you to, his sole aim is:

**To make you lose what you have, alluring you with virtues you do not have.**

Or the devil makes you lose what is already in your hand for the sake of things promised, which may not be achieved, or allows you some virtues then withdraws them from you afterwards.

### **3. Using virtues out of their place:**

The Holy Bible says, "*To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven*" (Eccl 3:1). If virtues are used out of their place or due time, they may lead to an adverse result and will not serve the spiritual purpose. Hereinafter are some of the various intrigues of the devil.

**In time of repentance, where penitence is required, the devil offers the virtue of joy.**

He gives all the verses related to joy so that repentance, penitence and tears may be lost though they are necessary for proceeding in the life of repentance. At the same time, he conceals other verses such as, "*Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.*" (Matt 5:4)

**In this way, the devil uses the method of the single verse...**

The Lord Jesus Christ refused this method. When the devil addressed Him on the mount, "... *for it is written...*" The Lord answered, "*It is written again...*" (Matt. 4:6,7).

Thus He showed us that the method of the single verse used by the devil cannot lead to a proper spiritual fact since there are other verses which explain the subject.

**The devil may also use various verses of a certain bearing which serve his purpose.**

He mentions the verses pertaining to mercy where firmness is required and where punishment is necessary; and he mentions the verses pertaining to punishment where forgiveness, compassion and mercy are required.

The devil tries to convince a person to be silent, offering various verses of the Holy Bible at the time when talking is necessary. On the other hand, he offers verses about the advantage and importance of talking when silence is preferable.

**The devil may give a person some verses which do not fit him but fit others.**

For example, he offers a layman certain verses which concern the apostles and clergyman only and do not fit laymen as if they are fit for him... as the words of the Lord Jesus Christ to His twelve disciples, *"Do not call anyone on earth your father..."* (Matt 23:9).

Another example is a violent person who whenever he meets anyone doing something wrong he would strike him hard! The reason being that the devil put in his mind the verse; *"Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the LORD."* (Ps 101:8).

Among the other intrigues of the devil in fighting man is:

#### **4. Planting suspicions:**

The devil plants suspicions in every field, because a suspicious person is usually weak and the devil can conquer him.

**For example, the devil plants doubts in respect of repentance;** either about the possibility of repentance or its acceptance by God.

He suggests to the person that it is not easy for him to get rid of such sins which have become a part of his character or one of his habits or have become so loved by him that he can never dispense with them. Filling that person with doubts concerning his ability, the devil conceals completely God's help or makes him doubt it as David the prophet says *"LORD, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against*

*me. Many are they who say of me, "There is no help for him in God..." (Ps 3:2).*

But, if the person insists on repentance, the devil makes him doubt God's acceptance of his repentance, either because it came after due time or because it is not true or because his sins are so dreadful that they cannot be forgiven easily but need punishment beyond his endurance!

**The only objective of the devil is to throw the repentant into despair.**

This would make him lose heart and continue in sin.

The devil may also make him doubt God's mercy, giving him countless verses about God's justice and punishments; and perhaps the punishments are for sins far lighter than his.

The devil's suspicions may enter into the personal life also.

**He plants doubt concerning which is to be preferred: virginity or marriage.**

He also makes a person doubt which ever way he chooses.

If the person chooses virginity, the devil makes him doubt whether he can lead such a life or not and shows him that it is a very hard way, which fits only those, *"to whom it has been given"* (Matt 19:11) and that, *"... each one has his own gift from God..."* (1 Cor 7:7)

The devil asks him, "How do you know that this is your gift?" and explains to him the falls of some holy people saying, "Are you better than David and Samson who both had the Spirit of the Lord?"

On the other hand, if the person chooses to marry, the devil says to him, "You have lost the crown of virginity." He puts before him the words of St. Paul the apostle, "*He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord; how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world; how he may please his wife.*" (1 Cor 7:32,33) and, "*He who does not give her in marriage does better.*" (1 Cor 7:38)

Thus, he leaves him in confusion not knowing which way to choose... !

### **The devil plants doubts also in respect of seclusion and ministry.**

If a person chooses the way of seclusion, the devil describes to him the glories of ministry and how it is the way of the apostles and heroes of faith, and, "*those who turn many to righteousness Like the stars forever and ever.*" (Dan 12:3); and "*Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*" (Matt 5:15,16)

However, if the person chooses the way of ministry, the devil says to him, "You have lost the way of the angels who are on earth, and lost the life of quietude and calmness in which one is devoted to God alone. You have chosen the way of Martha

whom the Lord reproved, 'thou art careful and troubled about many things' (Luke 10:41,42) and did not choose the way of Mary who sat at Jesus's feet and has chosen the good part." He reminds him also of the vision in which St. Arsenius the secluded hermit appeared better than St. Moses the Black who loved and served the brethren.

Thus, the devil goes on planting doubts as St. John Climacus says, "The devil fights the monk who lives in seclusion with the love and service of the brethren. But he fights the monk who serves the brethren in society with the love of loneliness and the life of quietude, prayers and contemplation."

### **The devil plants suspicions in the social relations as a whole.**

He plants suspicions between husband and wife, between friends, partners in business, and between boss and subordinates. He makes one person doubt the love of the other or doubt his faithfulness and honesty. He plants suspicions against any behaviour of people and against their intentions and purposes. The devil does all this to shake relations among people, lead them into discord and disputes, and destroy love on which spiritual and social life as a whole depend.

Even matters which should pass easily, are complicated by the devil's various suspicions and he may make of them complex problems!

### **The devil plants doubts in respect of faith itself and beliefs.**

All the heresies and heterodoxies which humanity has suffered from are the making of the devil and his thoughts. All the various sects with the conflicts among them, and atheism are also caused by the devil.

**The devil also makes people doubt the possibility of life with God.**

He explains that the spiritual life is difficult or impossible, for who can go along the difficult way, or enter in the narrow gate (Matt. 7:13,14), and who can attain the life of perfection which the Lord requires from us (Matt. 5:48), and who can escape the wars of the devils?

In all this, he conceals the role of Grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in man's salvation and conceals the abundant assistance of God!

**The devil may plant doubts in one's heart concerning the father confessor.**

He makes the person doubt the father confessor's concern and love for him, he makes him doubt whether he will keep his secrets. He puts suspicions in his mind concerning the father confessor's guidance and whether it is correct and fit for spiritual growth or not, and also concerning his knowledge and spirituality. The devil wants to separate, by all means, his prey from the father confessor who reveals to him the wars of the devils, their intrigues and cunning. Thus, the poor person remains without a guide and becomes an easy prey for the devils.

The devil makes the person doubt his father confessor in order to disobey him, to leave him or conceal his disposition from him, things which are all wrong. He may even make him doubt the sacrament of confession itself saying to him, "Why would you confess to a human being like yourself?"

**He may make a person doubt virtue itself.**

For example, he would say to him, "What is the need for humility and meekness? They weaken your personality! What does it mean that you leave your own right instead of getting it by force, thus making others deceive you ... ?" The devil does the same with the other virtues.

As for you, you must not accept such suspicions, and whenever you feel suspicious say, "this is the work of the devil..."

**Do not accept any suspicions within you, nor be doubtful, nor let doubts continue...**

If you can discuss a certain doubt, do this and prove its falsity, or pray to God to remove it from you and remember the words of the Holy Bible, "... *be steadfast, immovable*" (1 Cor 15:58).

I hope - through God's grace - to talk to you, about suspicions on a wider scope on another occasion, when we discuss the spiritual wars one by one in detail.

Another weapon which the devil uses in his wars is:

## **5. The war of despair:**

**Despair is a weapon which the devil uses after long preparatory introductions.**

These preparations may be successive falls in which the devil traps his prey unceasingly until that prey cries at last, "there is no hope for me. It is impossible to be saved as long as I am thus.... !"

The preparations may also be suggestions which the devil puts continuously inside his prey under the pretext of humility! He repeats everyday, "I am weak and helpless, I am all sin"... But instead of being led by this to humility, he becomes weak in spirit and feels that he will never rise again.

The beginning of the war of despair may be a great fall (such as that of Judas) by which the devil makes one feel there is no forgiveness after that! The fall may not be so great, but...

**The devil is used to enlarging faults so as to throw the person who commits them into despair.**

The devil is very cunning in this respect, because before the fall the person commits a sin which seems so easy as if it were an ordinary matter and the devil gives justification for it... But after his sinning, the devil either goes on in the same trend showing that sin is very easy so that the person might repeat it, or he exaggerates it in order to lead the person to despair. He says to the person, "is it possible that God forgives such a sin?"

**The sinner may feel that he has fallen into blasphemy against the Holy Spirit!**

Thus he feels that he will have no forgiveness for ever (Mark 3:29) while that sin has no relation of course to blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. The latter is to dismiss the Holy Spirit entirely from the heart for the whole life. Thus a person does not repent and accordingly is not forgiven because forgiveness depends on repentance and repentance depends on the work of the Spirit in the heart .

**The devil may lead the person to despair, making him feel that he will never repent ... !**

He says to him, "Would you leave sin? It is impossible. Sin now runs in your blood. Your resolution has ended, and your will has broken, even the wish to repent does not exist now... How many times did you try to repent, and failed to? How many times did you confess your sins and return to commit them and perhaps worse than before? ..." So, the devil breaks him up till he yields to him and stops struggling...

He says to him, "You are now entirely in my hands, I can move you from one hand to the other very easily, as I wish. There is no need then for an unsuccessful struggle which you gain nothing by."

**Of course these fears have no basis and they are false threats...**

God is able to give man repentance no matter how bad his condition is. History tells us of the very bad condition of St.

Mary the Coptic, St. Pelagia, St. Augustine and St. Moses the Black; and in spite of this they repented and have even become saints.

However, whenever a person falls, the devil tries to throw him into despair.

**He convinces him that his fall is permanent and everlasting and not only temporary.**

How wonderful are the comforting words in the Book of Micah the prophet, "*Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; When I fall, I will arise.*" (Mic 7:8), and, "*For a righteous man may fall seven times And rise again.*" (Prov 24:16) . In spite of the repeated falls, the Holy Bible calls him "just".

**Among the means leading to despair are the devil's attacks during our spiritual times.**

This is one of the devil's famous intrigues which have become known to many. The following is an example of this..

You may spend a spiritual night in church, at the beginning of a new year, full of desire and determination to start a holy blessed year. You spend the night, attend the liturgy and partake of Holy Communion, then you go out to meet a very troublesome person whom the devil sends to you to disturb and excite you.

You get angry and sin; here the devil strikes you with despair and you say, "How could I fall after all this? There is no use then!"

**But, do not get desperate. It is a well-known wile.**

Say with the prophet, "When I fall, I shall rise"...Know that the devil will not calm down his fighting. At the beginning of every new year, on every spiritual day, after every spiritual prayer, at the beginning of every fasting and after each Holy Communion... expect a blow from him to overthrow you. If he strikes, say to him, "Seek another game; your tricks are well-known now..."

Believe me, the wars on spiritual occasions are countless, and may be mere envy on the part of the devil of your spiritual work or success.

**Among the means which lead to despair is that the devil allures the person with higher levels than he can attain.**

He gives him right-hand blows convincing him of high spiritual levels which he cannot attain and encourages him with all his power. If his father confessor advises him to advance gradually and tries to put him on a lower level, the devil makes him suspicious of his father confessor and his spirituality.

How easy it is for a person to go along a high level for two or three days or even more without good grounding, but he cannot go on and fails. Here the devil starts to reproach him and throws him into despair saying, "You are not fit for the spiritual way! Your nature does not conform with the proper spiritual life.

The devil goes on breaking him up... However, if that person had advanced gradually according to the advice of his father

confessor , he would have eventually attained the level which the devil wanted him to start with.

**The devil was able to convince the scribes and Pharisees to behave according to his manner.**

In giving spiritual guidance they used to *"... bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."* (Matt 23:4). These heavy burdens may sometimes lead people to despair, for the person who carries them may say, "Who can bear this? Who may be saved?"

**But, the holy apostles did not do this.**

In accepting the nations into the faith, they decided, *"we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,"* (Acts 15:19). They sent to them the word, *"... to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:"* (Acts 15:28). St. Paul the apostle also said, *"I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able"* (1 Cor 3:2).

**So, if the devil tempts you with things above your level, do not accept.**

Say to him, "Get thee hence, Satan. I have my spiritual guide whom I obey. You do not intend any good for me. You have your own ways which are improper and do not lead to the right end. "It is said of St. Anthony that the devil awakened him one night to pray, but he refused the advice saying to him, " I pray whenever I want and will not obey what you say..."

The devil lifts a person high to overthrow him, and when he falls, the devil leads him into despair in malevolence. Fighting with despair is an important war to the devil because:

**When a person gets desperate, he is broken up, he loses self-confidence and faith in God, he mistrusts the possibility of leading a spiritual life and gives way to failure.**

This is what the devil wants so that his prey may not resist him and is destroyed. It seems as if the devil is saying to such a desperate person yielding to him, "You will not escape from my grasp. You will certainly go to hell. There is no use. So, I advise you to enjoy the world for a few days instead of losing this present life and the coming one as well... !"

**The devil convinces such a person of the difficulty of spiritual life and of his weak and corrupt nature! He convinces him that he would not escape from his grasp nor from divine justice...**

This is the most dangerous weapon of the devil in the war of despair. Yet, the answer for all this is simple, we do not fight with our own wills "*for the battle is the Lord's*" (1 Sam.17:47), and He causes us to triumph in Christ (2 Cor. 2:14). Though we are not able because of our weakness and corruption and because the way is difficult; yet we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13). We are supported by the work of Grace, and the power of the Holy Spirit working in us and by the angels sent to minister for us (Heb. 1:14). We are supported also by the intercession of the saints for us.

As for the devil, he has no power over us, we do not care for his threats. How good are the words of the apostle, "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7).

As for divine justice, it is satisfied by the Lord on the cross when he offered us in His love a salvation so great (Heb. 2:3)

As for us, "*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" (1 John 1:9), and He shall wash us and we shall be whiter than snow (Ps 50:7) as he has said to us, "*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow...*" (Is 1:18)

Since the devil fights with despair in the ways we have refuted,

**the Holy Bible encourages us and puts hope among the great virtues** (1 Cor. 13:13).

Many are God's promises to us and to the church, "*The gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.*" (Matt 16:18) and, "*We are kept by the power of God*" (1 Pet. 1:5), and we are inscribed upon the palms of His hands (Is. 49:16). The Holy Bible also says, "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power ....*" (2 Tim 1:7). Thus the apostle advises us more than once not to lose heart (2 Cor. 4:1, 16), (Gal. 6:9).

**If you are going along the spiritual way and you fall, do not think that you cannot walk and get desperate, but rise and proceed on the way.**

The devil envies your steps and wants to hinder them. Do not let his obstacles lead you to despair. On the contrary, rise more

powerful and know that were you not successful in the spiritual work, the devil would not fight you! Indeed, why should the devil tire himself in fighting persons already failing?

He would rather attack persons who are steadfast on the way and persons who may resist him and whose resistance he fears.

Hearken then to the words of the apostle, "*be steadfast, immovable.*" (1 Cor 15:58)

### **Be courageous in God, and do not get desperate...**

Do not get desperate however powerful the wars of the devil are.

Do not get desperate no matter how many times you fall and forget the commandments and fail in your practices.

Do not get desperate if the beginning is weak, or unsuccessful or wasted.

Say to yourself, "All these are mere wars and I will cleave to God.

I shall go along the way to God even if I pull my legs with difficulty...

Even If I fall a hundred times on the way, I shall rise and proceed on my way...

I shall never accept despair because it is from the devil."

Let us move to another wile of the devil.

## **6. The devil changes his plans:**

**The devil does not insist on a certain trend in fighting man. It is easy for him to change his trend and his plans if this helps him to overthrow whoever he wants.**

We shall now give **some examples:**

a) The devil used to fight a certain youth violently with adultery and tiring him and making him fall sometimes. The youth began a life of repentance and became fully on guard against this sin: keeping away from its causes, closing all the gates it comes through whether through reading, hearing or meetings and at the same time strengthening himself from within by spiritual practices and praying to God with tears to save him....

**What would the devil do with such strong caution against adultery?**

**He would say; "I shall leave him now. I shall not fight him with this sin for a long time until he thinks that he has overcome it completely and becomes less cautious against it; and I shall then fight him with another sin"...**

He leaves him for a year, or two, or three without fighting him with this sin, without any stumbling blocks, and without any thoughts; but makes him fall in such a sin as pride...

The poor youth, seeing that he is saved from adultery, rejoices, and is tempted by the devil into a higher level of fasting, reading and service. While his mind is at ease in respect of this sin and satisfied with his spiritual course, the devil calls him to apply

that level to others. He shows him that they are negligent and that he has surpassed them to a great extent. So, he falls in pride.

The devil also calls him to reprove and rebuke and condemn them saying, "Your father does not pray, your mother does not fast, your brothers do not partake of Holy Communion, your family does not read the Holy Bible. Go and reprove them violently..."

The reproof extends to despising others, insulting and despising them for being astray from God; while the heart becomes lofty. As the person tries to gather up the tares, he himself becomes tares. Under the name of righteousness, he begins to insult, talk angrily, condemn, despise others and shows arrogance. He becomes wrapped in vanity and pride and says like the pharisee, "*God, I thank You that I am not like other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers...*" (Luke 18:11)

If you ask the devil about the sin of adultery which he relieved the youth of...

**He would answer, "Whoever perishes through pride is like him that perishes through adultery. Both will perish."**

Is not death by tuberculosis the same as death by cancer, or as a result of a surgical operation? It is the same death... and the same end... The causes are varied, but death is the same.

As for adultery, which the youth thinks that he has escaped from, in fact it will return to him one day, when he becomes less cautious against it, and less careful and his resistance decreases.

At that time the devil strikes him in such a way that he does not regain consciousness of himself. When you ask the devil how did he do that, he says,

"During the time in which the youth was at rest from the war of adultery, he thought it would not fight him again at all and had no place in his life. He thought that it is one of the sins that fight beginners and it is impossible that it would fight the high levels which he had attained! Many even seek his guidance now for resisting such a sin."

Thus, he begins to hear such details of this sin which he did not allow himself to hear before. He now reads books on matters related to that stumbling subject which were unknown to him before, in order to answer whoever may ask him. He never read such material during the time of his caution and carefulness.

His mind becomes full of thoughts which left in him certain sentiments and impressions which grow by the lapse of time without his being aware of them. Besides, Grace began to abandon him because of pride and condemning others. Thus, it is time for the devil to strike him with this same sin and it becomes easy for the devil to overthrow him. Here, the plan of the devil has succeeded though he changed it on the way.

**Now the devil says, "I have relieved him from that sin some time so that he is no longer prepared for it and thus he is not on his guard. So, he will become indulgent with the sin and with the thoughts I give him. During this slackening and indulgence, I shall fight him with the sin which he has forgotten for years and so he shall fall easily."**

This is the devil... ! He may not fight you now with a certain sin not because of love for you, but because he is preparing a different trap for you.

**b) Another example:**

A person falling in sins like anger, condemning others, insulting and uttering abusive words; this person begins to awake and deeply practise silence in order to get rid of the sins of the tongue. What would the devil do?

**The devil would say, "All right, I can change the plan, and instead of fighting him with the sins of the tongue and with anger, I'll fight him with a sin like vanity, for example..."**

That person would be entirely convinced that there is no one better than he. But how? I shall relieve him from the sins of the tongue entirely, I shall not fight him with them now at all and advise him to achieve some sudden growth in spiritual work in some exaggeration without fighting him in that respect."

The person begins to think that no one resembles him and behaves in conceit. He may also disagree with his father confessor who objects to his extravagance and vanity, but he does not care. He no longer submits to anyone, nor obeys anyone. He does not consult anyone and does not respect anyone.

Vanity traps him and destroys him without his falling in the sins of the tongue.

However, vanity will make him clash with others and surely he will fall in the sins of the tongue without interference from the devil! More so that if he would be fought with it by the devil.

**The devil changes his plans continuously. He looks at the condition of the person and chooses for him the fall which fits him. He knows when he should fight, how and with what means.**

Whoever does not fall through a certain way, will fall through another.

And whoever does not fall in a certain sin now, will fall in the same sin afterwards. The traps are abundant and they are set up.

**c) A third example to show how the devil changes his plans:**

**Lent began and the devil was fighting a young man the year before so as to make him not fast, but in vain:**

In order to fill him with suspicions in respect of fasting, he addressed him, "What does it mean to abstain from animal food? It is rather better to abstain from sin and fight the animal which is inside you... for what is the use of fasting without chastity and purity? Would not your fasting be unacceptable?"

The young man answered, "I am only performing the commandment of the Holy Bible, *"These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone."* (Matt 23:23). So, I try to fast both: abstain from food by my body, and make my soul abstain from the lust of sin, *"But I discipline my body and bring*

*it into subjection*" (1 Cor. 9:27) by depriving my body of delicious foods and thus get used to subjecting my soul in order not to sin.

The devil said, "But you are weak and your health cannot endure fasting. You certainly need animal protein in order to live especially in this age of growing up."

The young man answered him with the words of the Lord, "*Man shall not live by bread alone*" (Matt 4:4). Remember that Adam and Eve lived on fruit and seeds, then on the herbs of the field (Gen. 1:29, 3:18). The Holy Bible did not mention that they fell ill for lack of animal protein!

The devil said, "All right then, you can fast but there is no need to fast from the beginning of lent for it is too much. You must also not force yourself to fast lest the devil should fight you with vain glory! You know the diabolic wars and the danger of the right-hand blows."

The young man answered, I do not want to slacken, for the Lord requires us to be perfect (Matt.5: 48). Whatsoever fasting I do, what is it if compared with the fasting of the holy people? It is nothing..."

The young man fasted, and lent came this year and he still insisted on fasting.

**The devil found that any attempt to prevent this young man from fasting would be in vain, so he began to change his plan to the opposite.**

**He said to the young man, "How useful fasting is! The deep benefit comes from the long time of abstinence. I see you ought to abstain from food every day till sunset since the beginning of lent. But you must consult your father confessor and have his consent (knowing certainly that the father confessor would not agree)"... Here the trap is set up.**

The father confessor did not agree, and called the young man to advance gradually...

Here the devil interfered, "Your father confessor is not experienced in fasting and his guidance will hinder your spiritual life. Thus you will not advance nor taste the sweetness of fasting. I even fear, if it became necessary, he would advise you to break your fasting in the Passion Week! It is better to change your father confessor. Or you can evade consulting your father confessor on the matter of fasting and the like! Leave these matters out and I shall myself help you to decide on them!

**Thus, the devil changed his plan from planting doubts concerning fasting to doubts concerning the father confessor. He does not care for the kind of war but what concerns him is the fall of the person he fights.**

Separating the young man from his spiritual father, he made him behave after his own heart without a guide, besides filling him with pride of heart by which he thinks himself better than his guide thus condemning the guide. All these are means which may pull him downward on the way to fall.

**d) A fourth example is the devil of vain glory:**

This devil changes his mode continuously to conform with any condition...

**This devil is known as a round devil, that means he is like a ball which rolls in any direction.**

Thus he differs from the cubic shape which must stand on a certain base. The round shaped devil moves wherever you turn or direct him on every side like a ball.

If you sit at a table and do not eat, he says to you, "I admire your asceticism. You do not eat like all the others." However, if you eat like the others, he says to you, "Thus do the saints, they pretend to eat while they are in fact fasting so as to hide their virtues."

**If you talk, he says, "it is the voice of wisdom which gains the admiration of those who hear you..."**

**And if you keep silent, he says, "Silence is the virtue of the saints like St. Arsanius."**

Be wise with the devil and do not believe what he tells you nor be affected by his words and judgements. If he fights you with praising yourself, remember your sins and points of weakness and reprove yourself for them or remember what you lack from the life of righteousness to make a balance with any praise you hear.

**In general, as for any devil, if he changes his plans for you, you also change your plans against him.**

An example of this is St. John the Small who was praised by the devils for the virtues he had attained so that all who were in the hermitage used to ask him for a word of benefit.

But St. John used to answer them, "Who am I the poor? Have I attained what St. Anthony or St. Bemwa have attained? I am all sin". And when they said to him "Indeed you are a sinner and will perish.", he answered, "But where are God's love and mercy?" So, the devils used to say to him, "You puzzle us. If we lift you up, you humble yourself, and if we humble you, you lift yourself up"... Thus, you also be in your dealing with the devils.

**If the devils praise you, remember your sins, and if they relieve you from fighting, say to yourself, "Perhaps they are preparing for me a trap which I do not know. May God have mercy upon my weakness..."**

Rather remember that you have not attained a level for which the devils may fight you. Remember the brother who complained to St. Pishoy that the devils fought him, so the devil appeared to St. Pishoy and said, "Who is that brother that I may fight him. I did not even hear that he has become a monk!"

The real wars of the devils are violent, and perhaps most of us have not been exposed to them. The wars which fought the saints were violent, God forbid that we suffer them.

The devil of vain glory fights a war based on praise, but there is an opposite way which the devil uses ie. sadness.

## **7. Sadness:**

**It is a kind of strong exaggeration with which the devil fights the repentants, or those who are aware of their sins, or penitent, in order to lead them to perdition.**

The devil chooses only one verse from all the verses of the Holy Bible and puts it before them always, that is, "*For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.*" (Eccl 7:3). He reminds them that the Bible never mentioned that Christ laughed, but it is mentioned that He wept many times.

Whenever one falls in sin or is fought violently with a sin, the devil increases his sadness by saying, "You are not the son of God, for you are a sinner, and the Holy Bible says,

*"Whoever has been born of God does not sin "* (1 John 3:9, 5:18)

**The devil also says to him, "You do not deserve to be a son not only of God but even of your father confessor. You are a shame to him. You defame him."**

He continues, "It is better to leave this righteous father lest the people should taunt him saying, 'Look, this is an example of your sons'. Leave him lest he should also be condemned because of you and in order that he might not always grieve when he sees you in this condition."

Thus, he leads him away from God and feeling His fatherhood and away from his father confessor.

Even when he holds the Holy Bible to read, he says to him, "Would you dare hold God's Bible with your impure hand. Every word in the Bible condemns you, for the Lord Jesus Christ Himself says about you and those similar to you, " *The word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.*" (John 12:48). Thus, he fills his soul with sadness till he leaves the Bible in bitterness and despair.

**If he is a minister, he even makes him abandon his service thinking he is undeserving.**

The devil says to him, "Ministry is for saints not for sinners, and you are a sinner. You do not deserve to sit in the place of the teachers, otherwise you will be a stumbling block. The ministry will also make you forget your sins though you have to put them before you all the time and grieve for them day and night."

**When he stands to pray, the devil prevents him saying,** *"the sacrifice (prayer) of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord."* (Prov. 15:8, 28:9)... and says, "Here is the publican standing afar off, he would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven (Luke 18:13), while you are slight and unmindful, speaking to God though you are breaking His commandments. May you be ashamed of yourself and stop this evil prayer!"

**Thus, through sadness, he leads him away from all means of grace to be alone with him.**

When the devil is alone with that person who is now lonely, broken down, with no Bible or prayer, no father confessor, no service or church meetings and perhaps with no friends around him for they might have abandoned him because of his sadness... he becomes easy prey for the devil.

**How easy it is for the devil to say to him, "Leave the religious surroundings because this is the cause of your sadness!"**

Or rather how easy it is to tell him these words through his relatives, or through his physician and to attract him gradually to some means of amusement to entertain him in his sadness. This may be for some time only until the devil extends with another wile so as to separate him from God completely.

The devil may also overthrow him by another means ie. despair, for which sadness prepares the way.

**The device of the devil in the case of sadness was to move his prey away from hope and forgiveness.**

He moved him away from the loving God, who received his lost son welcoming and joyful making all the others rejoice putting on him his best gown (Luke 15:22-24). The Lord even says, *"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* (Luke 15:10). It is true that saints wept for their sins but not without hope for the Holy Bible says, *"Sorrow as others who have no hope."* (1 Thess 4:13).

Sorrow for sin does not separate us from God but rather brings us nearer to Him and increases our love for Him because in

spite of our sins, He forgave us; and moreover He says, "*For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.*" (Jer 31:34). God finds no pleasure at all in that the wicked would die but that he would return from his ways and live (Hez. 18:23).

**The problem of the person who loses hope through sadness is that he follows the counsel of the serpent, ie. the devil.**

On the other hand, the word of God is full of comfort and God's heart is always full of love. Sadness is intended to lead to humility and penitence not to despair and separation from God. If the devil uses sadness with his wicked ways, he will certainly destroy the person falling in it.

St. Peter the apostle after denying Christ, wept bitterly and the Lord Jesus Christ - glory be to Him - appeared to him and said, "Feed My lambs...Tend My sheep." (John 21:15,16). What more hope is there than this? So, the sadness of the countenance which makes the heart better must not be separated from love and hope.

Let us move to another point of the diabolic wars:

## **8. Speed:**

The works of the devil are characterised by speed or what is called in common use haste... On the other hand, the works of God are characterised by calmness, deliberation and patience; they are precise and calm such as the dispensation of salvation and God's promises.

**The devil offers you a thought, and still pushes and pushes so that you may perform it rapidly.**

When the diabolic thought is inside you, you feel great enthusiasm to perform it, you feel a fire burning within, and a motive compelling you to carry out the matter immediately without lingering, without leaving the thought within you for some time to discuss it, examine it, and search it out, considering it from all aspects and meditating on it.

**His purpose in speed is to make you neither think nor consult.**

Through speed he wants to be alone with you, without the interference of anyone, no one to consult with and benefit from advice, experience and spiritualities; no friend or relative, no father confessor or guide, and no one having any experience. Only carry out the thought quickly.

**By speed he wants also to prevent you from submitting the matter before God in prayer.**

He does not want to give you a chance to pray concerning this matter to find out what God would say in this respect, or a chance to raise prayers in a Liturgy for this subject, or to fast seeking God's guidance. The thought goes on pressing on you heavily and the devil convinces you of it as if it were an axiom which needs no discussion. The fathers said concerning this,

**"Any thought which presses on you to perform rapidly is of the devil."**

Of course the thoughts meant here are not the desire to repent and return to God, or to be attached to Him in love, but other thoughts which need discussion and are not urgent (such as saving a drowning person or extinguishing a fire). There are many matters a person carries out rapidly but when he returns to himself he repents much. Sometimes, the thoughts of sin and lust are so pressing that the person finds no time to think and change his feelings.

**The purpose of the devil in using speed is also so that he would not be discovered.**

Perhaps, behind the thought or the suggestion which he offers there is a lie or a wile which he does not want to be discovered by thinking, consulting or prayer. So, he presses that it be performed quickly before his lie or wile is discovered. Here the advantage of having a father confessor appears in that he reveals the intrigues of the devil, as it is said, "those who are without a guide, shall fall like the leaves of the tree". That is because they perform quickly before consulting anyone. The devil presses on them heavily and they carry out his thoughts before his wile is revealed.

**As for God's children, they do not obey every thought which comes to them.**

For example the thought that came to St. Macarius to go to the inner wilderness in order to see the roaming fathers. The saint says, "I remained fighting this thought for three years to find out whether it was from God or not". How amazing this is, for a great saint like St. Macarius the Great and in respect of a spiritual thought such as visiting the roaming anchorites.

**The saints saw no harm in lingering, only benefit.**

They did not carry out any thought rapidly lest it should be of the devil. Lingering gave them a chance to make sure and wait for God to announce His opinion in that respect. They used to utter beautiful words,

**"That which is of God is established, and that which is not of God is removed away".**

We see St. Galion when the devil appeared to him in the form of a monk saying that he was one of the roaming anchorites and that his companions the roaming fathers allowed him to join them and asked him to walk with him, Saint Galion obeyed the devil without submitting the matter before God and before his father confessor. So, the devils that appeared to him in such a form caused him to get lost in the wilderness and left him scornfully saying to him, "You will die here alone, in this wilderness." But God saved him.

Another wile of the devil other than speed or rather its opposite is:

## **9. Extended gradual advance**

The means used by the devil in his wars vary and sometimes there seems to be some contradiction between one method and another but all have one aim. Yet, the means used differ according to each case. In general, the devil does not like to adhere to the same style, lest people should get used to it.

**Sometimes he strikes suddenly and quickly so that the person may not be ready for the blow. Some other times, he proceeds in long gradual advances so that the person may not be aware of the promotion.**

Gradual advance needs extended time, but the devil does not care for the time but cares for people falling. Gradual advance probably fits the persons who do not accept a certain sin easily. He leads them to it gradually, calmly, in small or very small steps which increase by time till they are destroyed.

**He may split sin into stages, each stage establishing itself over time.**

The first step to sin may not be sinful at all, nor tiresome to the conscience. The first step in the fall of David the prophet was refraining from taking part in the war himself. He sent out the army and remained at home. The second step was allowing some luxury into his life, after his wandering from one wilderness to another when king Saul was pursuing him. David the prophet passed these two stages without being aware of any fault.

**However, there were certain psychological factors taking place within him and robbing him of his spiritual ardour.**

Then David came to the third step i.e. taking many wives; a matter which was allowed at that time, but undoubtedly he fell to the level of the flesh. Though it was legal it was not a level of perfection. Flesh had control over him whether he was aware of it or not.

Then came the fourth step, he ascended to the roof to walk about and look. He allowed himself to look at the houses of others and see their privacies and thus began the slip.

The fifth step was a hard blow from the devil to overthrow the great psalmist into lust then adultery.

The sixth step was the awkward situation by which he tried to conceal his sin with a lot of sins which made him lose his spirituality and brought him down from bad to worse.

**Perhaps, the devil was preparing for these stages a long time before.**

When the devil deals his blow, he wants it to be deadly. This sometimes requires long preparations on his part so that when he comes, he may find the house adorned, furnished and ready for his work and his prey prepared without any resistance... or even if he resists he would be entirely powerless and fall easily!

### **The story of Jacob the Struggler:**

It resembles the story of the fall of David as it gives a clear idea about the devil's plan in long gradual advance. Here the devil was able to let a great hermit fall though he was a saint who had the gift of casting out devils. The devil was able to give this saint three deadly blows which would have destroyed him if God's mercy had not led him to repentance. How did this happen?

The daughter of a certain king was possessed of an unclean spirit which no one could cast out. They brought her to Saint Jacob the Struggler who prayed for her and the unclean spirit

was cast out. But when she returned to her country, the spirit returned to her. They brought her again to the saint, he prayed for her and the spirit was cast out. As soon as she arrived in her country, the spirit returned once more and they brought her to the saint for the third time.

**The scheme of the devil was repeated many times till they got weary of travelling many times.**

At last, the king decided to leave the princess with the saint.

They built a room for her and whenever the devil overthrew her, they brought her to him and then left her with him all the time. When they saw that she had become calm, they left her and returned to their country.

With time, there was familiarity between them which developed into sin. She conceived by him and he feared the sin would be discovered and he would be defamed and the king might kill him. The devil suggested to him to kill her, so he killed her and buried her in a far place in the desert.

Months passed, and the king's messengers came to inquire after her safety; but the saint concealed his second crime with a lie and told them the devil overthrew her once and she shot out and escaped. No one could catch her and she disappeared. They believed him because he was trusted.

**Thus, the devil gave him three blows and overthrew him in adultery, murder and lying.**

All this developed gradually over a long time and the beginning never suggested such an end. It is the craftiness of the devil who weaves his device with amazing patience.

This scheme of long gradual war has a great objective. **At every step the person gets nearer to sin, gets used to it, and becomes weak.**

His will may be very strong while he is away from the scope of sin and he may resent every aspect of it, but with time he gets used to it and becomes familiar with it.

Gradually it settles in his mind then in his feelings and with every step his will weakens and becomes unable to resist, whether he is aware of this or not.

### **An example of long gradual war is habit.**

Any habit dominating a person does not begin as a habit at all. Perhaps the person has control over it at first and is able to stop it. But, through long gradual war, he loses his control over it, then it dominates him. The devil may have said to him one word at the first step, "Try or test." Then he proceeded, "All life is experience. The matter depends on you, you can abstain whenever you want." He goes on pressing till the person yields completely and stops resistance or even loses the desire to resist!

However, getting rid of habits is possible for anyone who wants to.

The devil may tell you that you would not be able, or if you were able, you would return to the habit again. It is a kind of war with despair, but do not yield. A habit results from a repeated wilful act, and you can get rid of it by an opposite repeated wilful act, that is to be steady in such an act.

Our advice for resisting this scheme of gradual war which the devil uses, is to get away from the first step with all firmness no matter how innocent it seems or how the devil convinces you that it is.

**Beware of his lies, especially if he tells you that it is a single step which will never develop.**

The devil does not accept to leave the matter at this point but advances continuously towards his distant purposes... So, beware of him.

Beware of the first step, not only of its development, however tiny this step may seem to you. Here I warn you against a crafty devil that is the devil of the tiny matters.

### **10. Tiny matters:**

The Canticle warns us against this, "*Catch us the foxes, The little foxes that spoil the vines*" (Song. 2:15) ; the important warning here lies in this:

**Though they are little, they spoil the vines.**

The first danger of these small foxes is that they can get into the soul. Big foxes may not find a hole wide enough for them in the hedge of the vineyard while the little ones can enter easily.

One may be on guard against the great sins and get away from them. So, the devil postpones fighting with them since one is aware of them but he fights with tiny matters.

**The devil fights with tiny matters because a person is not on his guard against them nor gets anxious in respect of them.**

If you say to someone for example, "Beware of offences" he will reply in astonishment, "Offences! Does one like me fear such tiny matters! They may fight the young or the beginners; but as for us, we have grown up beyond such matters"... So, the devil fights him with them.

Who would have thought that our father Abraham, the beloved of God would fear and say that his wife Sarah was his sister so that they took her and kept her with them! Undoubtedly, fear and lies are of the tiny matters for such a great spiritual man like our father Abraham, the father of fathers and prophets!

**It is not necessary that one commits a great sin such as adultery to be defiled, but it is sufficient to commit a sin of the tongue that, "defiles the whole body" (James 3:6).**

The tongue is a *"little member"* but it is *"a world of iniquity"* and *"It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."* (James 3:8). It defiles the whole person as the Lord has said, *"Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth,*

*this defiles a man."* (Mat 15:11,18) What is amazing is that the devil convinces you that the sins of the tongue are small matters.

**Indeed, the devil of tiny matters can destroy a person.**

A ship may sink because of a small hole in the bottom.

It is not necessary that a person be devoured by a huge beast to die, but a tiny microbe which cannot be seen by the naked eye is sufficient for that. The Lord has said in the Sermon on the Mount,

**"But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment."**

(Matt. 5:22).

How easy it is for the devil to convince you that the word "fool" and the like are among the tiny matters! Perhaps Ananias and Sapphira thought that their sin was of the small matters but they perished because of it. Perhaps Solomon also thought that his marriage to foreigners was of the small matters, but we saw the very dangerous results even for the salvation of Solomon himself (1 Kings 11:1 -11).

**In fact, the "tiny matters" may not be tiny at all.**

The devil gives them such a name but they may not be so. They may lead to the most dangerous results such as what happened to Solomon, David, and Ananias. These small matters may turn into very dangerous things.

God tests our will with any test however simple it seems, but it reveals our inner souls; as He did with Adam and Eve through a fruit of the garden.

### **What then are these tiny matters and what kinds are there?**

Perhaps an example is a person holding to his own views and not consulting anyone. The devil may say to him, "What of that? What is wrong with it? Is there any need to consult others? Is not your reasoning sufficient?" Another example of these small matters may be a little indulgence with the senses, or with the material read or heard... or maybe a lack of strictness in talking or not blaming oneself for one's faults.

### **The way of being saved from the devil of tiny matters is the life of strictness.**

Another way is holding to the virtue of "faithfulness in the little" for the Lord says, *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much ."* (Luke 16:10).

Now, we come to another wile of the devil:

### **11. Postponement:**

The devil tries by all means to prevent you from spiritual practices.

### **If he finds you insisting on this, he calls you to postpone.**

He says to you, "Why do you hasten? The matter is in our hands, we can perform it at any time. Perhaps taking our time

gives us the chance to examine the matter more or to choose the easiest means to attain it. We may be more convinced... Anyhow, we have some important matters in hand which we must perform first, then we shall come to this matter."

**The purpose of postponement is to do away with enthusiasm for work, or to lose the opportunity or to put the matter aside so as to forget it or allow something more important to prevail over it.**

For example something involves all your care and time, or an event takes place and delays you, or certain obstacles put difficulties in the way of performance. The devil may also cast in your way a sin which makes you lose your spiritual zeal, so you do not perform what you intended and postpone it.

Remember the lost son, who felt the desire to rise and go to his father, and he actually rose and went (Luke 15:18-20). Had he postponed, we are not sure what the end would have been.

**Among the examples which show the harms of postponement is what happened to Felix the Governor and King Agrippa.**

While St. Paul was speaking of righteousness and temperance and the judgement to come, Felix trembled and answered St. Paul, "*Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.*" (Acts 24:25). Due to postponement, Felix was no longer affected and had no time to call for Paul.

As for King Agrippa, when St. Paul was pleading before him, he said to him, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I

know that you believe." Then Agrippa said unto Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian." By postponement, Agrippa did not benefit from this persuasion and the Bible did not mention that he believed.

**The Grace may call on you once, if you postpone, the effect will be lost.**

You have the chance in your hand, and enthusiasm in your heart; so do the work of God, do not slacken or postpone because postponement may be a step towards annulment. This is the intention of the devil. He does not want to prevent you explicitly but he does so tactfully, through postponement. So beware of him.

**Do not postpone repentance, prayers, or doing good as a whole.**

The Holy Bible says, "*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor; Go, and come back, And tomorrow I will give it; When you have it with you.*" (Prov 3:27,28).

This concerns doing good towards others. Do good towards yourself as well. Whenever the Spirit of God speaks within you, do not postpone responding to His call, for the apostle says more than once, "*Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.*" (Heb 3:7,15)

**Thus, postponement is a kind of hard-heartedness.**

When the devil calls you to postpone, he is in fact calling you to be hard-hearted or to get used to hard-heartedness to remain astray from God.

Among the means which the devil offers to cause postponement there is:

## **12. Involvement:**

The devil wants to hinder you from any spiritual act which you practise by making you involved in many things. He wants you never to sit with God or with yourself because he fears this would separate you from him and attach you to God. This is what he fears most.

When the devil finds that you are regular in your prayers and in reading, in attending spiritual meetings and in practices which improve God's love in your heart, he fights you by making you get involved either temporarily to hinder a certain work or permanently and this is more dangerous.

**The involvement may be an additional job to earn some more money.**

In this case, you find no time to devote yourself to God, and the devil convinces you that such work is so necessary for your living that you cannot dispense with it. He may also convince some people to undertake some higher studies or research to improve their scientific level; so that they finish one research only to begin another.

The involvement may even be in some church services which take the time of prayers.

Whoever refuses to be involved in money affairs, is offered church services and is convinced of their importance. We do not object to the ministry but it must be within certain limits so as not to hinder prayers, contemplation or spiritual reading or attachment to God.

**This is necessary not only for the spiritual condition of the minister but for the success of the service as well.**

When a minister is too involved in various matters, his spirits fail and his service becomes unsuccessful and has no strong influence. The languid spiritual life of the minister makes his service routine and rationalistic, it does not go deep into the heart nor address the soul.

Many are the ministers who are so involved all the time in various endless activities that they do not find time for a prayer,

Or a psalm or time to be alone with God. They live on their past spiritual stock without adding anything new. Their lives are threatened by perdition.

**Here, the devil does not fight the spiritual practices but gives them no time.**

He does not prevent you from prayers, contemplation, and reading, nor from spiritual songs and hymns, kneeling down in worship and examining yourself. He may even let you give lessons and lectures on such spiritual practices and their benefit

but gives you no time to practice them yourself. Thus you become, as one of the spiritual fathers has said, like bells which call people to come to the sanctuary but they do not go there themselves! How wonderful indeed are the words of one of the spiritual fathers, "You spent your whole life serving the Lord's house, when will you serve the Lord of the house?"

**If this is the condition of the ministers, what about ordinary people and their many involvements.**

There are the visits, talks, arguments and discussions, newspapers and magazines, the news and commentary on them, and the means of entertainment which are abundant and involve both the grown ups and the young. See for example football matches and how much of people's time they take and how they involve emotions, enthusiasm and comments! There are also intellectual and social involvements, problems and cares of the present world, and financial and economic affairs.

Even children are involved in television programmes and tales which may detain them from going to church. The grown-ups are also attracted to these programmes and hindered by them!

**God looks from His heavens on the world and finds it a busy world.**

It is a world which runs quickly, and finds no time for thinking where it is going! It is also a clamorous world, full of talking, noise, discussions and agitation. Where then is the quietude necessary for the spiritual aspect? You seek it and often do not find it!

Even many of the clergymen who have devoted themselves to the Lord and became "His portion" are busy far from God with many things! The war which fought Martha still exists and is lasting as is evident in our present world, *"You are worried and troubled about many things; but one thing is needed."* (Luke 10:42). As for you who are God's son and image, you must have a spiritual character.

**Let God be at the head of your involvements if not the only one.**

Let your spiritual practices, your attachment to God and your spiritual life be always at the head of your involvements and in distributing your time and then comes everything else. Give priority to your salvation and your eternity, then arrange your other responsibilities no matter how important they seem, and remember the words of the Lord,

*"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? "* (Matt. 16:26)

If you lose your own soul, what shall you give in exchange for it? All those who died and departed from the world, what did their involvements avail them? And when they left those matters on their death, did the world suffer confusion? Of course not, as the wise Solomon said of this world,

*"All was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun."* (Eccl 2:11)

Start your day with God, before any other involvement. Let God be, "in the beginning" and say to Him, *"O God, You are my*

*God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You" (Ps. 63:1). Arrange your time so that no other involvement prevails over the time which you spend with God. Do not go out of your house before you perform all your spiritual duties; and do not give priority over your spiritual matters to anything whatever its profit, its value or importance may be.*

**The devil always exaggerates the importance of the things that hinder us.**

Or he tempts us exceedingly with such matters. In fact, nothing at all in your life is more important than God. You ought not to sacrifice your relation with God for anything, or any person no matter who he is. The Lord Himself says, "*He who loves father or mother... son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.*" (Matt 10:37). Rather less are any other matters!

**So, if any new involvement comes to you, consider deeply before accepting it.**

The devil may not be satisfied with your present involvements which hinder you, but tries to add other things to make you confused. Everyday he offers you suggestions which may be of great benefit to make you involved in them; but you must be on your guard. Put your spiritualities before you ahead of any other thing.

If involvement is a wile of the devil to lead you astray from God, there is another wile which is more cunning i.e.:

### **13. Misunderstanding God's love:**

No one doubts God's love for us and the importance of our love for Him, but the devil may give a wrong concept of this love. He convinces the person that he can sin as he wants depending on God's love, mercy and forgiveness and depending on the salvation granted on the cross!

As if God's love leads to recklessness and slackening! God forbid, for the Holy Bible states, *"Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance. But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath..."*(Rom. 2:4,5); and also *"Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off."* (Rom 11:22)

### **The devil shows Gods' love in a way that makes one lose the fear of God!**

He benefits to a great extent from the words of St. John, giving them a wrong interpretation, *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear"* (1 John 4:18). Thus, he tries to remove God's fear from the hearts of people under the name of love, while the Bible says, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom"* (Ps. 111:10).

Here, I tell you about a book I wanted to publish about "The fear of God" and the relation between such fear and love. I had prepared this book more than a year ago and made an

announcement about it but I postponed publishing it. Now, I feel that it is necessary to publish it because many people benefit from God's love wrongly so that they get away from spiritual caution and become unmindful. All this is due to the intrigues of the devil!

**Indeed, God is very loving and forgiving, but He is also just and holy.**

As God has no limits to His love, He has no limits to His justice, and to His holiness. His holiness does not accept sin, and His justice punishes it.

This is with respect to God's love for us; what about our love for God?

**The devil describes our love for God as mere emotions no more!**

In fact, our love for God, in its proper concept, is practical love, "**Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.**" (1 John 3:18). Whoever loves God does not disobey Him nor do what provokes His anger. So, our love for God depends on our obedience to Him and keeping His commandments as the Lord has said, "*If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love*" (John 15:10); and, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.*" (John 14:23). Saint John the beloved also said, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.*" (1 John 5:3). To love God means that we do not love the world and all its lusts for the Bible states, "*If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father*

*is not in him.*" (1 John 2:15), and, *"The friendship with the world is enmity with God."* (James 4:4)

**Let not the devil deceive you and say to you, "It is enough to love God and do whatever you want!"**

He means by this that you commit whatever faults or omissions you want! It is a diabolic thought by which he aims at making you not blame yourself for your faults and consequently continue doing them not feeling their danger! He also wrongly interprets the concept of love as if it were mere sentiments with no deeds confirming it.

Thus, he shakes the spiritual values before you.

Another device of the devil is:

#### **14. Shaking principles and values:**

The devil now wages a mental war on the world, by which he wants to introduce new principles and concepts that serve his purpose.

**In this war, he tries to destroy all the values and traditions and all established ideas.**

He throws people in doubt concerning them and accuses whoever holds to old traditions of being obscure or underdeveloped or old-fashioned and uncivilised! As if old traditions are an insult which must be gotten rid of!

**It is a revolt of the devil against values, and beliefs as well.**

The devil wants a general sinful current; whoever does not follow his concepts is attacked by society and mocked! This has made many intuitions subject to argument and discussion. What is virtue? What is religion? What are rights and duties? And even what is the relation between father and son with respect to liberty?

**The devil has given this generation the wrong concept of liberty.**

Through this concept the devil wants to convince man that he is free to do what he wants, to adopt whatever ideas or beliefs he likes and to spread them with no restrictions at all, no matter how such ideas, beliefs or behaviour may be wrong or dangerous for society.

It is known that no one agrees with absolute freedom.

**A person may exercise his freedom so as not to invade others' liberty and rights and so as not to abuse society or destroy its values and morals.**

If one exercises one's freedom subject to no conditions or restrictions, it would be a field for nihilism and recklessness and a field for mental deviation without any control!

God has given man this liberty, but He has given with it certain commandments to be performed. God will also judge how man uses this liberty and will punish him if he causes any harm to himself or to others through it.

**The absolute freedom which the devil calls for has its dangers for behaviour and beliefs.**

An example of its danger for behaviour is the kind of liberty which the "hippies" and "beetles" and some atheist existentialists wanted to exercise. They found no shame in walking naked in the streets or in exercising sex unashamedly and disgracing society!

Other examples of such faults are the nihilistic programmes and the stumbling blocks that society faces and is led by to corruption. The devil encourages all this in the name of liberty but it is only deceit, for there is a proper concept of liberty from the spiritual aspect.

**True liberty is that a person becomes free from faults within himself.**

That is to free himself from lusts and sinful desires, from the habits dominating him which make him lose his free will. But if one realises one's desires and whims with all their corruption and remains subject to them and to the flesh and material matters that lead one's life, what would the result be then?

**Surely, a world dominated by its desires will hate God because He resists such desires, thus the cunning plan of the devil is achieved!**

The devil tries to make people hate God and consider Him their enemy because He makes them lose their liberty and cancels their existence and stands in the way of their desires! Instead of

correcting such desires and becoming pure, they hold fast to them and become enemies with God because of them!

**The devil also spreads unrestricted liberty in the field of theological understanding.**

He makes everyone interpret the Bible as he likes, understand what he wants and spread what he understands. Thus, minds get confused amid private concepts. Hundreds of sects have appeared in Christianity due to such wrong liberty by which they say that everyone is free in his beliefs and does not have to submit to any religious authority!

**The church has one faith, not a collection of contradictions.**

The Holy Bible taught this one faith, for it is stated, "*One Lord, one faith*" (Eph. 4:5), and:

*"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul."* (Acts 4:32) and that the church is one body no matter how abundant its members may be and Christ is the head of that body (Eph. 5:23). Since its head is Christ, it always has the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), this mind is one and has no contradictions.

**What about freedom of belief then, and its limits?**

We do not object to everyone having freedom to believe whatever he wants. It is impossible to make someone believe something in spite of his will. But whoever holds to the beliefs of the church, becomes a member of it; and whoever refuses its beliefs remains outside, with all his free will and the church maintains its one faith.

The church does not invade the liberty of any person or force him to believe, but:

**Nobody may claim the membership of a church whose beliefs he does not accept.**

Here the devil cannot defend liberty because though it exists, no one may be accepted as a member of a church except one who holds to its beliefs. It is a self-evident matter. So if a person does not hold to the church beliefs, it means that he abandons it by his free will, and the words of St. John the beloved fit him, *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us."* (1 John 2:19).

We say so because in the name of free beliefs, the lectures in some colleges of theology in many parts of the world, teach whatever they want without being restricted by the creed of the church to which they belong or whose beliefs they teach. A professor comes to the lecture and says what he likes!

**Thus, there exist atheist professors of theology in some colleges!**

Hence, the devil was able under the name of false freedom to deal his blow successfully!

As for the apostolic catholic church which holds to *"The faith which was once for all delivered to the saints."* (Jude 1:3), it has never permitted this. It condemned heretics and devious persons and ex-communicated them in order to keep the one faith of the church so that it may soundly reach the coming

generations. Thus, St. Paul the apostle says with authority, *"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed."* (Gal 1:8), and St. John the beloved says, *"If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him: For he who greets him shares in his evil deeds."* (2 John 10, 11). It is a great resolution from the apostle who spoke of love more than any other apostle.

So, the church guarded the faith, and defended it against any deviation and never accepted any deviation to enter in the name of liberty to spread private ideas.

**For this reason, we find that the devil refuses church authority and fights clerical authority.**

Take it as a settled rule among all generations. Whoever deviates from faith, unless he repents, will certainly fight clerical authority, being the authority given the power by God to condemn his deviation (Matt. 18:18, John 20:23).

Since the devil spreads his thoughts and deviations in every field and not only in fighting the church, he uses a well-known device which is:

**Resisting authority in general, in all its fields.**

He means of course resisting any authority which does not accept deviation or faults but fights such matters, and prevents or punishes them. His purpose is to let wrong doings go on...

- He fights the authority of the father in the family in defence of the son's personality.
- He fights the authority of the teacher in school or college under the pretext of forming a powerful generation.
- He also fights the authority of the state in the name of democracy and people's rights.
- He even fights God's authority to make man feel his own authority!
- Accordingly he fights the clerics' authority being the stewards of God responsible for His flock (Tit. 1:7).

**The devil wants no watchman who may find faults and correct them.**

But God says, "*I have made you a watchman ... therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me:*" (Ezek 3:17). The devil wants all matters to remain without control or watchfulness, in rash freedom as the Bible states about the reign of the judges, "*In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*" (Judg 17:6) Everyone does what he likes, and spreads whatever thoughts and beliefs he wants. If any authority resists him, he attacks it and even attacks the principle of authority as a whole! This is the plan of the devil.

Among the plans of the devil is..

## **15. Following the general trend:**

The whole general trend may be sinful and the devil calls you to submit to such a trend and be part of it. He may whisper in your ears,

**"Everyone is like this.. why should you be an exception and have your own way?"**

You have to answer saying, "We follow truth wherever it may be, whether with the majority or the minority. If the majority is wrong, we do not follow it, just as our father Noah did; for all the people in his time were wicked but he alone and his family were righteous.

**How easy it is for the majority or even the whole generation to be wrong.**

At the time of the cross, the majority were wrong and cried out, "*crucify Him, crucify Him*" (Luke 23:21). Even the whole generation was said by the Lord Jesus Christ to be, "*An evil and adulterous generation .*" (Matt 12:39).

In the reign of king Ahab, the majority worshipped idols except seven thousand knees from among hundreds of thousands ( 1 Kings 19:18). Also, at the time of Moses the prophet, the Lord. condemned the whole people for being rebellious and stiff-necked and did not allow any of them to enter the promised land, except Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh (Num. 14:20-30).

The Man of God who is firm in His commandments can sing,

**"I shall obey God... even though I obey Him Alone"**

**However, the devil forces people into the general trend by every means:**

Sometimes, he makes people keep up with the wrong out of courtesy, or shyness, or imitating others, or for fear of people's mockery or reproach, or due to outer circumstance and pressure from others, or in response to the devil who may say, "This time only and it will not be repeated"! And it shall of course be repeated. Another person may keep up with the current in submission to an authority more powerful than himself, or to a superior, or he may keep up with the current in ignorance, and the devil may say to him,

**"Is it possible that all people are wrong and you alone are right?"**

"Is it possible that all those people do not know what is good and what is right and you alone know? Be humble brother..." and the brother "is humbled" and keeps up with the trend.

He may keep up with the trend also due to a sinful friend or companion who can influence him and attract him to his way as Solomon the wise followed the way of his women (1Kings 11:4)

**A person may also submit to the current because of his weak personality.**

Thus he cannot resist, or resists a little and stops. It is amazing that the people of this world are powerful in defending their wrong doings and in mocking God's children who do not follow

their way. They keep calling them names in order that they may be weakened and submit. What a pity!

God's children must be strong in their principles, firm, steady, and unmovable against the mockery of the wicked. They have to remember the words of the Bible,

*"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." (Eph 5:11)*

If they cannot reprove the works of darkness, at least they must not take part in them. They must have a distinctive way of life, that of which St. John the beloved said, *"In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest."* (1 John 3:10). It was also said, *"You will know them by their fruits."* (Matt 7:16) and, *"For your speech betrays you."* (Matt 26:73). St. Paul the apostle said with respect to refusing to follow the general trend,

*"And do not be conformed to this world." (Rom 12:2)*

That means do not take its form, do not be like it; because your form is known. You are the image and likeness of God according to the beautiful words of God, *"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."* (Gen 1:26). How would you give up your divine image and be in the image of a devious falling world.

**Daniel and the three youths were more powerful than the general trend.**

This power is not only due to their being alone in the worship of God even though Daniel was thrown in the lion's den and the three youths in the furnace of fire... Even from the beginning of their coming to the king's palace, they refused the king's food and did not eat with the other lads. How beautiful are the words of the Bible, *"But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank."* (Dan 1:8)

Daniel and the three young men insisted on this matter though they were captives of war, under the authority of others and serving as slaves in the king's palace. Their hearts and souls were free and unrestricted, and they did not submit to the general trend but to God's will.

So, be brave, be firm in your principles and resist the general trend if it is wrong.

Do not submit to the devil and all his advice, and his fears. Refuse anything wrong even if you find older people doing it. If you find those who follow the right way are few do not be disheartened, for those are the few selected and the Lord has said, *"Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way, which leads to life, and there are few who find it"* (Matt. 7:14). Know that,

**Though the majority falls in the wrong, this does not make the wrong right.**

The wrong is wrong and the fall of the majority in such wrong does not justify it. It is known that the right way is difficult and

not all the people can follow it, but only the few distinguished for their principles.

If you find that the devil has thrown fear within all, do not fear. If you find the majority has fallen into insincerity and flattery do not do the same thing. If you find that all have followed the worldly means of amusement, entertainment, luxury and fashions, do not do the same thing. If you find that the language of the people has changed and differed from before, insist on your first tongue.

If your resistance against the current has become feeble say with the psalmist,

**"You shall keep them, O LORD, You shall preserve them from this generation forever." (Ps 12:7)**

The Lord is able to save you from the current of this world lest it should sweep you away.

Another wile of the devil to overthrow God's children is:

## **16. Temptations:**

**Since the first sin, the devil has been offering temptations to make his victims fall. The first temptation he offered to our first fathers was, "You will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Gen 3:5). He went on tempting men with, "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." (1 John 2:16). He offered the same to king Solomon (Ecc. 2:1-10).**

On the mount, he offered the Lord Jesus Christ three temptations: bread, angels to bear him up in their hands, and all the kingdoms and glory of the world (Matt. 4). But the Lord refused all these, and disgraced the devil and dismissed him.

**The temptations of the devil entrap only the heart that is inclined to them...**

Or even a heart which may be inclined to them. But a strong heart refuses such temptations or in other words is not tempted by them. Queen Jezebel wanted to influence King Jehu and entice him under her control as King Ahab was before, so, "*She put paint on her eyes and adorned her head.*" (2 Kin 9:30). But Jehu was not tempted by this false beauty; he disdained it and ordered that she be killed.

**The devil sometimes chooses his temptations, and sometimes feels the pulse.**

He feels the pulse to see whether his victim becomes weak in front of such temptation or not. If he finds that he does not care or is not affected, he tries another temptation as he did with the Lord Jesus Christ whom he found strong before all the temptations. Due to the long experience of the devil, he chooses for every type of person what he thinks fit.

**He may tempt the person with something which he knows him to be in need of.**

He tempted the Lord Jesus Christ with bread when, "*Afterward He was hungry.*" (Matt 4:2). He tempted King Saul with divination when he was in need of counsel and did not find it

(1 Sam. 28:4-7). He tempted the Israelites with the molten calf at the time which he found fit while Moses the prophet was away and there was no spiritual guidance nor respect for prophecy (Ex. 32:1-4).

**The temptation offered by the devil is strong and effective so as to hinder repentance and any spiritual act.**

If he finds a person insisting to repent with all his power, he offers him a sin which he has longed for a long time and has been seeking without success. He puts it suddenly before him, he finds it coming by itself, he knows not how. The devil tempts him with it to make him fall. If someone has stopped reading certain offensive books, the devil sends him on that day a friend offering him such a book which that victim has longed to buy for many months but he has not been able to find. He finds himself weak before the temptation, he reads and falls.

If a youth repents from adultery, he finds the sin seeking him by itself .

**The poor person thinks it an irrecoverable chance and the devil says to him, "Do not miss the opportunity, and you can repent afterwards! "**

Thus, whenever the devil finds someone moving away from sin, he offers him the greatest temptations because he knows well where the painful place in the wound is. So, if you repent but find a sin seeking you with amazing enticement...

**Do not say, "it is an opportunity", but say, "Certainly it is the work of the devil".**

It is not something natural, or casual but it is a well designed plan of the devil. Blessed is the Lord who reveals it to us in order that we may escape it. As the holy monk Abdel Messeih the Ethiopian solitary anchorite at Sheheit desert says, "A trap, father, a trap..."

Another distinct point in the wars of the devil is:

### **17. Drugging:**

When a person is wakeful and aware of his own salvation, attentive in mind and soul, it is difficult for him to fall. So, one of the saints said, "A sin is proceeded either by lust, unawareness or forgetfulness; the last two being used by the devil to drug such a person".

**Being drugged, a person is driven into sin as if he were unconscious!**

Thus, it is well said of the repentance of the lost son that, "*he came to himself*" (Luke 15:17). The word "came" means that he was not conscious or at least not in complete consciousness all the time of the sin. So, when he came to himself, he began to think in a different way other than that at the time of sin.

**The devil drugs the person so as to make him forget everything except sin.**

All his senses, his thoughts and his emotions become concentrated on the sin alone. He becomes totally unaware of

anything else as if he has forgotten everything completely, completely...

He forgets that he is the image of God, forgets the commandment, and forgets its results. He also forgets his spiritual level, his spiritual practices, his worship and his cautiousness. He forgets God's promises and his own undertakings and vows. He forgets to be on his guard and may even forget that he is fasting or that those days are holy.

He forgets the punishment and warning of God... as if he were completely drugged. The devil has drugged him with the sin and he has become unaware of anything else.

**He comes to himself only after falling, when everything has come to an end.**

Thus was David the prophet drugged when he fell and was driven from one sin to another. He did not recover his consciousness except when he heard Nathan the prophet addressing him, "*You are the man.*" (2 Sam. 12:7). Only then he came to himself and felt the extent of his sin!

Cain also might have been drugged when he rose and killed his brother. He came to himself only on hearing the words of the Lord, "*Where is Abel your brother?*" (Gen. 4:9). Only then he came to himself and felt his detestable deed and its results, so he said, "*My punishment is greater than I can bear!*" (Gen 4:13).

**A person may come to himself directly after sinning, or after a long time.**

The lost son did not come to himself except after he had spent all his money, and was in want, and felt his bad condition (Luke 15:14-17). The rich man, the contemporary of the poor Lazarus, did not come to himself except in hell.

However, there are persons who come to themselves directly after sinning, like St. Peter who wept bitterly after denying the Lord (Matt. 26:75), while Judas did not come to himself except when the chance was gone.

**There are some who come to themselves and repent, while others come to themselves and get desperate.**

Examples of those who came to themselves and repented are the lost son, David the prophet and Peter the apostle. But Judas, when he came to himself, was led by the devil to despair and, *"he went and hanged himself"* (Matt. 27:3-5). He died in his sin and perished.

**Thus, I give you two pieces of advice when the devil drugs you.**

The first advice is to come to yourself quickly as the psalmist says, *"I will awaken the dawn."*(Ps 57:8) and be wary that you do not remain drugged by sin until it becomes a habit or it will be difficult for you to recover your consciousness or you will find after coming to yourself that you have come to very bad results.

The second advice is that when you come to yourself let it be in real and quick repentance not in despair and mean spirits. Benefit from repentance and penitence for your spiritual life.

Another point in the diabolic wars is:

### **18. Turning religion into philosophy:**

**The Lord Jesus Christ wanted religion to be spirit and life.**

So, He said, *"The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."* (John 6:63). That means that we should understand the spirit of the word and turn it into life within us.

Thus religion becomes a way for purification of the heart and a guide for cleaving to God in order that a person may attain eternal life. Perhaps this is what the Lord meant by the words , *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* (John 10:10).

**But the devil wants to turn religion into arguments and discussions.**

He wants reasoning to replace spirit and argument to replace practices, thus the religious life becomes mere reasoning as if Christianity were a philosophy which is studied and analysed. Christianity becomes merely a programme to be taught and not a life we lead. The mind does no harm to the devil if it remains so, not moved by the spirit and that is what the devil wants.

**I wish to translate for you St. Augustine's book "Against the Academics".**

The book is entitled "Contra Acadimos". I wish I could translate for you some paragraphs of it as an example, for St. Augustine is known for having a deeply spiritual system.

**The reasoning system which the devil wants is fought by St. Paul the apostle.**

This is clearly evident in the first two chapters of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians where he says, "*When I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom " and, my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,"* (1 Cor. 2:1,4);

And also, "*... not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.*" (1 Cor 1:17). Concentrating on the cross of Christ is a spiritual act which may be hindered by being involved in reasoning and arguments.

**The heresies were a mental trick of the devil to hinder spiritualities.**

The deep spirituality which the church lived in through the epoch of martyrdom, during the first three centuries and the early fourth century, as well as the deep spirituality which began with monasticism at the end of the third century, and flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries, with all the love for God and the spiritual guidance of the fathers ... all this aroused the envy of the devil, so he wanted to involve the world in arguments and discussions for two long centuries. Thus appeared the heresies of Arius, Apollinarius, Sabilius, Macedonius, Nestor, Eutychus and others. All this took place in a very concentrated

period which puzzled the mind of the world. Discussing the divinity and nature of the Son went on in the streets, even among the common people. The devil offered the heretics concepts and interpretations for the verses of the Bible, and the fathers of the church were involved in refuting those heresies and heterodoxies for a long time.

**The devil wishes to involve our whole lives with mental debates and refutations.**

It is still his scheme, to send every generation someone who tries to turn religion into discussions, arguments, reasoning, debates, views and refutations. Wishing by this to hinder spiritualities.

On the one side and to arouse disruptions and controversies on the other side, even under the name of religion and of defending the faith. Thus the church becomes divided into parties and sects and the devil rejoices. Those who fall into heresies are a gain to him and those who are tired of suspicions are another gain.

**Thanks to God the fathers who refuted heresies were spiritual men.**

Take for example St. Athanasius' book "Incarnation of the Word", you will find it a book of spirit as well as of theology and creed...while many others were busy in reasoning. It is also with thanks to God that the heresies and their refutation in the fourth and fifth centuries went on side by side with the movement of monasticism with its spiritual guidance, so that there was some balance with the mental vortices.

Refutation of heresies was very necessary to keep the faith, but to be busy doing this was a hindrance to the church. However, God turned it into good by establishing faith deep in the hearts and removing doubts.

**The devil even tries to turn spiritual matters into philosophy.**

He may turn prayers for example into an ideology which has its rules, and he may do the same with monasticism and turn it into schools conflicting mentally about which is preferable: solitude or work, contemplation or service. The matter thus turns into discussion and conflict which please the devil and make him happy!

**Even the Lord's prayer (Our Father ... ) is turned by him into a conflict concerning translation.**

You find some people while praying say, "Give us this day our daily bread", while others cry out, "Give us this day our bread for the coming day". Thus, there is a conflict between translations and confusion of minds, and instead of contemplating the prayer itself, there is argument and discussion concerning which translation is more accurate!

The same may take place in the holy liturgy where the devil wages a war of translations wishing to put an end to contemplations and spiritualities.

**How easy it is for him to arouse new thoughts within the church itself.**

He makes some fond of anything new and then offers a new interpretation or a belief which differs from the common concepts. He tells the author and publisher of such a belief that all who preceded him were wrong. Thus, instead of using religious thoughts in love and purity of heart, this is turned by the devil into conflict and struggle among the religious people due to a private thought and understanding. Each party claims that they are defending the faith, and that their belief is the only true one.

The devil may at least hinder the work of the spiritual people by involving them in negativism and refutations. If they do not respond to him, he spreads doubts and confusion.

Another war of the devil is:

### **19. An interval without sin:**

**The devil does not fight continuously if he finds that constant war has its harms.**

He may stop fighting for some time not in compassion for the person fought, but to lead him to slackening and incautiousness then he returns to him with a harder device to overthrow him. In that way, he makes him always distrustful of his ability to lead a life of righteousness and convinces him that though he repents, he will certainly return to sin again. Or:

**He takes sin away from him for some time so that he may long for it.**

Perhaps practising sin a long time may make him get bored with it and hate it, so the devil plans to take it away for some time, then returns it after a while in a more desirable or violent manner, or in an unexpected way to make him fall easily.

**Thus the devil grants and prevents as a way to lead to fighting with sin.**

In this way he plays with the emotions of the human soul. He makes it always unstable, rising and falling. God's children are urged by this to more caution, carefulness and more humility. However, the devil wants them to be in fear and distrust, feeling that righteousness is beyond their ability.

He moves gradually from mental attack to a general attack in which he says, "Christianity is a religion of sublimity and perfection; but it is an impractical sublimity beyond the ability of one to attain". At the same time he hides the examples of righteous people in every age.

Another diabolic war is:

## **20. Apparent bodily virtues:**

**He entices the person with the apparent bodily virtues, instead of hidden spiritual virtues.**

The word "apparent" here means those virtues apparent only to the person himself, not to others. By such virtues he may lead him to self-admiration and vanity or to disdain others who have not attained the same level.

**This war is directed at monks as well as to the laity.**

When a monk begins his struggle, the devil makes him concerned with fasting, kneeling down in worship, watchfulness, silence and seclusion which are all apparent practices. At the same time he neglects the virtues within the heart such as joy, peace, purity, meekness, calmness ... etc.

**During a fast, the devil fights on the bodily level and neglects the spiritual.**

He makes a person's whole concern the time of abstaining and its length, the kind of food to be eaten and the necessity of abstaining from some delicious foods, decreasing the quantity of water one drinks, which are all bodily matters. He makes him completely neglect the spiritual virtues of fasting such as penitence, elevation of spirit and self control against all matters.

The devil knows that such fasting of the body may not benefit the person spiritually, but he makes use of this point afterwards to prevent the person from fasting completely.

**The same takes place in respect of kneeling down in worship (metanias).**

What concerns him is increasing the number of metanias continuously. He never makes the person think that when he kneels down his soul cleaves to the dust (Ps. 119:25) as does his head. He makes him neglect the spiritual emotions and prayers that accompany kneeling down... He only wants to make these metanias, in spite of their abundance, turn into a

bodily practice which may exert him but give him no benefit. This may lead him to vain glory!

**As for seclusion also, he cares for its outside appearance not for its spirituality.**

For example a person lives in seclusion as a system not as a spiritual course characterised by certain virtues where the mind is alone with God in love, and the heart completely dead to the world. The devil often makes this secluded hermit satisfied with residing in a cave away from the monastery.

He fills his heart with pride and wrath against the monastery and its inhabitants, neglecting his spiritual practices inside the cave. True are the words of St. Isaac, "there may be a person who resides in a cell for 50 years not knowing how to stay in the cell."

**What is said about seclusion applies also to silence.**

It is supposed that silence aims at preventing a person from the faults of the tongue, giving him a chance to talk to God. Yet, if a person is satisfied with silence alone, it will turn into an apparent act of the body because he may fall within his mind into all the faults he would have done with his tongue such as condemning others, anger, reviling and sharpness etc. If the heart is at the same time void of any talk with God, the silence will be unspiritual.

**In the same way a person may be satisfied with virginity.**

A person may think that virginity is that apparent act which is non marriage, while his soul may not be chaste and his thoughts defiled. The positive element of virginity is directing all love to God; if this does not exist, it means that the person has the outer appearance of virginity and not its spirit and effectiveness in the heart.

**Our main concern is supposed to be directed towards the inner spiritual act because it is the most important.**

The Lord has said, "*My son, give me your heart.*" (Prov 23:26). So, a person should begin with the purity of heart, God's love, and inner virtues.

From the pure heart comes holy prayers, kneeling down in holy worship, spiritual fasting and every other virtue. It is surprising how often he who cares for apparent virtues disagrees with his confessor and may think of seeking another one, while his own inner life is not pure before God!

## **21. Violence:**

It is a war which the devil directs at the spiritual as well as at the sinner.

He trains a person to be violent towards every wrongdoing, and consequently the person becomes violent towards everyone who contradicts his views. Behind such violence, pride and hard-heartedness hide.

Perhaps many people of the world are distinguished for meekness and calmness, while we find among religious people some who are very violent and in the name of religion, dissatisfied with everything. They think that they alone know God and follow His way. Through this violence the devil makes them fall into many faults which the laymen escape. He makes them forget such virtues as meekness and gentleness which are the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

Another war of the devil is:

## **22. Hindrances:**

**Every spiritual act is subject to many hindrances by the devil.**

A person may set his heart on a certain spiritual act but the devil resists him with all his power in order to detain him from performing what he wanted, as the apostle says, "*For to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*" (Rom 7:18). These hindrances may be outer circumstances, forgetfulness, lack of time, resistance by enemies or false brethren. Then the devil interferes saying,

**"Decidedly, this act is not of God or He would have facilitated the means to it!"**

Or he may say to people about a good person, "Had this person been of God, God would have made him successful." Thus he shoots two birds with one stone.

Another wile by which the devil traps people is:

### **23. Bashfulness:**

**Bashfulness is a virtue if well utilised by a person. However, the devil uses it in a way that leads to falling.**

For example a person may be sitting among some people who are uttering filthy words, defaming someone of rank, or telling

unbecoming tales. Such a person did not expect all this, so he thinks of withdrawing and leaving them. But the devil of bashfulness comes and forces him to stay... and he stays with them filling his mind with thoughts which he never liked to allow in.

**Also due to shyness he may sign a nomination which his conscience resents.**

A person may also sign a statement or decision which he is not content with in his heart or he may take part in praising an undeserving person... even if he tries to abstain, bashfulness prevents him!

**The devil may also make a girl shy of her modest dress.**

This happens if the general trend is different. The devil may also make her shy of being religious in general, shy of praying and fasting or of being known as doing so. She may even be shy of wearing a cross or of refusing an invitation to a certain party which does not suit her spiritual condition.

Likewise a religious youth may be shy to refuse a cigarette offered him by a comrade or a teacher. How abundant are the sins in which some fall due to the devil of bashfulness!

**A religious person is supposed to refuse such bashfulness and get away from its scope.**

He has to find for himself a way to escape a critical situation tactfully, or to be of strong personality so as to be able to defend his spiritual situation by convincing others. He may at least get away from the company that puts him in such critical situations and from the occasions on which he is fought with bashfulness.

It is amazing that religious people are shy of being religious while sinners are bold and daring in sinning and condemning spiritualities.

Another war is:

#### **24. Wasted time:**

As the believer is fought sometimes by the devil of bashfulness, he is likewise fought at other times by the devil of wasted time.

**Man's life is a period of time which the devil tries to waste.**

Wasted time is the time which passes without any benefit whatever to you: no spiritual benefit, no mental or physical benefit and no benefit for others. The devil is not anxious to

make you sin during that time... it is sufficient for him that it is time wasted, being a part of your life with no fruit to you or to others.

### **Many and varied are the examples of this loss.**

Some of these are the long conversations which may extend for hours in useless matters without any objective, besides arguments and discussions which benefit nothing but trouble the nerves and waste time. Add to this, visits and nights out, excessive luxuries, as well as means of amusement which may take all the time and hinder important positive aspects of your life. Some may pass the time at coffeehouses to play and talk, just "killing time".

Whoever agrees to waste his time, will look upon his life as of little value!

### **25. The devil employs supporters:**

He does not work alone for he has supporters among his army of devils as well as of men who maybe your dear friends, relatives, acquaintances, or strangers.

The devil has spoken through the mouths of some people at the cross addressing the Lord, *"If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."* (Matt 27:40).

**The devil may also use your relatives as it is said, "and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household."** (Matt 10:36).

He may inspire one of your most beloved relatives with advice which destroys your life, or make them resist your spiritual acts, or your consecration or worship. He may even employ them to mock you. So, be on your guard and examine well whatever advice you hear and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). But be heedful not to say to any of your relatives, "You are a supporter of the devil".

**The supporters of the devil may be evil company.** It is stated in the Bible, "*Evil company corrupts good habits.*" (1 Cor 15:33). So, always put before you the words of the first psalm, not to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful (Ps. 1). All these are seats of the devil which he leads and directs.

**Do not think that the devil appears to you in a visible form to fight you.**

It is a very high degree of warfare which God does not allow, except for the holy people who can endure it. If the devil wants to provoke you, he will send you someone who provokes you; that person is of the devil's supporters, at least regarding this point. Likewise is anyone who tempts you; who leads you to sin or helps you to sin or makes you fall in sin.

**The wicked are in general supporters of the devil.**

Examples of these are places of amusement and all stumbling blocks, all atheist philosophers and those who call for atheism, who spread suspicions and who cause evil. Against these David the prophet and his men cried out, "*O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness*" (2 Sam. 15:31).

The counsel which Ahithophel offered to Absalom during his uprising against his father David was very harmful to David and his men.

When the devil wants for example, to overthrow the world into heresies and suspicions, it is not necessary that he does so himself, but he offers such heresies to the world through his human supporters who spread them, explain them to people and call them to believe in such heresies.

**So, we have to pray all the time that the Lord may save us from the supporters of the devil.**

Not only from the devil alone, but also from his angels, his troops, his assistants and supporters, and all those who do his will on earth... all the powers of the enemy.

**Remark:**

a) As for fighting with fearful scenes, with visions dreams and deceptions of the devil, we have dealt with these in the second chapter on the attributes and wars of the devil under the attributes "cruel", and "liar".

b) **The points which we have mentioned are not all the intrigues of the devil** nor all that we know about him. His stores never become empty nor do his intrigues end, whether the old or the new or whatever he may invent now or afterwards. Undoubtedly he is renovating his intrigues; may God have mercy on us and save us from him and them.

Thus, we pray everyday in the eleventh hour prayer, "Deliver us from the intrigues of the adversary and annul all his snares, set against us" AMEN.



**CHAPTER 4**

**HOW TO OVERCOME DIABOLIC WARS**

**W**hat we mentioned before of the devil's attributes and his various intrigues, was mentioned to you not with the aim that you fear him but that you be on your guard. In spite of the violence and craftiness of the devil, overcoming him is very possible and even very easy.

### **1. Overcoming is possible:**

If you always think that it is difficult or impossible to conquer in the diabolic wars, you will faint, weaken and submit and consequently you will fall. But, when the devil fights you, be absolutely sure that you are able to conquer, otherwise God would not have allowed such an unequivocal war. **Always contemplate on the lives of the saints who conquered.**

Keep in mind the story of Joseph the righteous who conquered in spite of the hard temptation which he faced. As for the fall of David and Samson, you can take a lesson from the story of each of them. Know the reasons of these falls and avoid them. The stories of falling are intended for our benefit so that we may be on our guard and learn from them.

**The Holy Bible and history provide us with various stories of conquering.**

We know that repentance is very possible however bad the condition of the person was. This is apparent from the stories of the repentance of St. Mary the Coptic, Pelagia, Baiessa, Augustine, Moses the Black, and also from the repentance of Solomon the Wise and Samson.

So when the devil fights us with despair due to the bad condition which we are in, let us remember such stories and be comforted and encouraged.

From the history of St. Anthony, we can learn how to conquer in spite of the violence, the diversity and abundance of the wars. The same can be learnt from the history of all the other saints.

**We also have to always remember that God has blessed our nature.**

When God was incarnated and took our nature, He blessed this nature. So, we address Him in the Liturgy of St. Gregory "*You have blessed my nature in You.*" This nature has become very able to overcome the devil. Suffice us that we have become the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16). We have also become God's children of a nature born from high, of water and of the Spirit (John 3:3,5)

**As we remember the power given to us, we should likewise remember the spiritual powers surrounding us.**

We should remember that we are not alone in the battle, as God's Holy Spirit helps us, reproves us with respect to sin (John 16:8), teaches us on all things (1 John 2:27) and guides us into all truth (John 16:13). How then can the devil overcome us though we have the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14) and also the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 16:23). So we live, not we, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). Add to this the fact that many angels encompass us, sent forth to minister for us who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. 1:14),

seeing that we are also encompassed by a great cloud of witnesses who have conquered, "*Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us*" (Heb 12:1)

**Let us also remember God's promises to us to be encouraged.**

He says, "... *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" (Matt 28:20). So, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" (Rom 8:31). He says to everyone of us, "*I will not leave you nor forsake you... for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*"(Josh 1:5, 9) and, "*for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you.*" (Acts 18:10).

**Let us remember God's promises to those who conquer in order to be zealous in our struggle.**

Read about God's promises to the pastors of the seven churches of Asia for example, "*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*". "*He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*" (Rev. 3:21,5). "*To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.*", "*And I will give him the morning star.*", "*And I will give you the crown of life.*" (Rev. 2:17, 28,10)... Indeed, he that has an ear, let him hear these promises which fill the heart with zeal and power.

**Let us also be certainly sure that it is God who fights for us.**

However powerful the devil is, what is he before God's unlimited power? Though the devil be like a roaring lion, God sends His angel to shut the mouths of lions (Dan. 6:22). Truly, *"The battle is the Lord's."* (1 Sam 17:47). *"The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* (Ex 14:14). Since it is the Lord who fights for you, do not be afraid at all then of the devil.

## **2. Do not be afraid:**

Never be afraid of the devil, for in spite of all his talents and intrigues, he is weak before God's children as the Lord has said,

**"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."** (Luke 10:18).

The Lord has trod him down on the cross, and he is no longer "the prince of this world" as before. The Lord said of him before the crucifixion, *"Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out."* (John 12:31). *"The prince of this world is judged"* (John 16:11). Thus, the Lord says,

**"Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy."**  
(Luke 10:19).

The Lord's promise to us that we would tread over all the power of the enemy is a promise full of power and comfort, which removes fear from the heart. The church so appreciates this divine promise, that it put it at the end of the thanksgiving prayer in order that we may mention it in our prayers every day

or even every hour so as not to be afraid of the devils or all the power of the enemy.

**Thus, the devil has no authority over us, but we have the authority over him.**

Even the devils are subject to us through the name of the Lord (Luke 10:17).

The Lord even made casting out devils in the foremost of the signs that follow the believers (Mark 16:17). Of course the gift of casting out devils must be preceded by victory in the diabolic wars. Whoever overcomes the devil's temptations and enticements and stands steady is feared by the devil and he gets power over him.

**There is a fine lecture by St. Anthony on the weakness of the devils.**

St. Athanasius published this lecture in his book "The Life of St. Anthony" which you can read so that your hearts may be strengthened and not fear the devil.

There were many simple monks who did not have any education at all but could destroy the devil in the wilderness; among these is St. Paul the simple.

Martyrs and confessors also could overcome all his temptations, all his power and all his weapons.

**The devil dominates only the person who submits to him.**

True are the words of the common saying, "it is the slaves who create the masters". This means that the humility and submission of the slaves make the masters prevail and vaunt. Such is the case with those who submit to the devil, but those whom the Son makes free, they shall be free indeed (John 8:36).

**The thing which the devil likes most is to find you afraid of him.**

For in your fear you become weak in front of him and get confused. You think that you will certainly fall in his hands so your spirit is broken and you yield to him unable to resist. This is what he wants from you, because fear gives him power over you. However, the Lord Jesus Christ advises us not to fear at all,

*"It is I; do not be afraid." (Matt 14:27), " Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27).*

Do not be afraid then because God's power, acting within you, is beyond limits greater than the power of the devil fighting you from without. Be sure that the fear within you is more harmful to you than the devil's war from without.

Those who were afraid of Goliath the giant were weak before him and could not resist him. As for David who was not afraid, he advanced towards him boldly, depending on the Lord's assistance, so he conquered him. The story of David and Goliath is fit to be a symbol of the wars of the devils. Perhaps you wonder about the secret why David was not afraid and he answers,

*"The LORD is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps 27:1).*

He goes on to say, *"Though an army may encamp against me, My heart shall not fear; Though war should rise against me, In this I will be confident."* (Ps 27:3). So, face the diabolic wars with a peaceful heart, and fight the Lord's wars trusting that you will conquer with His assistance. How severe and dangerous are the words of Revelation about fear. *"But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone."* (Rev 21:8).

**Thus, the fearful are put before the non-believers and before the murderers and idolaters!**

You may ask, "Why?" Perhaps because he who fears the devil and submits to him falls in all these sins; or because he who fears the devil and submits to him will be afraid on the last day because he has not resisted and conquered as the selected believers have done.

**Would that you read the stories of the saints who did not fear the devils!**

Read about St. Anthony to whom the devils appeared in the form of lions, tigers and fierce beasts crying in dreadful voices to frighten him that he might leave the wilderness; but he was not afraid and used to answer them calmly.

Read about St. Macarius the Great who slept in a tomb putting a skull under his head. When the devils talked to the person to whom the skull belonged in a loud voice asking him to rise with them, the saint was not confused, but raised his head a little from the skull and told it, "if you want to go, rise and go with them to hell".

As for you, do not be afraid for the devils will not fight you with such fears as they fought the saints with. Hearken to the apostle comforting you,

*"God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able." (1 Cor 10:13).*

God would not allow the devil to tempt you above what you can endure, "... *but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*" (1 Cor 10:13). So, never be afraid of the devils and their wars, whether they fight with fears or sins. The devil may arouse a clamour to frighten people but he cannot do anything to a steady believer.

### **I compare the clamour of the devil with the story of the fox and the drum.**

There was a drum hung to a tree blown by the wind causing an awful noise. A fox passed by it and was alarmed by the noise, he was afraid at first, then he was encouraged and attacked it. When he saw it was empty from within, he laughed and despised it. This resembles also a big balloon which appears huge, but the prick of a small pin makes it nothing.

The devil is like this, clamour with no power. He tries to frighten you but has no power for he does not have the absolute liberty to do what he wants.

**There is God, the Almighty who prevents the devil according to His own will.**

In the story of Job the Just, the devil did not follow his own will but was confined to the scope which God allowed him (Job 1,2).

The devil is not so powerful that you ought to fear him. The mere sign of the cross makes him escape from your face.

**The devil wants you to imagine him as powerful, but do not believe him.**

Always remember his repeated defeat before the saints. Remember those who had the power to cast him out of the persons whom he overthrew, and how he always cried in fear before God's children and escaped.

Since you know the weakness of the devil, resist him bravely.

### **3. Resist the devil:**

It is good to remember the words of St. James the apostle, "*Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*" (James 4:7).

The expression "flee from you" proves the weakness of the devil, for the apostle did not say, "resist him and he will depart from you" but he said, "he will flee from you"...

The devil feels the pulse of the person to find out his constitution. If he finds him of the kind that fears, he begins to amuse himself with such a person and makes him his toy. But if he finds him strong and struggling, refusing to be conquered, the devil fears him and escapes from him. So, resist the devil and do not be deceived by his power for St. Peter the apostle says first, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour", then he says directly after that,

*"Resist him, steadfast in the faith."* (1 Pet. 5:9).

That means you ought not be frightened by his roaring as a lion but you ought to resist him. Let your heart be as the heart of a lion, more powerful than he. When it comes to your mind that the devil roars as a lion, remember the words of Daniel, *"My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths."* (Dan 6:22). Stand against the devil strongly and firmly resisting with all your power.

**Do not submit but resist in the battle, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.**

Fight with all your power and ask God's help. At this point, I like what is stated in the canticle, *"Behold, it is Solomon's couch, With sixty valiant men around it, Of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, Being expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh Because of fear in the night."* (Song

3:7, 8). Learn then how to fight all that comes to you from the devil, and let your sword be on your thigh and as the psalmist says, "*Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty, and in Your majesty ride prosperously.*" (Ps. 45:3,4).

**If the devil fights you with a thought or emotion, do not submit but resist.**

Do not accept anything that he offers you. Do not open your heart for him, nor your mind. Do not give up your will to him and do not be familiar with him but resist him with all your power. Resist his thoughts, his temptations, all his lusts and all his trials. Be cautious not to slacken lest you should hear the reproach of the apostle,

*"You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin."*  
(Heb 12:4).

Unto blood... even though you are martyred in your battle against him as it is usually said of the soldier in the army, "He fights till the last bullet and the last man." Be sure that if you open for the devil even a pin hole in your mind or your will, he will continue and go to a great extent causing troubles for you. So, resist him and send him away. However hard he tries to argue with you justifying sin do not agree with him.

**There must be no understanding with the devil concerning sin, no argument, and no debate.**

Follow what one of the saints has said, "Do not deal with a person whom the devil fights you with".

When the devil offers you sin, he wants to argue with you concerning it; he wants by this to make you stay in its scope for the longest time possible so as to be influenced by it. Hence, you are the loser.

**So, resist the devil at the first step when your will is still in control.**

If you delay resistance, his influence upon you will increase and your will shall decrease little by little.

And as long as the time with the devil extends, your resistance will fail as happened to Samson with Delilah when she pressed him daily, his soul was vexed unto death and he told her all his heart (Judg. 16:15-17).

**Do not say, "I shall bear this thought to know its end!"**

Believe me, you know its end quite well, so do not deceive yourself. Merely opening the gates of your mind to the devil is dishonesty toward God. So, get completely far away from the devil, and his ways, and his army. Do not indulge in his intrigues and do not delay, but resent him firmly saying "*Away with you, Satan!*" (Matt 4:10) so he knows that you are serious in your refusal.

**If you firmly refuse all the thoughts of the devil, you will be awed by him.**

The devil with his intelligence knows well what serious resistance is, and what in two minds is (1 Kings 18:21). He

knows who refuses him with a pure heart and who refuses him by word of mouth while his heart responds to him.

The devil can find out who will resist him unto death and who will submit if he presses a little. So, resist seriously, with all your power and with all your heart.

**I do not like the devil to say that you are good-hearted.**

I do not want him to say that this person is good-hearted, he rebels hard against me at the beginning but his heart is soft, and he soon responds. Though such a person objects much, at the end he consents and it appears as though this is the case each time!

**To resist is to refuse sin in all its forms. and to refuse satisfaction with less than perfection.**

This also means insistence in one's heart to follow the spiritual path, to refuse any suggestions of the devil, and moreover to watch his thoughts while they are still far away without holding any argument with any of them. Dismiss such thoughts at first sight and shut all the gates of the soul, the mind, and the heart in front of them. Do not indulge in anything under the pretence that the matter is simple or that you will not be influenced by such a temptation!

Resistance is necessary, but how? The apostle says, "*Resist steadfast in the faith.*"

#### **4. With faith:**

##### **You conquer the devil with faith, but what faith? It is:**

The faith that God works with you, that God is able to annul the power of the devil and all his snares set for you, the faith that God wills that, *"For the scepter of wickedness shall not rest On the land allotted to the righteous."* (Ps 125:3), and the faith that God is more powerful than all the intrigues of the devil and that God Himself fights for us.

*"The battle is the Lord's"* (1 Sam. 17:47), *"The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* (Ex 14:14).

You must believe that the battle is the Lord's. It is not you who fight the devil but God fights him in you and with you. It is God who gives you the power to fight and the weapons which you will use and the experience of fighting the devils as David the prophet says,

*"Blessed be the LORD my Rock, Who trains my hands for war, And my fingers for battle;"* (Ps 144:1)

Do you take God with you in your wars, your temptations and in your problems? If you are defeated, this may be because you do not take God with you. God is absolutely able to conquer in you and to be glorified in you however little your power is and however slight your persistence, for the Holy Bible states,

*"For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few."* (1 Sam 14:6).

When Hezekia the king received a threatening letter from King Sennacherib and his valiant army, he put the letter before God in the Lord's house and poured himself before God to take action.

So, God interfered and sent His angel and smote the camp of Sennacherib (2 Kings 19:35).

**We notice how with faith David the prophet conquered in his battles.**

He says, *"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side when men rose up against us, then they would have swallowed us alive... our soul has escaped as a bird from the snare of the fowlers... our help is in the name of the LORD, Who made heaven and earth."* (Ps 124). *"But my eyes are upon you , O God the Lord ...Keep me from the snares they have laid for me, And from the traps of the workers of iniquity."* (Ps 141:8,9). *"Refuge has failed me; No one cares for my soul. I cried out to You, O LORD: I said, "You are my refuge, My portion in the land of the living."* (Ps 142:5).

**With such faith, David conquered in his wars as he conquered Goliath.**

No matter how powerful your enemy is, believe that God will save you from him. Sing with David the prophet, *"The voice of the LORD divides the flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness..."* (Ps. 29:7,8). Resist the devil with strong faith repeating the words of St. Paul the apostle,

*"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*  
(Phil 4:13).

Be steadfast in this faith, trusting that God will take your side and help you to conquer in all the wars of the devil. He will never forsake you, and as He was with our fathers and led them to triumph in Him, He will be with you also and will not permit anyone to set on you to hurt you (Acts 18:10).

**This faith will give you the strength of heart within, and a power over the devil without.**

Thus, when the apostle speaks about our battles with the devils, he says, *"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*  
(Eph. 6:10,11).

Thus, for such a matter, our personal power will not do but we must, "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." Our human weapons are not fit, but we have to put on the whole armour of God and feel God's power working for us.

**With this power, we will not have the spirit of failure nor the spirit of submission to the devil.**

We will not have the spirit of slackening or the spirit of despair because God, upon whom we depend, is able to protect us through all the diabolic wars. By this power St. Paul the apostle was able to say, *"I have fought with beasts at Ephesus"* (1 Cor 15:32). With this power, he was able to say, *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and*

*of a sound mind."* (2 Tim 1:7). So, God's children never fail in their battles.

**They are valiant, neither the devil nor sin can prevail over them.**

How fine is the statement which St. John the apostle wrote about God's children, *"Whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him."* (1 John 5:18). All of them have the spirit of triumph and attain the promises as the Lord says in Revelation (Rev. 2,3).

Look at Job the Just and the Lord's testimony concerning him, *"There is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil? And still he holds fast to his integrity...?"* (Job 2:3). Could the devil prevail over such a person? No, God even defied the devil with him.

**In war, always put victory before you and not failure.**

Say, "It is impossible to fail as long as I resort to God and He fights for me. I do not fear the devil but I shall say to the Lord, *'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me.'*" (Ps 23:4). I am in the right hand of the Lord and He has graven me upon the of His hands (Is. 49:16). The Lord has said about His sheep, *"And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand... and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."* (John 10:28,29).

With faith we can triumph, and also with humility we can triumph.

## **5. With humility;**

### **St. Anthony used to conquer the devils with humility.**

Whenever they gathered around him, he used to address them humbly, "Ye strong, what do you want with me who am weak?" and he prayed, "Save me, O God, from those who think I am of any worth though I am too weak to fight even the youngest of them." When the devils heard him raising such a prayer full of humility, they could not endure but vanished like smoke.

### **St. Macarius the Great too conquered the devil with humility.**

Once, the devil appeared to St. Macarius and said, "Ah for you Macarius! One thing you do that we do not! You fast and we eat nothing, You keep awake and we do not sleep. You inhabit the desert and wilderness and we also; but you overcome us with one thing". The saint asked what that thing was and the devil answered, "It is with your humility that you overcome us."

### **Humility overcomes the devil for many reasons, among which are the following;**

First: because the devil is not humble and humility reminds him of his pride which was the cause of his fall.

Second: because humility reminds him of the image of Jesus Christ who emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a slave in order to save humanity. Mere memory of this troubles him and he departs.

Third: because the humble person, feeling his weakness, seeks the power of God to help him in fighting the devil and this is the thing which the devil fears most.

So, I wrote once in my notes the following words:

**"The devil said to God, 'Leave to me the strong, I am responsible for them; but the weak I cannot overcome because when they find that they have no power, they fight me with Your power'"**.

**The story of St. Sarapamon the Veiled (Abu Tarhaa) proves that casting out the devils can be effected by humility.**

The daughter of a ruler called Zahra was possessed by a devil and they brought her to the Patriarch to pray for her so that the devil might be cast out. The Patriarch said to them humbly, "I do not have such a gift, go to St. Sarapamon the Veiled". When they went to him he said humbly, "My prayers for her are not sufficient." He required the cross of the patriarch to cross her with and said, "By the blessing of this cross, she will recover". He meant by this to attribute her recovery to the Patriarch not to himself. Thus she recovered because the devil could not bear such humility.

We have talked about the importance of humility for fighting the devils giving some examples of stories of a few saints, now we shall discuss an important question:

**What is the practical effect of humility in overcoming the diabolic wars?**

1 - A humble person always realises that he is weak and seeks God's help which comes to him powerfully; so he conquers because he does not depend on his own human arm but on God's help.

2 -The humble person is on guard against the slightest sin, and is afraid to fall so he gets away from all temptations and does not throw himself into a trial or think little of any matter. Through this caution due to humility he conquers the devils.

3 -The humble person reveals his wars and weak points, so that they are cured and thus he conquers.

4 - The humble person always prays and raises prayers even for the slightest sin. Thus, he takes God with him in his wars and conquers.

5 - Humility itself is a virtue which the devils cannot bear and so they fly away.

As a person conquers the devils by humility, he conquers also by wisdom and discernment.

## **6. By wisdom and discernment:**

When a thought haunts your mind, you have to examine it well: Is it of the diabolic wars? What is right and what is wrong with it? Do the same thing with visions and dreams and with the advice of others... and with all deceptions of the devils... The apostle draws our attention to such awareness, discrimination or discernment saying, "... *Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God*" (1 John 4: 1).

### **What then are the sources of such wisdom, knowledge and discernment?**

There is a person who is wise by nature, God created him so, and granted him intelligence, wisdom and knowledge. He can discover the devil's war and distinguishes it discerning it from the spiritual thought. Another person acquires wisdom through reading the Holy Bible, spiritual books and stories of the saints. A third person acquires wisdom through experience. Every fall gives him a lesson and he gets acquainted with the wiles of the enemy so he does not fall again. As one of the saints said,

**"I can not remember that the devils overthrew me in a certain sin twice."**

A person may acquire wisdom through counsel, guidance and learning.

As he distinguishes the devil's war and reveals it, he gets away from it and the enemy cannot deceive him.

This applies to the person who wants to conquer; because there is a person who knows that such a war is of the devil, yet he continues doing it for reasons within himself or because he is unable to resist.

**As wisdom reveals the intrigues of the devil, it also provides the means of action.**

A wise person knows how to escape the intrigues of the devil, how to escape his snares, how to rise after falling and how to get away from all the ways of sin.

If he does not know, wisdom leads him to consult others.

## **7. By counsel and confession:**

**Spiritual guidance reveals the intrigues of the devils and shows how to escape them.**

The guide also prays for the soul which reveals its thoughts in order to be saved as St. Paul the apostle says, "*Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy...* " (Heb. 13:17). So, whoever follows his own will in the spiritual path, may fall in the snares of the devils, and it is said,

"Those who have no guide, fall as the leaves of the trees."

Hence is the importance of the confessor in the church. You reveal to him your heart, to be ashamed, and humiliate yourself before God in his presence. He guides you to what you should

do. Confession reveals wars of which beginners are perhaps not aware.

**The person who confesses gets rid of many sins due to the virtue of confession.**

The devils of these sins cannot bear the humiliation of the person who confesses so they fly away. The devils also like to work in darkness and confession reveals them. Guidance breaks their snares and the dispensation given in the sacrament of confession destroys their labour. So, we find that the person who confesses his sins and obeys guidance leads a life of repentance and is saved from the diabolic wars.

Though sin may not leave him entirely, its power becomes weak when attacking him.

**So, the devil tries to hinder confession and throws suspicions concerning the confessor.**

Here the devil of bashfulness interferes to hinder confession. Then comes the devil of lust to say, "What is the use since I will return to you!", and the devil of thoughts and argument begins to discuss the subject of confession as a whole. Then follows the devil of doubt to throw suspicions concerning confession and the confessor.

As for you, be steadfast, and confess all this too. Thus, the devil will find no way with you and will consider you a troublesome opponent and leave you.

## **8. Watchfulness and caution:**

It is not enough to confess and reveal yourself asking for guidance, but you ought to be watchful for your own salvation (*see our book "Spiritual Watching and Vigil" for a detailed explanation.*) as the apostle says,

*"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion..." (1 Pet 5:8).*

Be vigilant because your enemy is wakeful and strong lest he should attack you in time of unawareness, negligence or slackening or in time of fatigue or when you are forgetful of your spiritual duties or not anxious about your salvation.

**The church provides us with many occasions on which it calls us to be awake:**

In fast it says to us, "Be sober and ready" and, in the Liturgies it says, "Come and partake in Holy Communion deservedly". In the sermons, readings and meetings, we are called to be anxious about our eternity and to fight God's wars with all carefulness. So, we have to be watchful because the church calls us to say to God at the beginning of the midnight prayer, "Remove from our minds the sleep of neglect. Give us, O Lord, watchfulness to know how to stand in Thy presence..."

**The devil wishes his prey to be negligent so that he may be easy to destroy.**

Whoever neglects his spiritual duties, is easily made to fall because he is not strengthened by any spiritual preparedness or any spiritual emotions which the practices of Grace plant in the heart. So, sometimes when the devil wants to overthrow a person, he begins with the weapon of neglect. The result is that the person slackens in his prayers, reading, spiritual meetings, confession and Holy Communion. As he becomes unguarded, the devil strikes him and he falls

On the other hand, the person who is concerned about his spiritual duties, puts God before his eyes. This makes him ashamed of falling and God helps him in his wars.

**There is a type of person who does not come to himself except after falling.**

An example of this type is the lost son who awoke only after being lost and continuing so for some time. David the prophet also was not aware when he fell. He came to himself only when Nathan said to him, "Thou art the man". Solomon the wise was not in his wisdom either when he fell, and he was not aware that all was vanity and vexation of spirit except when the women enticed him.

**As for you, as long as your enemy roars, declare a general mobilisation.**

Say to the devil, "Stop at the borders and do not go beyond them". Prepare your weapons of fasting, prayers, vigil watchfulness, repentance and caution. Hold on to the Lord and be watchful for every motion of the enemy, every desire, every thought, every action of the senses. Do as the apostle says,

*"...bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," (2 Cor 10:5)*

In your spiritual vigil hearken to the words of the apostle,

*"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Eph 6:11). Be wakeful, "your sword upon your thigh because of fear in the night" (Song. 3:8). We mean by this the sword of the Spirit, the breast-plate of righteousness and the shield of faith (Eph. 6) and all the spiritual practices.*

**Let such caution and such readiness last with you all your life.**

Be on guard unto death, and be watchful to the last moment, *"lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping."* (Mark 13:36). The Lord Jesus Christ was fought even on the cross when it was said to Him, *"If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."* (Matt 27:40). So, be always ready then and do not say I have grown old or I am already saved!

**Beware of the devil who fights with theology.**

You may say, "O Lord, have mercy upon me", and find the devil rebuking you and saying, "Never say, 'have mercy upon me', for the Lord has had mercy upon you a long time ago when he redeemed you on the cross and saved you. What does this word 'mercy' mean then? It is a heresy!" Say to him, "The Lord had mercy upon me and saved my soul, but I have no mercy upon myself. I lose my salvation everyday. So, I shall cry out saying, 'have mercy upon me'".

So, watch over your own salvation.

**In your watchfulness, behave in complete seriousness and complete caution.**

Be very faithful even in the little, because your faithfulness, caution and seriousness will make the devil flee from you feeling that the battle with you is a lost battle.

There is an important weapon for victory, it is the most important weapon ie. Prayers.

### **9. By prayer and fasting:**

When the disciples were unable to cast out the devil, the Lord said to them,

*"This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."*  
(Mark 9:29).

Hence, we see the importance of prayer and fasting for triumph in diabolic wars, or in other words, the importance of bringing God into our lives and our wars crying out to Him, "Deliver us from the intrigues of the adversary, and annul all his snares set against us".

**We shall fall in our wars if we face the devil alone without God.**

We ought to say to God, "This strong enemy of ours, who walks about as a roaring lion, this crafty resourceful enemy

cannot be overcome by our skill and intelligence, but we seek salvation from You. We, as far as we can, discern spirits and find out the thought that comes from him and be on guard against it but, the power is from You."

**We struggle as far as our ability permits us, but You lead us to triumph in Christ.**

In respect of every sin whether big or small, we do not want to face the devil alone but God must be with us. So we address Him at the beginning of the First Hour Prayer, "We ask thee to keep us this day without sin, and deliver us" and in the conclusion of the same prayer we say,

"Grant us to please Thee this present day. Protect us from every evil, every sin, and from every power of the enemy", "Surround us with Thy holy angels that we may be guided and guarded by them..."

**We must ask God's help from the beginning of the way.**

Many people do not seek God except in time of affliction, like someone who does not go to the physician except when the disease becomes more severe and he reaches a very bad condition. But, the church teaches us to pray for delivery before the wars come.

**It is a protective prayer before the curative prayer.**

We ask God to annul all the snares of the devil set against us, not waiting till we actually fall in them then ask God to get us out of them! Thus in the thanksgiving prayer we ask God to

take away from us, "all temptation, all the influence of Satan... the rising up of enemies, hidden and manifest". We ask Him to take them away from us before they come, and to "lead us not into temptation".

**We do not get confused before the wars of the enemy, but we ask God's help.**

This devil who is experienced in fighting people over seven thousand years I cannot overcome. But You are God, the eternal, existing before the devil. He was the creation of Your hands before his fall. You know all his intrigues, you can tie him and restrict him and set limits for him, and even dismiss him completely. So, save me from him.

Thus, you have to resort to prayers without which you would not be saved.

**If you fall in fighting the enemy know that your prayers have failed.**

If your prayers are strong, you will certainly conquer him. Be sure that when God hears the cries of the poor, He will respond. For He says, *"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, Now I will arise," says the LORD; "I will set him in the safety ..."*(Ps 12:5). So, say to Him, *"Rise up, O LORD! Let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You."* (Num 10:35). Rise, O Lord, *"Help, LORD, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men."* (Ps 12:1). Rise and say openly, *"Gird Your*

*sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty; and in Your majesty ride prosperously ."* (Ps 45:3, 4).

**The devils are Your enemies, O Lord, before being my enemies.**

They fight Your Kingdom in me and in others; so, fight them on my behalf and on behalf of others. Do not leave us alone in the wars of the devils because without You, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

David the prophet who experienced God's triumph in his wars said the words of the psalm,

*"The right hand of the LORD is exalted; The right hand of the LORD does valiantly."* (Ps 118:15, 16)

Did you try the Lord's right Hand in your life? Did you experience God's salvation of which He said to Moses, *" Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD ... The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace."* (Ex 14:13, 14). If you experience this, you can say with David the prophet, *"The LORD is for me among those who help me; Therefore I shall see my desire on those who hate me."* (Ps 118:7). *"A thousand may fall at your side, And ten thousand at your right hand; But it shall not come near you."* (Ps 91:7)

You have tried your own reasoning, your intelligence, your will and your practices and the assistance of people; but have you experienced the Lord's salvation? Have you experienced the

effectiveness of the strong prayers holding the altars horns? Would that you do! ... Do not be like a person who says to the Lord,

**"Let me work, O Lord, and if I fall and am not able to rise I shall seek you."**

Why do you wait till you fall and are unable to rise? Seek him at this moment and you will find his power supporting you so as not to fall. Of course, if you fall and seek God, He will lift you up but you will rise wounded and broken down! Resort to the strong Hand that can protect you and cry out to the Lord saying, "Deliver us from the intrigues of the adversary, and annul all his snares set against us". Then God will come to your help and deliver you and you will sing with the psalmist,

*"The snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth" (Ps. 124:7,8).*

Ask God then to give you victory as He gave those who struggled before you; and to give you power as He gave them, and to give you His Grace and the power of His Holy Spirit that you may be supported with His Divine power. Ask Him to rebuke the devil as He did before and to say to him, *"Away with you, Satan "* (Matt. 4:10).

## **10. Get thee hence, Satan:**

**These words with which the Lord rebuked the devil, "Get thee hence, Satan" were not for the temptation on the**

**mount only but also far all the wars of the devil with mankind.**

Experience the power of these words in your life when the Lord comes in and dismisses the devil so that his war may not be severe against you or at least that he do as he did with the temptation on the mount, to depart from you for sometime (Luke 4:13).

When you find then that the war is moved away from you and the thoughts and lust no longer trouble you as before, and when fatigue no longer exists but a new light shines upon you, know that the Lord has rebuked the devil and dismissed him ... to send him away from you.

**God does not permit the devil to fight us continuously.**

God does not permit the devil to hold us in his grip. When God sometimes lets the devil tempt us, this is to give us the chance to attain spiritual benefits out of these wars.

However, when the devil presses on us with despair or confusion, God rebukes him saying, "Away with you ,Satan ".

**There may be times when a person is relieved of the diabolic wars.**

A person finds himself absolutely with God, happy in His communion and he even wonders how he sinned before and how he fell. In the middle of this spiritually comforting sphere, he realises that the Lord Jesus Christ - glory be to Him - who passed these diabolic wars, has rebuked the devil for him... as if

He has said to the devil, "I gave you the liberty to tempt and try, but not to this extent. So, get thee hence, Satan".

**Believe me brethren, the sins which we fall into are only a little of the diabolic wars.**

These wars would have pressed violently on us, had not God hindered them before reaching us and had He not prevented the devil from tempting us with them. God only permits that you be fought with the wars which you can resist, if He permits that you be fought with the others you would not bear it. You may be exposed to a severe war and be about to fall.

**Then you find yourself saved from such a war without being aware of it.**

That is because God interfered and said to the devil, " Away with you .... you have pressed on this person violently..." This reminds us of how God put limits for the devil for fighting Job the Just: once not to lay his hand on Job (Job 1:12), and another time not to touch his life (Job 2:6).

**The words "Get thee hence, Satan" are a great comfort to us.**

They make us aware that the wars of the devil are limited, and that he is not absolutely free to do whatever he wants with us. They make us aware also that the devil himself is in the hands of the Almighty, who is able to rebuke him whenever He wills, to prevent him and set limits for him, hindrances and restrictions, and even to dismiss him. Let us be sure then that whatever wars we are exposed to, they are within our power, and our

abilities and our resistance. We can overcome them, if we want to.

God has given us power over the devil, we can say to him "get thee hence" and he gets away.

**However, many a time we do not want to say to the devil, "Away with you ".**

Sometimes, we slacken in fighting him and give him a way to get within us. Some other times, we submit to him and languish and postpone dismissing him. Sometimes, we negotiate with him and stop hostility with him and become not resolute with him. We sometimes even yield to him or co-operate with him, refusing entirely to say to him, "Get away..."

**I even fear that some open their hearts and emotions to him and welcome him!**

Many cannot dismiss the devil and say to him "Get away" because there is friendship between them and the devil, and there is love or familiarity, and there are ties which link them with him and subject them to his will. Even if the Lord rebukes him and he goes away, they would seek him and pray him to return and help them! They do not want the devil to get away from them!

Only a pure heart can rebuke the devil and say to him, "Get thee hence", and can become happy when God rebukes him, while others have some needs with the devil for which they keep him and even defend him! The same happened with the Ephesians who defended the goddess Artemis (Diana) and her statue (Acts

19:28). So, the Lord sometimes used to ask the person first before healing him, "*Do you want to be made well?*" (John 5:6).

**So, if God wills to dismiss the devil away from you, respond to Him.**

Let your will be one with God's will to dismiss the devil away from your life, no matter what this may cost you and no matter how you would be troubled when the devil gets away from you, for the Holy Bible says,

**"Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."**(Prov 27:6). The devil may kiss you pretending that he loves you and deludes you with the idea that he will make you happy and realise your lusts and desires so that you may not dismiss him from your life all whilst he is preparing snares to destroy you! So, do not believe him.

**Go deep into your heart and your mind and say, " Away with you ,Satan ".**

When the Lord rebukes this devil, rebuke him with God truly and with all resolution and determination, abolishing any former relation between you and him. Do not try to keep God with the Devil in your life because, "*What communion has light with darkness?*" (2 Cor 6:14).

Do not make friends with an enemy of God and do not take part with him in any act. Remove all his belongings from your life, your house and your library; all his pictures, his books and magazines, all his means of amusement and songs and stories, his agents and supporters. Say to him, " Away with you, Satan,

and all that belongs to you". Shut before him all the gates so that he may not return to you.

**Dismiss the devil with all seriousness, forever, and resolutely.**

Let not your dismissal of him be unsteady, irresolute and disturbed. As the common saying goes, "An eye upon paradise, the other upon hell"! Be absolutely sure that the stay of the devil with all his intrigues is a loss to you. Be cautious not to accept any profit through him because such a profit will cost you your life and your eternity.

Among the means which help you to dismiss the devil there is:

### **11. Facing the sin with the commandment:**

**Learn by heart a number of verses against the sins which fight you.**

For example when the devil fights you with anger, say to him, *"for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God."* (James 1:20); or repeat the words of one of the saints, "though the irritable person raises the dead, he is not accepted by God or by anyone."

If the devil fights you with an evil look, put before him the words of the Lord, *"Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* (Matt 5:28).

If he fights you with adultery, remember the words of the apostle, *"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit "* (1 Cor 6:19). *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!"* (1 Cor 6:15).

If the devil fights you with the faults of the tongue, put before you the verses of the Holy Bible, *"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking."* (Prov 10:19). *"... Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;"* (James 1:19); and also say, *"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips."* (Ps 141:3).

If the devil fights you with the love of the present world, with its temptations, face him with the words of the Holy Bible, *"The friendship with the world is enmity with God."* (James 4:4), and, *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (1 John 2:15), *"And the world is passing away, and the lust of it."* (1 John 2:17).

Remember also what is stated in Ecclesiastes in this respect, in particular the statement, *"Vanity of vanities... all is vanity and grasping for the wind and there was no profit under the sun."* (Eccl 1:2, 14, 2:11).

If the devil fights you with pride, remember the words of the Holy Bible, *"Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall."* (Prov 16:18), and, *"God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble."* (James 4:6), (1 Pet 5:5).

**This way of facing the sin with the commandment is the advice of St. Evagrius.**

We find this method extensively in St. Evagrius' poems on "The War of Thoughts" which are available in the manuscripts of the monasteries. However, you can find for yourself some verses from the Holy Bible which you may use in your wars, and learn them by heart.

**The word of God is quick, and powerful (Heb. 4:12) and has its effect.**

Be sure that when you remember the word of God it will surely have a restraining effect within yourself, as the Lord has said, *"So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it"* (Is. 55:11). Try then the power of the word of God in the wars of the devil.



**CHAPTER**

**5**

**BENEFITS OF DIABOLIC WARS**

**God does not prevent the devil from fighting us but He takes our side in these diabolic wars and turns them to our spiritual benefit.**

Thus we see St. Paul the Simple, after living with St. Anthony for some time protected by his prayers, he was asked by St. Anthony to reside alone so that he might face the diabolic wars in his loneliness and get benefit for himself.

What then are the spiritual benefits which may be gained from diabolic wars? Those wars which the secluded hermits experienced in the desert and wilderness till they could devote themselves to the love of God and could fight the enemy?

### **1. The first benefit is humility:**

The more severely diabolic wars fight a person, the more he feels his weakness and this puts an end to his pride and he feels penitent within. He finds himself liable to fall and his will fallible and recognises how sin *"... has cast down many wounded, And all who were slain by her were strong men."* (Prov 7:26)

### **2. Prayers and holding fast to God asking His help:**

When a person is at rest, he may not seek divine assistance and may not feel his urgent need for it. But, when the war is severe against him, he cries out to God to give him victory over his cruel enemy. Thus, feeling himself weak, he holds fast unto

God in deep prayers, in strong relations as He said, *"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."* (Ps 50:15).

### **3. Spiritual wars call for compassion towards sinners:**

Whoever is not fought by the devils may be hard towards sinners and condemn them when they fall. But whoever has been fought and experienced the violence of the enemy is compassionate towards every sinner and prays for him. As St. Paul the apostle says, *"Remember the prisoners as if chained with them; those who are mistreated; since you yourselves are in the body also."* (Heb 13:3); he also says about the Lord of glory, *"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."* (Heb 2:18)

### **4. Spiritual wars give the person experience:**

The person becomes practised in fighting, and learns war, becomes acquainted with the intrigues and arts of the enemy. He gets experience through his rising or his falling. It is known that every promotion must be preceded by an examination and whoever passes this examination is promoted as is the case with students. So, we find that whoever has fought the wars of the enemy has gained experience.

These spiritual experiences are a school which provides spiritual guides, who are able to help others, and encourage them and reveal the wiles of the enemy to them.

## **5. These wars are a blessing through which we gain crowns:**

True are the words said by one of the saints, "None shall be crowned except the one who conquers, and none shall conquer except the one who fights."

Our endurance of the wars of the enemy and withstanding them, our struggle and our resistance, all this shows our love for the Lord and we gain crowns for this. As one of the fathers said, "The crowns are not given in the war only to the soldiers who won victory, but also to those who were wounded and hurt as long as they have not yielded to the enemy and fought him."

## **6. These wars always give us the spirit of wakefulness and readiness:**

As the Lord says, "*Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning;*" (Luke 12:35). The feeling of a person that he is in a war makes him always ready to fight, and perform all the spiritual practices to conquer, such as prayers, fasting, humility and spiritual counsel. But if there were less wars, perhaps this would lead him to spiritual lethargy. Wars make him always ready, always cautious and on his guard. The fear of falling makes him get more prepared in order to conquer.

## **7. Spiritual wars make us powerful and not afraid:**

He who fears war is he who does not face it or who does not fight. But the person who experiences wars, gains courage and boldness. The crowns which he gains encourage him to enter

other wars and he fears not to fall. Would a student say, "I shall not be examined because I am afraid lest I should fail. I shall not even study or go to school!"? No, he takes the examinations bravely saying "I shall overcome any difficulties of learning and examinations."

### **8. Spiritual wars are a school of faith:**

In these wars we see how God's Hand interferes, how it helps and gives victory, how it rebukes the enemy, how it gives the small David the power to conquer Goliath the valiant. This gives us deep confidence in God's love, in His care and work for us.

### **9. Spiritual wars express the principle of giving the devil equal opportunities:**

He had the opportunity to fight, with all his power, lest he should protest against God's children saying, "Why does the Lord reward them? If I had the chance I would overthrow them." This is what he did in the days of Job and he had this opportunity; but Job remained holding fast to his integrity (Job 2). God allows the devil to fight the believers but He gives them power to conquer and disgrace the devil.

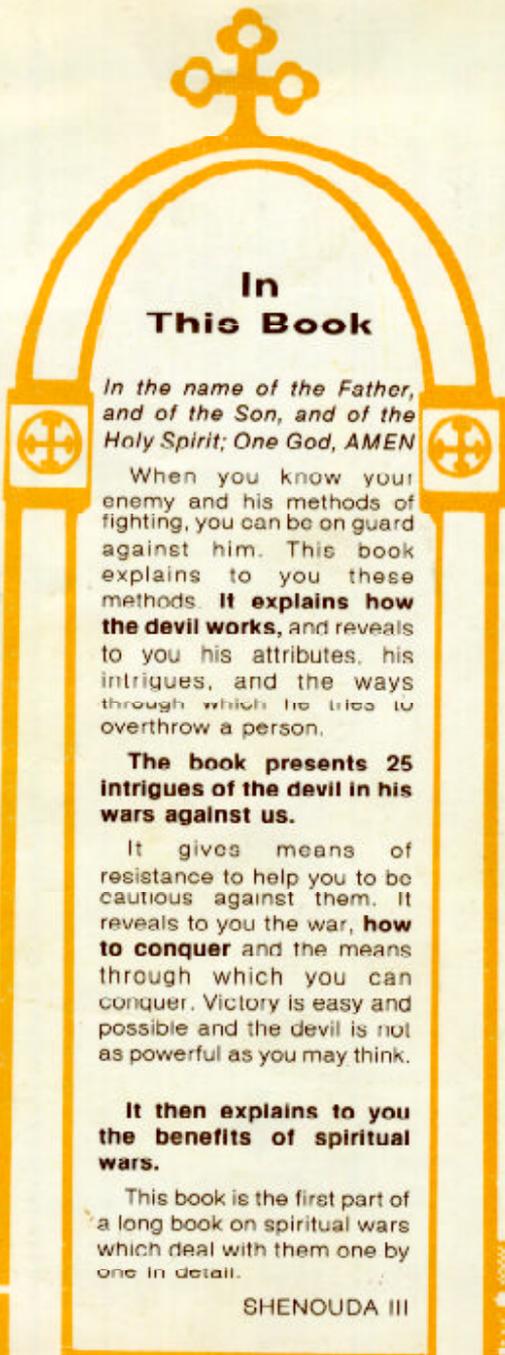
**10. Lastly, spiritual wars open the doors of the Heavenly Kingdom before us and determine our rank in it:**

Everyone takes his wages according to his labour and his struggle. So, we find the believers do their best to express their love for God because how would their love be revealed except by testing it through spiritual wars; and how would their rank in the Heavenly Kingdom be determined without such spiritual tests.

May God be with us in all our spiritual wars and lead us to triumph in Him.



**Thank God**



## In This Book

*In the name of the Father,  
and of the Son, and of the  
Holy Spirit; One God, AMEN*

When you know your enemy and his methods of fighting, you can be on guard against him. This book explains to you these methods. **It explains how the devil works**, and reveals to you his attributes, his intrigues, and the ways through which he tries to overthrow a person.

**The book presents 25 intrigues of the devil in his wars against us.**

It gives means of resistance to help you to be cautious against them. It reveals to you the war, **how to conquer** and the means through which you can conquer. Victory is easy and possible and the devil is not as powerful as you may think.

**It then explains to you the benefits of spiritual wars.**

This book is the first part of a long book on spiritual wars which deal with them one by one in detail.

SHENOUDA III

