

The Triumph of Divine Love over the Powers of Hell

In the possession of the Mother Superior of the Ursulines of Loudun, exorcised by Father Jean-Joseph Surin of the Society of Jesus

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Introduction: A Summary of the History of the Possessions of the Ursulines of Loudun

It was the year 1633, during the reign of Louis the Just,¹ and while Cardinal de Richelieu² was first minister in the French government and was doing very illustrious things for the good of the church and the state, that Our Lord permitted hell to undertake something fearful in the city of Loudun. This undertaking could be seen in the possession of the Ursuline nuns who some years earlier had established a convent there,³ and who, in the peace of their convent, were working for the good of the church by charitably instructing young persons of their gender. By a strange magic charm, the nuns found themselves vexed unjustly by the malevolent spirit and possessed by the devil, during the time when Monsieur Martin de Laubardemont⁴ was serving as *intendant*⁵ for justice and was working on the demolition of the castle and the fortifications of that city.

Ordinarily, evil spells of that sort, of which there are numerous examples in the history of the church, are based on the lewdness of magicians who use demons to act in the bodies or spirits of women or maidens, in order to induce them to carnal love.

Several persons have believed that this same carnal love was the source of the magic charm that showed up in this Ursuline convent; but when the true story has been told, it will be seen that the magic charm placed upon the nuns of Loudun was based on hate, rather than love.

¹ King Louis XIII of France (1601–43, r.1610–43).

² Cardinal Armand-Jean du Plessis de Richelieu (1585–1642), commonly referred to as “Cardinal de Richelieu,” became Louis XIII’s principal minister in 1624 and held that position until his death.

³ Founded on August 31, 1625, the convent accepted its first nuns in July 1627.

⁴ Jean Martin (or Jean de Martin), baron de Laubardemont, was born in Bordeaux around 1590, died in Paris in 1653. In 1633, he was entrusted with the witchcraft trial of Urbain Grandier (1590–1634), *curé* (that is, parish priest) of Loudun, whom he sentenced to be burned alive. Laubardemont was related to Jeanne de Belcier (1602–65), known in religion as Mother Jeanne des Anges. She was the superior (“mother prioress”) of the convent and the main protagonist of the dramatic events; Belcier was related to two other nuns. During the 1620s and 1630s, Laubardemont held positions in the Parlement of Bordeaux. For Laubardemont, see Roland Mousnier, ed., *Lettres et mémoires adressés au Chancelier Séguier* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964), 1:112. For Laubardemont and Loudun, see also Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France*, esp. 212–17, 265–69, 323, 546. The main English-language analysis of the events that are the focus of Surin’s book is de Certeau, *Possession at Loudun*.

⁵ *Intendant*: “A person who is appointed to guide or direct specific affairs and who is empowered to give orders. Intendant for justice in the army, in a province, and so forth”; DAF 1694.

That is to say, there had been some big lawsuits between two churchmen, both of them canons in the collegiate church of Sainte-Croix of the said city of Loudun. One of them was Monsieur Mignon, a very wise and virtuous man, who is still alive; and the other was *Sieur Urbain Grandier*, a man whose learning was above average and whose knowledge of letters befitted a man of his rank.⁶ In addition, he was well built and good-looking, endowed with eloquence and decorum in his conversation. And he was witty. Although he was a canon of Sainte-Croix, he was also *curé* of the principal parish, that is, Saint-Pierre-du-Marché. There had been big lawsuits between these two churchmen, which Monsieur Mignon had won before Monsieur de Poitiers,⁷ his bishop, and had lost before Monseigneur the archbishop of Bordeaux,⁸ his primate, before whom there had been an appeal. Those who knew the truth about these disagreements believed that Grandier's vices were the origin. For he was commonly held to be a libertine and a debaucher, as became all too evident during the lawsuit and by his own admission before the judges. Monsieur Mignon, whom everyone considered a man of uprightness and probity, was chosen by the Ursuline nuns to be the person in whom they would confide, taking him as their confessor, having greatly distanced themselves from *Curé Grandier* because of his libertine air and his bad reputation. Consequently, although Grandier tried hard to gain access to the nuns, he nonetheless had no habitual contacts in that house, and several of the nuns had never even seen him before the big lawsuit against him in which they were engaged. The lawsuit resulted from the enmity that had developed between him and Monsieur Mignon (although I believe that, in the latter's case, this enmity came from his zeal rather than from revenge). This lawsuit planted a very strange thought in Grandier's spirit, which involved giving some devils to the nuns and causing them to be possessed, employing an art that almost no one suspected, and of which he nonetheless was subsequently convicted, although he never admitted that it was magic.

6 Jean Mignon (dates unknown), *curé* of Loudun, a Capuchin monk, was close to another Capuchin, Father Joseph, born François Lecerle du Tremblay (1577–1638), Richelieu's principal advisor on occult matters. A *curé* is a priest who administers a *cure*, that is, he is entrusted with the souls and the spiritual conduct of a parish. *Monsieur* is a quality or title showing honor, civility, politeness, to persons to whom one is speaking or writing; DAF 1694. By contrast, Urbain Grandier is called *sieur*, an honorific title normally used in law courts, in public acts, and in other texts of the sort; DAF 1694.

7 Henri-Louis Chasteigner de la Rocheposay (1577–1651), born into a noble family from Poitou with Protestant leanings, opted in favor of Catholicism, took clerical orders in 1596, and moved in papal circles in Rome. He was consecrated bishop of Poitiers in 1612.

8 Henri d'Escoubleau de Sourdis (1593–1645), born into an old noble family of Poitou, was coadjutor to his older brother, the archbishop of Bordeaux, whom he succeeded in 1628.

In order to take revenge on his enemy by this abominable art, Grandier got the idea of causing the nuns, who were young and mostly from good families, to be moved by an ardent love for him. If the nuns were driven in their interior, he could take advantage of some of them; and when they became pregnant, it would be attributed to the only person who had been seen talking with them, that is to say, Monsieur Mignon. Having decided on this plan, Grandier carried it out as follows: a branch of a rose bush bearing several roses was tossed into the convent, and everyone who smelled the roses was seized by the malevolent spirit. The mother prioress was first. She was twenty-five at the time, and her name was Jeanne de Belcier,⁹ daughter of the baron de Cozes in Saintonge. She was very mature and very prudent. Next came her two relatives, both known as Mother de Nogeret, two sisters.¹⁰ Then came Sister Claude de Razilly, Cardinal de Richelieu's relative; Sister Anne de Sainte-Agnès, the daughter of the marquis of La Motte Baracé in Anjou; Sister Martha and Sister Catherine, lay sisters. In addition to these possessed women, all the nuns were obsessed, and in the convent as a whole almost everyone bore some mark of possession.¹¹ Carried away by this magic charm, they felt vehement inclinations for Grandier, in addition to the thoughts and the imaginings that nature can give, but that hell uses against the most innocent persons. God permitting this, they thought only of Grandier. Although they did not even know him by sight, they would cry out for him alone, and they would go to the most distant places in the building and gardens to cry out for him and seem to be seeking him; so it sometimes happened that after they had spent several hours in a little garden shelter, or in an attic, sighing for him, having chosen a convenient time and place he would appear to them, suddenly transported by the devil. And Our Lord permitting this, he would say to the nuns: "Well! What do you want of me?" But when these souls regained consciousness, they would be disgusted by him and would reject him, horrified, because these impressions and these desires had not become part of their will and had occupied only the sense that

9 Jeanne des Anges was the daughter of Louis de Belcier de Cozes (dates unknown). The text reads "Belciel," a distorted spelling that has tacitly been modified here. Surin generally calls her "the mother prioress," or simply "the mother." Her attacks began in 1632 and continued until late 1638. For more on her, see de Certeau, *Possession at Loudun*, passim, esp. 213–26; Henri Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1933), 5:201–251.

10 This misspelled name ("Nogent") has been tacitly corrected in this translation. The two nuns were almost certainly the children of Louis de Belcier's half-brother, Louis de Barbézieux, lord of Nogeret (1668–1701). For these persons and for events at the convent before Surin's arrival in December 1634, see de Certeau, *Possession at Loudun*.

11 For the differences between obsession and possession, see glossary, "Obsession vs. Possession."

this, God was showing him the sort of suffering into which he had permitted the father to fall. No physician could explain this unusual suffering.¹¹⁶

After the mother's total deliverance, all the other possessed women hoped to obtain theirs, and they begged the fathers who were doing the exorcisms to exorcise them no longer, hoping that if the exorcisms were stopped, they would find peace and would no longer be tormented. They continued to say this, but the fathers had difficulty believing them. Nonetheless, by his providence, God caused the king, who had seen the mother totally delivered, to deem it a useless expense to keep the exorcists at Loudun. This part of the budget was therefore crossed out in the financial records, and the payments stopped. Everyone went away, and in a short while the maidens were in peace and tranquility, and so was the mother. The nuns, no longer being disturbed, devoted themselves to serving God, to prayer, and to cultivating their interiors. And God spread his blessing over them and over the convent. As for the names that were on the mother's hand, they remained until the feast of Saint John,¹¹⁷ 1662, when they were renewed for the last time. Today, in 1663, these names are completely gone, and no one knows why, except that this mother, in order to be freed of the continual importunities of those who, in order to see them, were turning her away from Our Lord, had asked, pleadingly, that this suffering be lifted from her. "And that," says Father Surin, "is a truth that I learned from her not long ago in one of her letters. And so, for a year and a half, she has not had the names on her hand, and we do not know what God will do in the future."

The End

[A preliminary note by Jean-Joseph Surin]

116 At this point, the 1829 edition has the following note, presumably written by the unnamed editor: "The rest of the manuscript of this first part discusses a great number of healings operated by Saint Joseph's holy unction, not only to serve as proof of the grandeur of this saint's merits, as Father Surin recounts, but also as proof that the mother's voyage through France to Savoy was truly ordered by God in order, by the authenticity of the marvels that accompanied this voyage, to confound the extravagance of those who denied the mother's possession and her fortunate deliverance. Elsewhere we shall publish the account of these miraculous healings."

117 The feast of St. John the Baptist falls on June 24.

return to Annecy with the mother. Thus was God's will made manifest. The curiosity of the inhabitants to see the marks on the mother's hand delayed their departure, and for two weeks the father remained in the same silence. But on the very day when they were leaving Lyon, the two fathers, on horseback, had no sooner begun the *Veni Creator* than Father Surin was able to reply, and he continued to speak after that, albeit little by little, as they advanced with the mother toward the end of their voyage. They stopped for a while at Grenoble, where people were not a little surprised to see the father talking, showing the mother's hand and the holy unction before the altar at the college, and recounting how the mother had been healed by Saint Joseph. Having reached Annecy, the mother was received with great joy by Mother de Chantal and was admitted to the convent. There, she made a novena at the saint's tomb, and she spoke frequently and intimately with this venerable prioress.

It was not possible to remain longer at Annecy, for the crowds were becoming so large that the convent was losing its peacefulness. The same was true on the return trip to Chambéry and Grenoble. In the end, since the heat was excessive, and since only with difficulty could Father Surin remain on his horse, he resorted to the convenience of the coach, and went with the mother all the way to Brissolles, via Roanne, Moulins, and Nevers. They continued their journey as far as Briare,¹¹³ where Father Surin separated from the mother, letting her go to Paris to be present at the queen's lying-in, and he set off for Poitiers. He said Mass for the first time at Moulins, on the feast of Saint Ignatius,¹¹⁴ and he gave an exhortation at the priory of Guinne, of the Order of Fontevault, and then in every place through which he passed, all the way to Bordeaux. Having arrived there, he resumed his Spiritual Exercises, preached throughout the year 1638, and then relapsed more than ever into the strange accidents that have gripped him until now,¹¹⁵ He was unable to leave his bedchamber or make the slightest movement. One day, a devout person, having felt compassion for him, asked God to give the father some relief and to participate in his ailments, not knowing specifically of what those ailments consisted. This person immediately felt gripped and taken over, and was unable to move. This lasted for a quarter of an hour, at the end of which the person was liberated. By

¹¹³ This is the standard seventeenth-century route from Savoy to Paris.

¹¹⁴ July 31, 1638.

¹¹⁵ That is, in these few sentences the manuscript takes us from 1638 to 1660. These final two pages of chapter 9 serve as a bridge to *The Experimental Science*, which survived partly in print (edition of 1829) and partly in manuscript (ed. Cavallera, 1928).

was being besieged. He would also come to the mother prioress in the middle of the night, when she was in bed, and he would present himself to her in his house-robe, in a light that appeared to come from the devil. He would say things to her that no one could interrupt, for during this time the other nuns would be sleeping so deeply, owing to the magic charm, that even if the mother had cried out, she could not have made herself heard.

All these temptations were permitted by God, and the demons were never able to get the nuns to consent willingly. "The demons often bore witness to me about this," says Father Surin, "and they expressed their rage at being unable to shake the will of a maiden attacked so violently by so many solicitations, and for so long." But God always kept order, so that the liberty of the nuns (with the help of his grace) would have its full place, and nothing would be done against their will that might give an advantage to their visible and invisible enemies.

This evil spell was first discovered by Monsieur Mignon, who, surprised by what he was observing in the mother prioress, summoned the *cure* of Chinon (Monsieur Barre¹¹²), a wise, pious, and very upright man, and together the two of them exorcised the mother, in whom the demons Asmodeus, Leviathan, Be-hemoth, and others did strange things, to the point of lifting her body into the air and replying in Latin to hidden thoughts. Even at the start, the demons would reply in Latin; and as for the question in the Roman Ritual, *Quis te Magsus unmsit?*¹¹³ the demon replied "Urbanus." This astonished the two clerics, who did not in the least suspect Urban Grandier, even though they did not have a very good opinion of him. After this early stage, the matter was referred to non-ecclesiastical magistrates; but since the *balli* and his *lieutenant particulier*¹¹⁴ were Grandier's good friends, they turned everything to his advantage as much as they could.

The demons' accusation during the exorcism greatly shocked these persons, and this continued until the king, having heard about it, ordered his intendant, Monsieur de Laubardemont, to become informed, and he gave him an order to inquire into this mischief and act as judge. Not knowing about the order, which he perhaps had not yet received, Monsieur de Laubardemont, as he later told Father Surin, had an impression in his soul, when Grandier came to greet him, that Grandier was the criminal whom God was sending to kneel at his feet.

¹¹² Pierre Barre (dates unknown), *cure* of the parish of Saint-Jacques at Chinon, was the first

tempted to prolong the affair in his own parish.

¹¹³ "What magician sent you?"

¹¹⁴ *Balli*: the king's administrative representative, responsible for the application of justice and the supervision of the local administration and finances. He might be assisted by a *lieutenant particulier*, a special lieutenant.

Having received the order, he did not delay having Grandier arrested and taken to the castle of Angers, because there was no secure prison at Loudun. At Angers, he interrogated Grandier, who at first refused to reply, but then decided to do so, and answered. Meanwhile, having been informed about what was going on during the exorcisms, Monsieur de Poitiers came to Loudun; but since there were several possessed persons (for, in addition to the nuns, there were three or four lay women), he summoned a Recollect friar named Father Lactance, a good religious who had been successful at other exorcisms, having delivered someone in Auvergne from a possession. This father began very seriously to exorcise the mother prioress, and sometimes the others, among them Sister Agnès and Sister Claire, Monsieur de Poitiers usually being present. These exorcisms were done with great show and were attended by all sorts of persons who came in great number from every province.

Seeing that the demon's accusations were always directed against Grandier and his accomplices, both men and women, in order to be close to the exorcism, Monsieur the intendant ordered that Grandier be conducted to Loudun, where the intendant kept a very strict prison; and after several interrogations and confrontations with the nuns, who said that they had seen the aforesaid Grandier several times in the convent at an unwarranted hour of the night, the intendant was ordered by the king to assemble fourteen judges from the various neighboring *présidiaux*,¹⁵ such as Poitiers, Angers, Tours, Orléans, Chinon, La Flèche, and others. The members of this court having been selected, and Monsieur de Laubardemont presiding, the demons told of marks on Grandier's body, which were verified. His trial was held and completed, and the judges unanimously declared him guilty of casting evil spells on the nuns. Although he persisted in denying the crime of magic, he did admit to several other crimes, and especially to having written a book against priestly celibacy, which was found in his trunk, written in his own hand. He was nonetheless sentenced to be burned alive in the city of Loudun. This sentence was carried out, Grandier being continually attended by religious. His death took place with so scant a demonstration of piety that, two hours before the execution, he was singing the song about the happy sojourn of Parthenia and Alidor, which showed that he had very little devotion and a totally profane and worldly heart. While they were executing him, the demons in the possessed persons appeared to be extremely pained about his chance of salvation. They were in the convent at the time, and everything going on in Grandier could be seen on the faces of the possessed. Finally, at the moment of his death, the demons showed extreme

15 *Présidiaux* (sing. *présidial*): intermediate courts established in 1552 between the provincial parlements and the courts of the *baillis*.

were received by the *Reverendissime* Mother de Chantal.¹¹⁰ She very charitably lodged them for the nine days they were there. Mother de Chantal, greatly troubled at seeing that Father Surin was mute, wanted to try to contribute to his healing by means of the holy bishop's relics. The nuns thought that they should make him swallow a little bit of the bishop's dried blood that they kept in a box. That was done in the morning, immediately after Communion. As soon as he swallowed it, a sort of air bubble formed in the depths of his entrails and came up into his mouth, causing him to say these words distinctly: "Jesus, Maria." But he was unable to say anything else, so great was the sudden shock to his faculties. When the novena was over, they went to Lyon, hoping to encounter the mother there.

They soon learned that she had left Paris with Monsieur de Morans, the grand vicar of Monsieur de Poitiers, the mother sub-prioress, her companion, Madame Amauric, and a young lady. Monseigneur de Sens's gentleman was on horseback. Monseigneur the cardinal de Richelieu had said to her upon leaving: "Come now, Mother, I fear that your exorcist, Father Surin, has left. Try to meet up with him, and even if he is already at Annecy, bring him back, so that you can go together to accomplish your vow, as stated."

However, the plague broke out in Lyon, and it spread so quickly that the fathers resolved not to wait for the mother there. They organized their departure for a specific day; but a legitimate obstacle surfaced. The next day, as the father was about to mount a horse in order to leave, a messenger came to say that the mother had just arrived, and that she was going to the house of Reverend Mother Matel,¹¹¹ prioress of the convent of the Incarnate Word, near Fourvière Square.¹¹² He went there with Father Thomas, his companion, and saw the mother arrive. When Father Thomas said that they were going back, the mother told them about the order she had received from Monseigneur the cardinal. It was necessary to consult the Jesuit reverend fathers of Lyon, who concluded that despite the orders of Father Jacquinet, the provincial, Father Surin ought to

110 Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot (1572–1641), the widowed baroness de Chantal, met François de Sales in 1604 and founded the Congregation of the Visitation at Annecy in 1610. De Sales wrote his *Treatise on the Love of God* for these nuns. Chantal was canonized in 1767.

111 Jeanne Chézard de Matel (1596–1670) was busy founding the Order of the Incarnate Word when the prioress of Loudun met her. The house in Avignon dates from 1639; Grenoble followed in 1643.

112 The printed text of 1829 reads "Fourmière." This seems to be a misreading of the handwriting, "A hill called Fourvière" (now the site of the nineteenth-century basilica of Notre-Dame de Fourvière) looms over the old city. The error, if it is indeed an error, persists in the Prunair edition.

Monseigneur the cardinal de Richelieu at Rueil.¹⁰⁴ He received her with great benevolence, and joyfully viewed her hand. The queen,¹⁰⁵ who was at Saint-Germain,¹⁰⁶ summoned her. The king also wanted to see her, but his courtiers persuaded him to refrain from doing so. He therefore decided to go hunting in order not to be attracted to that curiosity. However, when the time came to mount his horse, it began to rain. This made him change his plans. Having learned that the mother had just arrived, he went straight to the queen's quarters and was followed by the entire court, in such a crowd that the queen, who was pregnant with Louis XIV, felt ill. Upon seeing the mother's hand, the king said that it really was necessary to see it in order to judge it; then, having looked pleasantly at the mother, he withdrew. The queen welcomed her warmly, and she too wanted to see Saint Joseph's unction, which she greatly revered. Next, she wanted the mother to promise to return for her lying-in, wanting Saint Joseph's unction to be near her at the hour of her delivery.

The mother was also well received by her uncle, Monseigneur the archbishop of Sens,¹⁰⁷ by Monsieur the chevalier de Sillery,¹⁰⁸ and by several high noblemen and noblewomen. Monseigneur the cardinal de Richelieu supplied the money for the journey, Monsieur de Sillery loaned her his coach and horses, and Monseigneur de Sens gave her a gentleman to accompany her. She was delayed for a long time in Paris, so Father Surin had already reached Annecy by the time she left. The vow specified that they go to the tomb together, but that was not the opinion of Father Jacquinet, the provincial, who planned that the father should not go to the tomb with her unless they happened to meet at Annecy. But as we shall see, Our Lord wanted the opposite. Having reached Chambéry,¹⁰⁹ the father was awaiting news of the mother, whom he would have been very pleased to meet there, owing to the vow that specified that they go together; but he also wanted to obey the father provincial. As a result, he and Father Thomas continued along their route toward Annecy, where they

¹⁰⁴ The chateau of Rueil (formerly spelled Ruel) was Richelieu's country house, purchased in 1533. It was famed for its gardens and fountains.
¹⁰⁵ Anne of Austria was the queen consort of Louis XIII. Her first child, the future Louis XIV, was born on September 5, 1638.
¹⁰⁶ The "new" chateau of Saint-Germain-en-Laye, some twelve miles west of Paris, was a favorite country retreat for the royal family. Louis XIV was born there.
¹⁰⁷ Octave de Saint-Lary de Bellegarde (1587–1646) was consecrated archbishop of Sens in 1614. Well connected to royal favorites, for several decades he played a major role in church affairs. He was Madame de Belcier's half-brother.
¹⁰⁸ Noël Briart de Sillery (1577–1640), a knight of Malta (hence his title *chevalier*), divested himself of his family fortune, became a priest in 1634, and founded a mission in Canada in 1638.
¹⁰⁹ In the 1630s, Chambéry was one of the principal cities of the duchy of Savoy.

signs of joy at his not having escaped them; for they had feared the contrary, because the Blessed Virgin was praying for him. She had obtained graces for him, he had abused them, and the demons' imprints¹⁶ had gotten the better of him. That is what they were saying.

At the time, Loudun was like a theatrical stage to which everyone was thronging. Monsieur de Poitiers was conducting exorcisms along with Father Lactance, Monsieur de Laubardemont was there with the assembled judges, and a quantity of physicians had been summoned from all over to judge these

energumens, that is, possessed persons.

Father Lactance would exorcise now one, now another, forcing the demons to adore the Blessed Sacrament; which they did with convulsions surpassing nature. Nonetheless, the variety of spirits and the crowd of onlookers turned this possession into a problem. Several persons said that this was nothing but silliness and imaginations; others, on the contrary, took things seriously, seeing in it the finger of God¹⁷ and the prodigious effects of his justice. Among the effects of the exorcisms that Father Lactance was conducting very vigorously was a quite noteworthy one: the demon Asmodeus, who from the beginning was possessing the mother prioress along with six other demons, promised to come out publicly the next day. As a mark of his coming out, and of the coming out of the other two demons, he promised to leave three openings in the mother's chest, below the breast, and he fixed an hour for it. This was done as he had promised, and the three demons left three openings in the mother's skin. They pierced her corset, which was garnished with whalebones. Although there was a great deal of quibbling about this coming-out, saying that the mother had subtly broken her skin with a piece of iron, in order to make people believe in this coming-out and to deceive everyone, she was delivered of the demon Asmodeus, who previously had always spoken through her, but who no longer appeared except to Sister Agnès, whom he still possessed.

Shortly after Grandier's death, death came to Father Lactance, who had been of great help to the nuns. He was obsessed by the demons and molested in his person; but he finally was seized by an illness that carried him off in a short time. Monsieur de Poitiers also withdrew, leaving the Capuchin fathers in charge of exorcising the nuns. With the permission of Monsieur de Poitiers, Monsieur de Laubardemont assigned an Oratorian named Father Dupin to care for the mother prioress until someone was appointed. In response, the king, who had been made aware of what was going on, and Monseigneur the

¹⁶ For this phenomenon, see below, glossary ("Imprint"), and also *Science*, part 2, chapter 13, and part 3, chapter 2, where Surin writes at length about "impressions" and "imprints."
¹⁷ For this image, see Exod. 8:16–20.

cardinal de Richelieu, got the idea of employing the Jesuit fathers to exorcise these maidens. To this end, His Majesty wrote the father provincial of Guyenne to inform him that he wanted some Jesuit fathers to be sent to help these poor, possessed maidens. Monseigneur the Cardinal [Richelieu] also wrote him; and the father provincial (Arnaut Bohire¹⁸), mulling over the matter, decided on Father Surin, who at the time was at Marennes, where he was preaching to the people. As was customary with matters of consequence, the father provincial wanted to consult his advisors. None of them wanted to send this father, because he was only thirty-three, and they did not think that he possessed the necessary qualities for that function. Despite this, the father provincial remained firm in his opinion; he informed the superior at Marennes that as soon as he received the letter, he should send Father Surin to Poitiers, to exorcise the nuns of Loudun

1 How Father Surin Undertook to Exorcise the Mother Prioress, and the Condition of the One and of the Other

When divine providence chose Father Surin to be employed at exorcisms, he was as far from being disposed to doing this function as one could imagine; all the more so because, for several years, he had been overwhelmed by great physical and spiritual suffering that rendered him almost incapable of all types of work. His body was so feeble that he could not apply himself to anything without a great deal of pain; and owing to continual headaches, he could not do the least reading. Moreover, his spirit was plunged into such extreme sufferings and pressures that he did not know what would become of him, all of this owing to an order that he did not understand and to causes for which he could find no remedy. This anguish had especially been gripping him for two years, during which his soul had been so darkened, afflicted, and clenched, and his body so hemmed in and anguished in every way, that he did not think he would be able to live very long in that condition. His troubles had begun four years earlier,¹⁹ but for the first two years, they were accompanied by a great

18 Arnaud Bohyre, provincial of the Jesuit province of Aquitaine (1632–36), of which Bordeaux was the principal city.

19 In 1630, Surin finished his “tertianship” year of novitiate at Rouen, at which point he began “laboring” for God and for his neighbor: first at the novitiate of Bordeaux (1630–31), next at the college of Saintes (1631–32), and then as a missionary at Marennes (1632–34), a coastal town in a Protestant region that was prosperous owing to its location in the middle of salt-producing marshes.

me a piece of that saint’s flesh, wrapped up in a cloth. That precious relic had the same odor as Saint Joseph’s unction, and even the same odor as on the mother’s hand.

12 Containing What Happened before and during the Mother’s Journey to Savoy

The mother having acquired total peace and liberty, Father Surin was spoken to about working to help other possessed persons; but his ailments had worsened in the extreme. The father provincial having come to Loudun, the father himself asked to withdraw, which was granted him. He was sent to Bordeaux, where he was incapable of doing anything but endure his suffering. It became so intense that he even lost the ability to speak, and was mute for seven months, unable to say Mass, or read, or write, or even dress and undress himself, or finally move at all. He sank into a malady unknown to all the physicians, whose remedies remained without effect. The entire winter was spent that way.

Meanwhile, they thought about carrying out the vow, made at Loudun, to go to Savoy. The father desired it very much, hoping to find relief there from his ailments. The mother also desired it greatly. Finally, those on whom this journey depended contributed to carrying it out. Having learned that the mother would be going to Paris after Easter, and then to Lyon and from there to Savoy, Father Jacquinot told Father Surin to be ready to depart, and to go meet her, wanting him to go via Toulouse, Languedoc, Avignon, and then Grenoble. He gave him as a companion Father Thomas, a gentle and charitable man, and after *Quasimodo*¹⁰³ they left Bordeaux together. Externally, the father appeared to be in rather good health, but all that time he was suffering extremely from external ills. And being unable to speak, he was deprived of the consolation of gathering any benefit during his voyage from the persons who spoke to him. He used signs to confess to Father Thomas, and he received Communion very often.

Already quite far along the route, he learned that the mother was in Paris, at Monsieur de Laubardemont’s residence. She was visited there by a large part of the royal court and by common people, who would go to see the marks on her hand. To satisfy the public’s curiosity, she had to stay patiently at a low window from which she would show her hand to everyone who appeared, more than fifty thousand souls a day. Each person talked about her as his fancy dictated: some treated her with respect, others with great scorn. She visited

103 The feast of Quasimodo was celebrated on the octave of Easter. In 1638, Easter fell on April 12. In short, they set off in late April.

Saint Louis,¹⁰⁰ Another thing happened that adds proof to this. There was a nun in the house who suspected that artifice might be involved. That is why, one day when they were hoping that these names would appear, renewed, the nun waited for the mother, who would be entering the nuns' choir to hear Mass, at which everyone was supposed to receive Communion. When she arrived, Madame de Dars came up to her and begged her to let her see her hand, where, at that time, she saw the names almost entirely effaced. During the entire Mass, she kept her eyes trained on the mother, watching everything she did. The mother received Communion with all the others, and everyone left after the thanksgiving. This nun ran toward the mother and begged her to show her hand. There, with joy and surprise, she saw the names as lovely and new as one might desire. This left her convinced that there was no artifice, and that the mother was not playing a role in their renovation.

We shall therefore repeat: it is an effect of God's goodness, not only in order to teach mankind that God is just in punishing his enemies, who are the demons, but also that he is very gentle toward those who serve him, giving assured proofs of a supernatural thing, and continuing for so many years to do a significant good for the consolation of the persons whom he had permitted to be afflicted by his enemies through such a terrible persecution.

On the subject of the renovation of the four names that were on the mother prioress's hand, Father Surin said that it happened every two weeks, with effects that gave admiration and consolation to everyone who saw them.¹⁰¹ These effects," he adds,

were a very sweet and agreeable odor that I judge to be like the one I smelled in my youth on pieces of Saint Teresa's¹⁰² shroud, which had been given to me by a Spanish mother named Isabelle des Anges,¹⁰² who was one of the first to come to France. When she was in Bordeaux, she gave

¹⁰⁰ Louis IX, king of France (1214–70, r.1226–70), known as "St. Louis," was a model of the ideal

¹⁰¹ Teresa of Avila (1515–82), also called Teresa of Jesus, was a Spanish Carmelite nun and mystic.

¹⁰² Venerable Isabelle des Anges (1565–1644), a profess at the Carmel of Salamanca, Spain, founded the Carmel of Bordeaux in 1610. When only a young adolescent, Surin was being instructed by this nun, whom he called his "spiritual mother." Later, he evoked the spirit of St. Teresa and the charms of the Bordeaux Carmel. Teresa had a "divine force, similar to lightning that topples everything in order to reach his target. [...] With this force, there appears in Teresa's spirit a charming sweetness that, like a celestial balm, perfumes the entire church. This was felt in her conversation, in her discussions, in all her manners. [...] Nothing is sweeter than her Cantiques. [...] The agreeableness of her spirit passed to her daughters [the Carmelites], and so did her force," Surin, quoted by Bremond, *Le sentiment*

religieux, 5:162–163.

deal of consolation and assistance from God. For the next two years, he lacked this reinforcement, and his ills seemed unbearable to him; so he continually asked Our Lord to please have pity on him, and give the father the means to serve Our Lord in liberty.

One day, while kneeling in his bedchamber, asking Our Lord to please open the way to his relief, if it was for his glory, and to put him in a place and in a condition where he might be delivered from the extreme impediments he was feeling, his superior entered his bedchamber, bearing a letter from the father provincial, who was ordering the father to go to Loudun to exorcise the possessed Ursulines. It subsequently was determined that this was the confirmation of his request, and that this employment, in a supernatural way, had cured his ills.

At first glance, this occupation appeared to him to be totally impossible as far as nature was concerned, owing to the hard work he would have to do during the exorcisms and the conversations with the demons.²⁰ He was not discouraged, however. To the contrary, he felt an interior trust founded on blind obedience. Thinking about what he had to do, and measuring himself against this work that God was placing in his hands, he felt strongly attracted to practicing that obedience with a total loss of self. And from that simple practicing, he proposed to himself that he would promptly call upon his inner vigor. Shortly after having been notified, he understood clearly what he had to do, and he formed an idea about God's plan. He would tranquilly and patiently apply himself to relieving the souls he would be given, by inculcating into them the maxims of the interior life.²¹ And through these maxims, rather than by another way, he would put the demons into an extreme rage. He thought that it would be possible to obtain from God the deliverance of these souls, having first earned his mercy by a total subjection of these souls to God's graces and power. The father then thought about the efficacy of this interior life, and its ascendancy over the demons. Feeling inside that God was promising him some secret vigor for wielding this type of weapon, he left Mareennes, where he had been for two years, and set off for Loudun. Several times, along the road, he was shown his weakness, and just how impossible was the matter that he was undertaking; yet he felt great delight at losing himself in obedience, and he would say:

²⁰ In 1629, during Surin's year as a tertian, Louis Lallemand (1578–1635), his tertianship master, would have reviewed the basic doctrine about demonic behavior. See Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 166–69.

²¹ For an overview of the "interior" life, see the writings of Surin's teacher, Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 171–85.

If I can do nothing else, I shall speak of God and his love into the possessed woman's ears. And if I can make my words enter her heart, I shall win a soul to God, and shall persuade that soul to dedicate itself to this happy life that one has with him in one's interior. If not, my words will cause the devil so much pain that he will be forced to listen to me, and he will want to surrender his fortress²² to me.

In this spirit and with this trust, his principal concern was to remain recollected.²³ He continued along his route and spent the night in La Rochelle, to which he had gone on foot, hoping to do the same for the entire journey; but he had been too optimistic. That one day had so exhausted him that he had to go on horseback to Poitiers. There, he was given as a companion Father Bachelier, who was older than he. In this manner, the two of them reached Loudun.

Meanwhile, the father provincial was giving further thought to this matter. The next day, he wrote to the superior at Marennes saying that, if Father Surin had not yet left, he should keep him there, for he had changed his mind; but that if Father Surin had left, he should be allowed to go to Loudun.

At the time, there was a very pious maiden at Marennes who had great communications with God, and who had Father Surin as her confessor and director. He had told her about the order he had received and would obey. She learned from God that the father would suffer strange ailments while carrying out this task; so she was terrified, and her face could not conceal her apprehension. She told the father that he would experience great ailments, but that God would help him. In a supernatural vision, she had seen a hand extended over him, like a pall to protect him.

This took place during Advent of 1634. Having reached Loudun, Father Surin watched the persons who had preceded him at doing exorcisms. The first time he attended an exorcism, it was clear to him that these maidens were possessed by the malevolent spirit. God gave him such great tenderness for them, owing to the great wretchedness of their state, that he could not keep from shedding many tears when he saw them, and from feeling moved to relieve them by an extreme affection. Monsieur de Laubardemont, the intendant, took him

²² In a sort of reverse image of "standing guard over the heart" (see Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 107–14), Surin imagines the demon standing guard at a fortress (*place*), always ready to launch an attack. This is but the first of many evocations of demons as warriors who are determined to retain control over a possessed person's soul.

²³ Recollection means attention to the presence of God in the soul. It includes withdrawing the mind from external and earthly affairs in order to attend to God and divine things. It is interior solitude where the soul is alone with God.

We have said that there is reason to believe that the renovation of these names was done by the mother's good angel, for although the first characters were made by the operation of the malevolent spirit, there is nonetheless good reason to think that their extraordinary conservation should be attributed to the good angel, not to the devils from whom she was delivered. All the more so since this renovation is done with the interior and exterior disposition of peace, devotion, and recollection, which is one of the marks given by spiritual persons as proof that the spirit is good. It is not that there have not been diverse persons who wanted to philosophize on this subject, and who have said that the marks of the bad spirit were there, because these names were on the left hand, which is the hand associated with the devil. Moreover, it would begin at the lower part of the hand, not the top part; for they say that the top is close to the thumb and that the name Jesus was seen closest to the little finger, and then Maria, and that the last name, François de Sales, is closest to the thumb. This leads to an ill-advised speculation, but it is unfounded.

One must consider that Our Lord wanted these names to be written and conserved on the hand, for the mother's consolation, and that for her convenience they should be as they were. Otherwise, they would not have been read and seen so easily by her. Indeed, if someone wanted to write them on his hand, that person could only do it by writing on the left hand, beginning at the base of the little finger and continuing to the thumb, and by putting them on the back of the hand, in order to read them conveniently. Thus there is no need for philosophizing and going to seek other causes, except that God wanted the good maiden to be able to read them and be consoled.

I have reported proofs that these names were renewed in a totally supernatural way. Here are some other proofs that are above suspicion. There was a high-ranking lady named Madame de Dars, who asked Monsieur de Poitiers for permission to withdraw to the convent at Loudun. Several persons begged her for indubitable proof of the truth; and she herself desired it just as much as they did. She therefore asked the mother to please make available the hand on which the names were written. Having granted this request, around the wrist of her glove the mother put some silk that closed the entire glove; and in two places she put a seal of Spanish wax on this silk, putting her own seal on top of it. She did this at a time when the names were soon going to be renewed on an approaching holiday. The feast day having arrived, Madame de Dars begged the mother to permit her to remove the seals. Having broken the seal that closed the glove, she pulled on it, and she found the names totally repaired, as usually occurred every two weeks, and particularly on noteworthy feasts of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, the apostles, Saint Ignatius,

Third, she felt all of this in such a horrible manner that it seemed to her that a thousand deaths would not be as grievous for her as the agony of seeing herself close to Jesus Christ, so luminous, so powerful; and that appearing in the same place with him was a torment that surpassed all hell. This continued for a moment. Then, the demon having suddenly emerged, she dismissed that frightening idea and entered into thoughts of trust and peace with which she received Our Lord. This event left her with a very lively and very strong impression about the horrifying misfortune of a spirit who receives his condemnation from God and his dismissal, in order to be sent from his presence for an endless time. And she admitted that if God had not helped her so powerfully then, she would have perished during this encounter.

As for the holy name of Jesus written on her hand, this is what should be noted. We have said that the two other names that were already there were renewed from time to time. But when that occurred, they would be renewed lower down than previously. Thus, moving little by little down toward the thumb, the name Joseph at first was in the middle of the left hand, on the back, the name Maria was as high as the extremity of the hand, so that no place remained for writing above it. But as time passed, and as they moved downward, these names left a large space above Maria, and it was then (that is to say, seven or eight months later) that the holy name of Jesus appeared in the form we have just described, and the name of Saint François de Sales. Then, all four together, they continued to renew themselves whenever, having faded, they moved all the way to the extremity. This continued for twenty-four or twenty-five years.

Once, it so happened that Mother Agnès⁹⁹ was present when the good angel came to renew the marks. Since the glove had been removed, she laid her cheek on the mother's hand, and felt a little tickle as if someone were engraving on her skin. Then, having looked, she saw the perfectly formed letters, having had the advantage of being present at this operation and being a witness. I say that it is the good angel who renews these letters, because it sometimes happens that he spreads, at the same time, very agreeable and very sweet odors that are smelled in the place where the mother is, be it in the choir, be it elsewhere, even throughout the entire house. And for several years, these same marks have been perfumed with the agreeable odor that resembles the holyunction of the balm discussed earlier. This causes great devotion in all who are witnesses, with several other indices that cannot be politely uttered, but that someday will be known and will give great reasons for praising God.

⁹⁹ Sister Agnès, who took her vows in October 1632, was possessed by Amodéus. She is not mentioned on the list of possessed women; de Certeau, *Possession at Loudun*, 90–93.

to the mother priorress of the Ursulines,²⁴ whom he found in a very tranquil disposition and with the free use of her spirit. Upon first seeing her, he was marvelously moved at rendering service to this soul, and at making efforts to help her experience the goods hidden in God's interior kingdom. She, on the other hand, owing to the devil's interior imprint, felt very apprehensive about the father. She heard a voice inside her saying: "Here is the one who will ruin me." This impression from the demon made her resolve not to open her heart to the father.

After this first visit, the father thought about the exorcists' way of doing things; and since their way was extremely laborious, it was as he had foreseen. And it seemed to him that, judging from what he had personally experienced since the age of twenty-five, he would be unable to continue the exorcisms for more than a day. As much as he could, he was keeping himself from examining his own state and fathoming the circumstances; he was simply careful to lose himself in obedience and to sustain himself by trust. He was more determined than ever to pursue the idea that had come to him at Maremnes, and he figured that, for him, it was a matter of prayer and silence, not tumult and action. He was careful to make no plan, not even for expelling the demons, but to steep himself in the thought that he was totally incapable and a pure nothingness before God. He resolved not to undertake anything else, beyond seeing the openings that it would please God to give him, and following God's guidance as peacefully as if he had been a mere spectator, watching what was about to happen. They summoned the mother priorress for him: he took her as if from God's hand, and he began to look at her soul with what he thought was a charitable eye, seeing in her the love that God bore her, and the capacity she had to love God. He believed that he ought to gather all his strength to serve and cultivate²⁵ her soul, and he made the greatest plans he could for this soul, in hopes of making it holy. He went to Saumur²⁶ to reverence the Blessed Virgin and to put himself under her protection; then, back in Loudun, he began to carry out the duties of his position on the feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle.²⁷

²⁴ That is, Jeanne des Anges.
²⁵ *Cultiver*, "cultivate": "Do what is necessary so that the soil will be more fertile, and trees and plants will grow better and produce more fruit. Cultivate the spirit and the memory: devote oneself to perfecting them"; DAV 1694. Surin uses this word repeatedly, always in the context of bending over a fragile soul and coaxing it to grow, thanks to the spiritual nourishment he is providing.

²⁶ The chapel of Notre-Dame des Ardilliers, near Saumur, was a popular pilgrimage site during the 1620s and 1630s. (Surin mentions several visits to this chapel.) Among the pilgrims were Louis XIII and his queen, Anne of Austria (1601–66). Richelieu added a chapel in 1634.
²⁷ In the seventeenth century, this feast was celebrated on December 21.

However, there was an important matter at Loudun that was keeping spirits busy and attentive. Sister Claire's demon, who was horrible and who was called Zabulon, had promised, during this sister's exorcism, that he would come out on Christmas Day, and that he would write the Holy Name of Jesus on her forehead. The father exorcist greeted this promise joyfully, because it was a very attractive good. The news was spread everywhere, and in Poitiers people were saying that one of the principal demons of Loudun was supposed to come out on Christmas.

While Father Lactance was doing exorcisms in such a showy way, under the authority of Monsieur de Poitiers, the demons of all the possessed women had been questioned in conformity with the Ritual: *De die et hora exitus sui*.²⁸ Each demon promised marvels and things that were piquing everyone's curiosity: one was supposed to carry the preacher's pulpit to the top of the remaining tower of the castle; another was supposed to remove Monsieur de Laubarde-mont's skullcap. In a word, all of them promised great things. The mother prioress's demons had also made promises. Yet for all that, Our Lord permitted no effect beyond the demons' coming out from the mother prioress, but not so soon.

Everyone was waiting to see unusual things; people were thinking solely about being amused. Zabulon having promised to write the Holy Name of Jesus, everyone spread the news. However, since Our Lord never fails his own, he permitted the mother prioress's demons, who were the most important in the band and who were being asked about Zabulon's promise, to say that he was a deceiver, and that nothing but a bad effect would come of it.

Father Élisée, who likewise was Sister Claire's exorcist, came to interrogate this demon, who kept insisting that Zabulon was lying and that he was obliged to notify Father Élisée about it, against his will. That father said to him: "You are the one who is lying." Trusting in the devil's solemn promise, he told Behemoth that it would happen, despite what he said. At that, Behemoth said to him proudly: "It will only bring embarrassment for you and for your order. But all the embarrassment is for the devil, who is already sufficiently distressed and denigrated, having fallen into damnation, which is the quagmire of all evil." That a devil was supposed to come out caused a great stir at the royal court. And upon hearing about it, Monseigneur the cardinal de Richelieu, who had begged Monseigneur the bishop of Nîmes²⁹ to pass through Loudun and, on the king's behalf, see everything that was going on there, arranged it so that

²⁸ "About the day and hour of his exit."

²⁹ Anthime-Denis Cohon (1595–1670), a man of humble origins whose nomination to the see of Nîmes in November 1633 can be credited to Richelieu's favor.

I say, wanted the mother to be totally delivered from her last demon, without the father resorting to exorcism.

The first the sign of Behemoth's coming out had been the elevation of her body into the air, but Behemoth had long protested that, since they had given him other signs, that is, writing the name Jesus and then the name of Saint François de Sales, he did not feel obligated to make the first sign. On the feast of Saint Teresa, October 15, which was near the end of the retreat, the father was saying Mass, albeit very languidly, and he came to give the mother Communion at the little window with the grill. While holding the blessed host in his hand, he said *Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, and the mother, contrary to what was usual for her (for she was almost always tranquil at Communion), made a furious contortion, changed her face, bending and curving all the way to her heels, and raised her left hand toward the father. Becoming attentive, he saw manifestly, above the names Maria and Joseph, the name Jesus, taking shape in beautiful vermilion and blood-red letters. Since her hand was turned in such a way that her thumb was opposite him, he could not see the name François de Sales take shape. The devil came out at that moment and left her free. She resumed the posture of a person who, kneeling, awaits Communion, which she received with love and consolation, Our Lord taking her enemy's place. Since then, throughout her entire life, she has never again felt the devils' ordinary operations, remaining entirely free from that illness, which is one of the most horrible and the most worthy of compassion in the world.

A remarkable thing happened to her at the moment when the father was approaching her with the sacred host in his hand. God permitted the demon to do an operation in her, which is rather ordinary among malevolent spirits, and which consists of their strength to imprint their own sentiments in the soul of the person they are possessing. For by the virtue they have, they themselves can apply, as one applies a signet to sealing wax, and imprint upon the soul that they are vexing, be it by temptation, by obsession, or by possession, the very same sentiment that they have from either their malevolence or else from the power of divine justice over them. God therefore permitted this demon, who was reduced to coming out, to communicate and to imprint, in the mother's spirit, the same things he was feeling in himself, in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ. First, the mother felt, as if she herself was wicked and damned, a very strong and powerful idea of Jesus Christ, present, as her God, her judge, and her greatest enemy.

Second, she felt all the indignation of her anger in so terrible a manner that all hell seemed desirable to her compared with having to subsist for a moment in God's presence.

had destined this glory for his servant. Upon his arrival, the father resumed the exorcisms. The first day, he found the demon very rebellious about the orders of the church, and about things involving devotions to the Blessed Sacrament and the veneration of holy things. When it was a question of coming out, he kept saying that nothing but the saint's tomb would have the power to make him come out. The father told Monsieur de Laubardemont this, and said that he believed it was an order from God, which no one but he could change. He wrote the same thing to the father provincial, and the grand vicar notified Monsieur de Poitiers. But no one would agree, and the father relapsed into his previous languid state. However, he devoted himself to cultivating the mother's soul, hoping more from that than from all the other efforts.

On the feast of the Assumption,⁹⁸ the father was asked to preach to the Ursulines of Thouars. He went there, and that very day, during his absence, the mother, having received Communion, heard an inner voice that sent her into great recollection. It was telling her that, since men were so opposed to the ways that God was opening for her deliverance, it might be possible for God to deliver her at Loudun itself, should she and the father make a vow to go together to thank Our Lord and visit the sepulcher of Monseigneur de Genève; and that she should tell the father this. She shared this information with him upon his return. The father thought he should notify his provincial, and the mother wrote to Monsieur de Poitiers and to Monsieur de Laubardemont. They all thought it proper for this vow to be made, and they agreed to grant permission for the journey. The vow was to be made on September 17, the feast of Saint Francis's stigmata, when, having placed the Blessed Sacrament on the little shelf of the grill, the father on one side, the mother on the other, and the Blessed Sacrament between them, they vowed to go together to Monsieur de Genève's tomb in Savoy, in order to honor his body, in the event that it pleased God to deliver the mother from the demon who was possessing her. This vow was written down and placed in the hands of their superiors, who were present, after which they began waiting to see what Our Lord would do. The father, who was already very ill, did not have much strength for conducting a powerful exorcism, or even for making the mother profit from the spiritual things of which she was becoming increasingly capable. Around October 8, she desired to make a retreat for the Spiritual Exercises, during which the father did not exorcise her; but God, to confirm this practice, which was, as we have said, to place the core of the strength needed for this battle with the demons in the soul's interior devotion, rather than in the vehemence of the exorcisms, which only strike the exterior, although they bear the church's blessing. God,

the prelate would try to arrive in time to see this devil come out. The bishop arrived on Christmas Eve. It was decided that, after the noon meal, he would lead a procession that all the exorcists would attend, along with the possessed maiden. The maiden was led into the castle church, where she was put in an elevated place, everyone trying to have a good place to see the sign of this coming-out. The entire afternoon was spent in prayer, song, and exorcisms, until five in the evening. But they waited in vain: nothing happened. Everyone began to say that the devils were liars; and they went away quite discontented. Having seen the state of things, Monsieur de Nîmes wrote Cardinal de Richelieu and reported on everything; and the king wanted these good nuns to receive help, and he wanted several Jesuit fathers to be summoned. So, to Father Surin were added six or seven more fathers, who were assigned to several other nuns and to some lay persons as well, principally to Isabeau Blanchard.³⁰ The king allocated money for the upkeep of the Jesuit fathers, who created a community in Loudun. Monseigneur the Cardinal gave two thousand livres per year to the nuns, who had spent all their money to pay the costs of so many illnesses. Monsieur de Laubardemont also spent a large portion of his possessions. Thus did Our Lord provide for the nuns' spiritual and temporal needs. Now, it is appropriate to set forth here the condition in which Father Surin found the mother priorress, so that by knowing about her miserable state, one can judge the grandeur of divine mercy.

This maiden's natural disposition was most excellent as far as her spirit was concerned, which was very good. Her humor was sweet and flexible, her judgment solid, but her health was extremely poor, and her natural vivacity inclined her greatly toward every passion. And so, although she brought it moderation through virtue, she had nonetheless used grace in such a way that she was absolutely dead within herself. She had observed a common course of devotion that, guarding itself against the greatest ills and not striving for great goods, did not apply itself solely to contenting God with all her might. That is why the devil who possessed her had gained such an empire over her, and kept her totally enslaved and incapable of any pious function. For two years, she had experienced such a hardening of the heart that she could scarcely elevate herself to God and practice any prayer exercise. She received Communion and confessed without any feeling; and if she paused for even a little while in the church choir, the devil would claim the right to trouble and worry her, and

³⁰ Elisabeth ("Isabelle/Isabeau") Blanchard (dates unknown), a laywoman in her late teens, was purportedly possessed by six demons who caused her to do amazing things. De Cer-teau, *Possession at Loudun*, 92, 107, 108, 113–14, 196–97.

she would be forced to leave the choir. In addition, she was continually persecuted by violent temptations against which she had virtually no more strength, being sustained solely by an extraordinary protection from God. Things had finally reached such a point that, morally, she could no longer hold out or prevent herself from falling into her enemies' hands. Her soul's greatest trouble was the furious assaults continually made against her by the spirit of impurity named Isacaron, a great companion of Asmodeus. Seeing this soul's desolation, he undertook cruel things to make her lose honor and conscience. All night long, he would tempt her violently, wreaking on her body abominations that one cannot describe, and bringing into her bedchamber at night male and female magicians who would do their lewd acts before the eyes of this virgin who had been consecrated to God, yet who was, however, so bound that she could neither move nor close her eyes. It would be impossible to recount all the inventions that the enemy employed to ruin her. Here is one abominable invention, among others. Seeing that he could not sway her to consent to his temptations, he undertook to make her appear to be pregnant, in order to defame and dishonor her, and to make her despair. He went so far as to stop her bleeding, and to make her swell and show other signs, to the point that milk formed in her breasts. This shameful pregnancy of a nun was already visible when Father Surin reached Loudun, and it continued for several more months, during which the devil provoked her to despair, and threatened to put a dead child in her bed, and by that means to make people believe that she had given birth and had smothered her fruit. He would have carried this out, if God had not prevented him, with help from the Blessed Virgin, who forced the demon, as he later confessed, to vomit up all that blood that had collected in her body, so that it came out from her mouth for two hours on the feast of the Circumcision. Several noble persons witnessed this, among them Monseigneur the bishop of Nîmes. As a result of this miracle, this maiden's innocence was declared, her courage was maintained, and a great consolation was given to Father Surin who, at the beginning of his exorcisms, saw this effect of divine goodness on his work.

Several other very strange things were going on in this poor maiden's soul, where the devil was exercising his tyranny and, little by little, was preparing her total ruin, if God had not prevented it. Now, the remedy that his mercy brought to this extreme case was the help of the grace begged³¹ from glorious Saint Joseph and administered by the hands of Father Surin, as will be recounted in the next chapter.

³¹ Surin describes this particular grace as *impétrée*, that is, procured by pleading.

He set out in the morning. Along the way, there was a nun from that priory, praying in the church; she smelled a wonderful odor, as she put it in the text she wrote. Since this odor continually got stronger, she asked the sacristine if she had made some very special stew. The latter said, "No." And then the father arrived, and asked to see the prioress, who assembled all the nuns. The one who had smelled the odor came with the others, and having come near in order to kiss the unction, she found that it was the same wonderful odor that she had smelled, yet this odor was only perceptible when one's nose was virtually touching it, although several times, by a supernatural operation, it had been smelled from a distance.

There was yet another wondrous healing in the city of Saumur. There was an Ursuline nun, who had been in the infirmary for several years, afflicted by a great quantity of ailments, all of them strange. She was healed by having swallowed a piece of paper that had touched the unction, and she was so absolutely healed that the divine operation remained very manifest.

One day, Father de Ressès, who had been entrusted with exorcising the mother after Father Surin's departure, pressured more forcefully the demon Behemoth to come out. The demon replied that he would only come out at the tomb of the bishop of Geneva. The father told him that since he was supposed to come out by the merits of that saint, he wanted that saint's name to be written on the mother's hand as well as the name Jesus. The devil promised; and he kept his promise a year later, when he came out.

Meanwhile, Father Surin was in Bordeaux, with serious ailments that he was hiding as much as possible. Despite them, he was doing some preaching and was hearing confessions. He even went to preach at Bazas for the octave of the Blessed Sacrament.

11 How Father Surin was Sent Back to Loudun, and Fortunately Finished His Labors for the Mother's Total Deliverance

Although putting distance between himself and Loudun did not relieve the father's suffering, for legitimate reasons his superiors nonetheless sent him back there to the mother, hoping that, through him, God would finish what he had begun. Monsieur de Laubardemont was awaiting him, hoping that the demon would come out at the first exorcism, for he did not place great faith in the utterances of Behemoth, who kept saying that he would only come out at the tomb of Saint François de Sales. On the other hand, the father believed that what Behemoth said was certain, and that, owing to the bishop's saintliness, which was attracting much attention in this century, it was possible that God

wanted to wash this cloth, owing to the dirt brought by the multitude of persons who would come and kiss the balm or, from devotion, would touch it with their rosaries and other objects. When this linen was washed, it always turned out that the place where it was held up in the air, tied with little cords, even if it was dirtier than the rest, would be as clean and white as if it had been soaped. The five drops alone could be seen. This marvel has continued for more than twenty-five years. It is incredible how great the people's devotion was for this holy unction, and how many cures God operated through it.

The first healing, and one of the most remarkable, was that of Madame de Laubardemont, who was at Tours, deathly ill at the end of her pregnancy and unable to deliver her baby. Her husband was very worried about her. As soon as he learned and verified that the mother had been healed, he wrote to Monsieur de Morans,⁹⁵ the grand vicar of Monseigneur the bishop of Poitiers, to beg him to bring to Tours the mother's shirt with the unction. This was done; and as soon as it was placed on the sick woman, she gave birth to a stillborn child who, according to the physicians, had been dead for seven or eight days. There was every reason to fear that it would kill its mother, so the great success of her healing is attributed to this relic.

Soon afterward, the relic was carried to Thouars, for someone who was dying, who was cured *in extremis*. I saw the long account, with a quantity of similar and prodigious things, about which I cannot and will not go into detail because they are so numerous. There is, nonetheless, a noteworthy one, which took place at the abbey of Fontevault, where a nun called Madame de Saint-Aubin had a strangely ulcerated leg that could not be cured by any remedy. They begged Father Jacquinet, the provincial, to come to the abbey with the mother's shirt; no sooner was it applied to the sore than, in its presence, she was healed so quickly that onlookers remained astonished, because the wound, which was very large, closed in a very short time. When the father started back, the only ill that remained was a tiny red spot that they covered with a leaf from a rosebush. The same father saw a multitude of other sudden healings operated in the same way, so that he wrote to the superior general:⁹⁶ "I have seen the blind see, the lame walk," and so forth.⁹⁷ There is one more thing of merit to be recounted: the nuns of Guinne, which is a priory of the Order of Fontevault, two or three leagues from Loudun, wanted that shirt to be brought to them. One day, the nuns not having been notified that this consolation would be procured for them, Father Anginot resolved to go there.

95 Canon René de Morans (dates unknown), dean of the chapter of Thouars.

96 Muzio Vitelljeschi (1563–1645), elected superior general of the Society of Jesus in 1615.

97 Is. 35:5: "Then the eyes of the blind shall see, and the ears of the deaf be opened."

On the Manner of Proceeding Used by Father Surin to Guide the Mother Prioress, and How He Placed Her under Saint Joseph's Protection

We have described the condition of both the father exorcist and the possessed mother, which was truly extreme, both in him and in her, and which needed extraordinary help from heaven. We must now see how the undertaking began, and the great difficulties that were encountered, which were such that the father easily judged that it seemed impossible for his plans to succeed. For he encountered terrible obstacles when he tried to gain access to the mother's spirit in order to know what was going on there, and to make the feelings that he had proposed to communicate to her, flow into her.

First, the malevolent spirit had made the possessed woman's heart biased, giving it an aversion for the father mingled with distrust; and it had made her plan to behave with dissimulation, which she did to such an extent that everything she said was artifice. Nothing came from her interior that might content this father, who wanted to gain a complete knowledge of the state of her soul, in order to combat Satan at the root and introduce Jesus Christ's spirit. The devil was keeping this maiden's heart bound so tightly that she did not communicate frankly and sought only to escape. Whenever the father said something pious in order to win over and soften her heart, which he could see was sensitive, the demon would occupy her fully and would show himself on her face, speaking through the possessed woman's mouth, and saying openly that he would not tolerate having anything received in the soul that could be useful to it. After several attempts, the father realized that the door had been entirely closed to him, and he lost all hope that his plan would succeed by acting directly with the possessed woman. But he was convinced that first he had to act in an extraordinary way with God, and directly against the devil, who, as if in an armed fortress, was guarding his post and peacefully possessing it. He realized that it was a great matter to dispossess a devil who is rooted in nature; and God permitted the devil's strength and his power over the soul that is still imperfect to be declared, so that the father knew how great God's mercy would be in ripping it out of there. He was therefore convinced that he could not manage to chase the devil away by exorcisms alone, but that here God wanted to give extraordinary help by which Satan would be defeated by the doctrine of the Gospel and the spirit of Jesus Christ, and that sooner or later this nun would therefore have to do her duty and conquer herself and totally change her life, which was generally good, into a more exact and more fervent one, in order to obtain her deliverance from God.

Now, before one could see the soul in a state where it could work at winning a victory over itself, it seemed necessary to attack the demon, specifically and directly. The demon, who was proud of his strength, would stand up against everything. It was necessary to make a breach through which one might enter this heart that was so strongly fortified. That is why the father totally applied himself to besieging the fortress and cajoling it from afar, waiting to approach it when God would give him the means. And inasmuch as the weapons that he had at hand for combat were inside the fortress, he believed he should employ them in two ways: first, by acting for God, and second, by acting against the devil. He would arrange it so that both had access to her soul; and he would persuade her soul about what would be suitable for its healing. First, he resolved to pray continually, in order to ask Our Lord that it might please him to give him this soul and to accomplish in it the work for which Our Lord had been willing to die on the cross. This prayer never stopped, except during an exorcism, which was very brief. He felt pushed to be continually on his knees before God, and he felt so attached to this undertaking that he virtually never stopped doing this. Weeping, he would ask God to give him that maiden in order to make a perfect nun of her. And for that, he felt carried away by such ardor that one day he could not keep from offering himself to the divine Mother, in order to bear the burden of this poor maiden's ills and participate in all her temptations and woes. He went as far as to ask to be possessed by the malevolent spirit, provided that God would agree to give her the liberty to enter into herself and to care for her soul. From then on, a paternal love for this afflicted soul developed in the father's heart, and made him want to suffer for her (a strange thing!); and he proposed to himself that his great happiness would be to imitate Jesus Christ who, in order to pull souls from captivity to Satan, had suffered death after having taken on their infirmities. His sole prayer was to remain at Jesus Christ's feet, awaiting his mercy and conserving a great desire to suffer in the extreme, in order to win this soul into whose service he had entered by obedience. However, the devil confronted everything and was prepared to resist, continually strengthening his fortress, and fighting for that maiden's heart by assaults that the father could only resist by his prayers. In every direction, access was blocked.

Second, he attacked the devil directly, debilitating him by his exorcisms and by commands that afflicted him and humiliated him greatly, the principal one being to force him to pay homage to Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. This the devil did, to the great edification of those present and with some relief for the possessed woman. But the father's principal artillery was to aim his heart at the devil continually, beating him incessantly, be it while eating, while drinking, or while walking in the street. His heart being separated from all the

see the exorcism, she said that her good angel had hair similar to that of this prince.⁹²

As soon as the vision had ceased, the mother began to say: "I am healed." She asked for her habit, saying that she was well. She also asked for a linen towel to wipe her side, which felt wet from the balm that the saint had placed there. They gave her the habit, but they forgot to give her a towel, which is why she wiped herself with her shirt. Then, having dressed, she went to kneel at the little window in her bedchamber, from which she could see the tabernacle on the altar. People quickly ran to the physician, who was a Huguenot, but a very honorable man. The nuns used him because there was no Catholic physician in the city. No one mentioned her sudden healing to him. Entering the bedchamber, he saw the empty bed and asked where the body was. The mother heard him and came, saying: "Monsieur, I am cured, a saint cured me, Saint Joseph cured me." This man was extremely surprised, and thought he would faint. He asked her if they had made her sweat profusely, and whether she had been purged,⁹³ and when they said "No," he replied: "God's power is greater than our remedies." He did not, however, convert, and he no longer was willing to visit the nuns. The mother, being totally well, was visited by everyone. Two days later, she remembered the unguent⁹⁴ that had healed her, and which she had simply wiped away with her shirt. She summoned the mother sub-prioress, and begged her to inspect her side and see what that unguent was. They shut themselves up together, and the mother bared her breast. They smelled an admirable odor, then, having seen the traces of this divine balm preserved in five big drops, the mother decided to keep that shirt. They gave her a clean one, and then they cut at the waist the shirt that had the balm, keeping the upper part and throwing away the bottom. They then wanted to wash the upper part of the shirt; but fearing that they would lose the five precious drops that smelled so good and that they wanted to save intact, they got the idea of making a hem all around to mark their place, and to lift it into the air and tie it with thread. Then, holding high this tie, they washed and soaped the rest of the shirt; and ever since, this practice has been followed when they

92 François de Vendôme, duke of Beaufort (1616–69), was the son of one of King Henry IV's bastards. Contemporary portraits show him with shoulder-length golden ringlets. For the "handsome angel," see de Certeau, *Possession at Loudun*, 213–14.

93 *Évacuation*, "evacuation": "A discharge of humors or excrements from the entire body, or from one of its parts. Do a big evacuation; after a small evacuation he felt better; overly large evacuations are dangerous"; DAF 1762.

94 Note that this "balm" (a fragrant medicinal resin) had quickly become an "unguent" for healing sores; and in a very short time, it was being described as a "*divine* balm," a "*holy* unction" (italics added).

good that came to the people, who did not tire of seeing the demons' respect for the Blessed Sacrament. This led to several conversions. This father enjoyed giving breadth to his zeal, but at the time he did not take into account the mother's weakness. One day, her health was very contrary to what she needed in order to endure the exorcism. However, although she told this father that when she was in such a state, his predecessors had customarily left her alone, she preferred obedience over her own life. Since Father de Resses very much desired to do the exorcism at that time, because some well-known persons were present that day, he told the mother to take courage and to trust in God. And he took her to work with him, which caused her to have a high fever with pleurisy. After a few days, her life hung in the balance. The physician concluded that her illness could not be cured, so she was brought extreme unction. She was on death's door; but an effect of God's grace came, along with a great wonder that deserves being recounted here.

Since they had decided to give her extreme unction on the twelfth or thirteenth day of her fever, Father de Resses and Father Bastide came to the foot of her bed. Although she was extremely weak, she received this sacrament with great devotion and resignation, and shortly afterward, the death throes began. All the signs of death could be seen on her face. She gave two hiccups, and people were waiting for the third and last one; but instead of that, the dying woman suddenly changed and sat up. After that, she remained attentive, her eyes lifted as if she were enraptured. Her face was extremely beautiful. She was that way for half of a quarter hour,⁹⁰ leaving the spectators in suspense. Then she said that Saint Joseph had just appeared to her, as if in a golden cloud, showing only his head and his face in the *nuelle*⁹¹ where Father Bastide was. The saint had looked at Father Bastide and had given him an endearing smile, as if to someone who was agreeable to him. Then, approaching her, the saint put his hand on the rib that was hurting, and he rubbed that place with his hand three times, and he anointed her with an oil or a celestial balm that gave her life and strength in a moment. She also saw her good angel, who looked like a very beautiful young man about eighteen years old, having lovely blond hair and holding a lighted white candle in his hand, after which everything disappeared. She retained her idea of Saint Joseph's face, which she later had painted. Monsieur the duke of Beaufort having come several days later to

⁹⁰ Most clocks of the period did not show minutes. Rather than think in minutes, people would talk about "a little quarter of an hour" (that is, five minutes or so). Or, as here, they might say "half of a quarter hour" (around seven or eight minutes).
⁹¹ Literally, "the little street" that is, the space left between the bed and the wall. A prayer stool for personal devotions was often placed in this space. The *nuelle* was generally reserved for personal or ceremonial visits.

activities of this world, he continually applied himself to directing his heart toward God for the ends he could. And he bound that unfortunate demon, forcing him to leave to the possessed maiden the liberty to listen to and conceive of the things the father wanted her to understand. This bitter and continual manner of fighting astonished the devil greatly. Indeed, the father had chosen only one devil, the unfortunate Isacarou, who was on guard duty at the time and was ceaselessly beating her soul, just as he was being beaten by the father. This spirit declared and stated that this new way of fighting was more unbearable for him than all the exorcisms, and that he would be forced to surrender in the end. When he heard this, the father resolved that since he was being attacked in that extraordinary and interior way, he too would seek extraordinary ways to defend himself, which he employed as shall be recounted later.

The father used yet another manner that was quite new and that conformed to the emotions he had experienced at Mareannes. That is, lacking the strength to take the trouble to struggle with the devil personally, as the other exorcists did, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament he would place himself near the possessed woman's ear, and there he would whisper in Latin about the interior life, about the goods to be found in the divine union, and about similar subjects concerning which the devil was tormented in the extreme. The exorcism caused the demon little torment in comparison. That is why, in a short time, the devil invented some ways to prevent the father from acting against him in that manner. All this time was spent in suffering and silence, awaiting God's operation.³²

Since the father was seeing more and more how difficult his undertaking was, he got the idea of committing it totally to the charity and protection of glorious Saint Joseph, for whom he had been feeling a particular affection for several years,³³ having great trust in him and imagining that he could achieve anything with the saint's aid. He therefore placed himself and the possessed woman (who willingly agreed), as well as his entire undertaking, in the hands of this great saint, the special protector of the father and of the interior life on which his entire plan was based.

The devil felt a violent despair about this protection, yet he did not change his violent and tyrannical behavior. He continued it with assurance, however, until an unforeseen accident deflated his courage a bit. That is to say, the mother's spirit having been besieged for several days by a violent temptation,

³² *Opère, opération, "operation,"* means to do something that produces an effect or result. For more, see the glossary ("Operation").
³³ For this devotion to St. Joseph during Surin's tertianship, see Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, esp. 232–33, 308–09, 333.

and she being kept in a strange anguish by her scant trust in the father, it so happened that the father, praying before the Blessed Sacrament, received an imprint in his soul about the mother's condition, with a distinct knowledge of what was pressing her most. So he went to see her, and as she was demonstrating great reserve, he felt a movement to tell her that it was such and such a thing, about which she remained extremely astonished and tender toward him. From then on, that changed her heart and made her decide to surrender to the father's guidance in everything, with a total trust that has continued ever since. For her, this resolution was the source of good, for from then on, the devil began to lose his strength, and her soul began to be helped by the father's ministry.

Isacaron made one final effort against her, and he was so surprised at this change, and so infuriated by it, that he could not keep himself from saying so. He therefore appeared and interrupted the father's conversation with the mother. He showed himself on her face with extraordinary fury, and in a disarray that seemed to be mingled with rage. Seeing that he had gained a great ascendancy over Isacaron, the father spoke to him with what he felt was extraordinary vigor, assuring him that since God had given him an opening into the good of this soul, he would use it to his advantage and would put it in a state that would be very shameful for someone who had worked so long to doom that soul. To this, the demon replied, very vehemently and proudly, that if the father undertook to lead this soul according to his plan for it, he would meet his match, and he would receive from the demons a treatment so rough and so strange that he would have reason to repent at having embarked on this affair, and he, Isacaron, would force him to ask his superiors to relieve him of this task. "I shall make you totally wretched," the demon said,

I have begun to make you feel my power, but you will see many other things, if you undertake this unheard-of project of perfecting a soul that is in a state of possession. And I shall prevent you from succeeding, for that would be too great an affront to me. I shall also undertake new things that will astonish you and that will make those on whom you depend resolve to make you leave the fortress. I have great strength, more than you think. I have magic's reputation, and God lets men do what they want. For my plans, all hell will league against you; you will soon have news of it.³⁴

34 In the original French, the *tu* ("thee") form of pronouns and verbs is used in all Surin's verbal exchanges with one or another demon. In this particular context, this "theeing" and "thouing" signals the speaker's scorn for the person to whom he is speaking; but in other contexts, the use of these pronouns can signal affection. To avoid ambiguities, this

thought she had done everything possible, and that God would be content; but while collecting her clothes, she got the idea that she could do more, and that she should trust Saint Joseph. She removed her robe again and immediately resumed fighting courageously. She had not gone on for as long as it takes to say a *Pater* when God, seeing her perseverance, relieved her. She felt something come out of her head. It overwhelmed her, and she saw before her a dreadful monster, like a dragon, at the sight of which she became excited. Holding her bloody scourge in her hand, she bravely struck the monster, and it suddenly disappeared. After that, she realized she was free and had totally regained her strength. She went back to find the father, who learned from her everything that had gone on, and who blessed God for it with her. Thus the battle ended.

The mother regained her strength and her courage, and she enjoyed great peacefulness and vigor in her entire interior, so that, ever since then, the devil has remained with her, as her slave. She would do her Spiritual Exercises with great peace, joy, and liberty; every night she would rise to pray, and God would console her so much that sometimes, having gone to her oratory at nine in the evening, she would still be there at five the next morning, as if she had merely spent an hour there. In addition, God habitually gave her such peace that, when she began to pray, the demon would come out of her head and would leave her with God; yet he would stay at her side in the form of a black dog, rolled in a ball and not stirring. Then, when prayer was over, he would go back into the mother's head, and he would operate everything permitted by his right over the vexed souls whom God keeps in captivity. During this time, she increasingly strengthened herself in the way of the spirit, and she spent seven months practicing this.

At that time, Father Surin saw his personal ills increase extraordinarily, and the devil's vexations too, which went so far that those who were interested in his good asked the father provincial (Father Jacquinet) to remove him from that employment. This was done in the following manner.

10 How Father Surin was Recalled from Loudun, and the Things that Happened during His Absence

His extremely poor health forced Father Surin's superiors to remove him from his employment. They put in his place Father de Ressès,⁸⁹ a holy and fervent man who greatly enjoyed the vigor of the exorcisms and who kept in mind the

89 The 1829 edition reads "Reffées." His correct name is de Ressès (or ResSES). At one point, he was the confessor of Jeanne des Anges.

better state after the journey; that they must persist at doing exorcisms, press the demon to come out, and not amuse themselves with uncertain promises. It was necessary to be patient, and to submit. But at every exorcism the demon replied nothing else, except that he would come out at the tomb of Saint François de Sales, and nowhere else. Meanwhile, he began to molest the mother by a stubborn rage, and the father himself was being unbelievably molested in his obsession. In vain did the mother continually work to unite herself with God and to fortify herself in his grace: she suffered insults and unbearable obstacles, so that it seemed as if God had totally forgotten these afflicted creatures whose sole plan was to serve him. Amid this demon's attacks on her, there was one attack that seemed the most tangible: by his malevolent operations, the demon not only put her into a great spiritual repugnance; he also put her into such bodily languor that she seemed to be dying; her face became thin and small, her spirit dull, her heart stricken; she sensed neither flavor nor savor; her will was entirely for God, but its power was so blunted that she could scarcely pay attention to what people were saying to her. The father was fearing just that sort of persecution, imagining that everything was turning into a debacle, and he was very solicitous about this. Finally, since she kept getting worse, one day when he saw her reduced to the extreme, he asked her what she was thinking about her state. She told him that she did not know what it was, but that she wanted to do everything he might order her to do, no matter how grievous it might be. As if in extremity, the father then elevated himself to God and asked advice and light; then, feeling encouraged by the remembrance of past experiences, he asked the mother whether she really was resolved to help herself in such a perilous state. She replied, "Yes." And then, having clearly understood that all herills came from the demon, and knowing that God helps everywhere where one is combating the enemy, he proposed that she make an effort; and since the demon's malevolence alone was causing her this languor, she should be more forceful against him and go use the scourge, until God had pity on her and withdrew her from this oppression by her adversary. It was a mighty combat, and he hoped God would bless her.

She was very surprised at this, not believing that she could do anything but rest. Nonetheless, since she was obedient, she submitted, and the father advised her to do so, wishing her God's blessing. Meanwhile, he was going to pray to God for her. This good maiden got up as best she could, and she dragged herself to the rear of the garden, to a chamber where she could not be distracted by anyone; and she had the courage to flagellate herself for an hour, without feeling any effect or relief in her soul. The father, having remained in prayer, began to fear that he had gone too far, and he thought that he should make the mother return. But Our Lord kept restraining him. After an hour, the mother

To that, the father replied, with great confidence, that he had, in truth, planned to make this nun holy, and that he would not give up as long as he had the strength, until he had seen the fire of divine love kindled in her breast. "I have resolved," said the father,

to make you the most wretched demon who ever undertook to possess a body. I want to prepare a new hell for you in this soul, and I assert that, with the help that God is promising me, I shall put your master in the most signal disarray he has ever known. You have hell and magic on your side; I have heaven, which will help me. God gave me this soul, I want to return it to him as he desires it to be. As for the troubles with which you are threatening me, I do not fear them, and I will endure every extreme in pursuing the redemption of this soul. And as long as a moment of life remains in me, I shall not cease to annihilate against you and to work for that maiden, in accordance with my plans for her. The ill's you have done to me at this hour have whetted my appetite for more, and I offer myself to God to feel all the effects of your rage, provided that this soul that you are holding captive can profit from it and become free, in order to tend to exercising divine love.

They talked this way for quite a while, the malevolent spirit speaking through the possessed woman's mouth. It was evening, and they were in a parlor adjacent to the church, in the sole presence of God and the angels. They issued a general challenge and declared that they would fight to the end. It took place in the manner that will be described. For the father, who had already begun to be obsessed by the devil, stood up against strange forces; but in this instance the enemy was very astonishing, and the father received a great consolation and hope that God and Saint Joseph would help him.

Another thing happened, around that time, which greatly astonished the devil and made him see that God would give the father great power over him, by forcing that wretched spirit to return three consecrated hosts that some magicians had brought to him. This is what happened. Isacarion, who was possessed by the mother and who had been on guard duty for a long time, had become extremely strong at resisting exorcisms, and he was so insolent that the father

translation replaces the original "thee" and "thou" with the polite *vous* ("you"). The sharp distinction between *tu* and *vous* is consequently masked. Readers can, however, be assured that, in the original, the demons and Father Surin use contemptuous *tu*s, "thous," while the mother and Surin speak to one another politely and respectfully: *vous*, "you."

conjectured that a horrible spell had been cast by the magician, and that this demon was taking advantage of it. Contrary to his habit, the father wanted to know about it, for he did not inform himself about such things, trusting to the power of the church. But he felt driven to push ahead with this interrogation; and from Isacaron's own reply, he finally realized that this was the case. Isacaron stated that, for around a week, three magicians, one of them in Paris and the other two at Loudun, had received Communion and had kept the hosts, in order to put them in the devil's hand. By his great goodness, God was deferring in this way to his creatures' liberty. So the hosts were in the magicians' possession, but he would give them on deposit, sometimes to one and sometimes to the other: and now they were in the hands of the magician who was in Paris, and they would soon be burned. Hearing this, the father felt a great desire to have these hosts, and to prevent them from being dishonored at Satan's suggestion, for he would not have dared touch them himself. The father resolved to command Isacaron to go to Paris, and make sure that these hosts were conserved, telling him that he was appointing him guardian. Suddenly, the demon left the body. The next day, the father noted that Isacaron was not present, as he usually was, for he routinely appeared during exorcisms. Fearing that some misadventure might happen to these sacred hosts, the father believed that he could order one of the other demons to bring them back to the church, where they belonged, and to place them in the hands of its clergy. He therefore ordered Balaam, one of the other possessing demons, to go to Paris and, without informing Isacaron about what he was planning to do with these hosts, tell him to go to his usual residence in the body of the possessed woman. Then, when he had withdrawn, he should take those hosts, wherever they were, carry them to the afternoon exorcism, and deposit them in a decent place, in order to give them to the father later. Balaam categorically refused, saying that this mission was too horrible for him. Now, the father could never make Balaam promise to obey his demands, and he felt an extremely strong desire for these precious things that had been deposited. When the father returned to his bedchamber, he felt a great urge to remove Our Lord from the hands of his enemies. It seemed to him that this would amount to redeeming his Redeemer, and would in a sense return to him what he had received from him. For that, he offered Our Lord his life, begging him to take it in return for those sacred hosts kept in captivity under the power of the wicked. He began to pray, and he begged his good angel to force Balaam to carry out the commands he had been given. Then he rose and forgot about his prayer.

That afternoon, having begun the exorcism, the father found that all the demons were absent. Balaam alone was guarding the fortress. The father informed him that if the others arrived, he should signal their coming. Shortly

said that they appeared suddenly, as if a signet had been applied. He rose in surprise, and everyone turned in that direction. The exorcism continued, and Behemoth, the only one to remain in possession, appeared and said that the Virgin's power had chased away Isacaron, and had made him write her name; and that, as far as he was concerned, he had received God's command to write Jesus when he came out. The father accepted this willingly, and did so all the more joyfully because it was surprising that no one had as yet thought of this.

We have seen how the name Joseph was engraved on the mother's hand. At first, it was vermilion and like coral. That beautiful color lasted for five or six days, after which it imperceptibly faded. People expected it to disappear, as scabs do on hands; but one day, when the mother was praying, she felt a gentle tingling in her hand, and an elevation of joy in her heart, and she saw that Joseph was renewed on her hand. This grace continued, and it was renewed just when it seemed about to disappear, and by the consolation and the other effects she was feeling, the mother judged that it was her good angel who was doing this good deed for her.

What was going on with Joseph's name then occurred for Mary's, and both names were renewed, usually for high holidays, sometimes during nighttime prayer, sometimes during morning Communion, and under such circumstances that it was always thought that this renewal was being done according to a good principle. After the three names were written there, this continued, as we shall see later.

9 On the Great Troubles that had to Be Endured before the Mother was Entirely Free of Demons

After Our Lord had given this consolation of seeing the mother delivered of the third demon who had possessed her, the rest seemed inconsequential, for only one demon now remained. But experience showed that they were not yet at the end of these matters. On the one hand, it was a question of journeying to the tomb of Saint François de Sales, for which a thousand obstacles were being raised; and on the other hand, Behemoth, the fourth demon, was causing so much trouble for the mother prioress, and for the father who was helping her, that they realized that the most difficult remained to be done.

First, there were the superiors, who did not think the journey should be made. People were saying that one must not believe demons, that they were liars; that it was too costly to take a nun so far, who perhaps would be in no

on a genealogy of the French royal house (the first volume was published in 1628 and the second in 1647).

work, until one night, toward the month of December,⁸⁶ the mother had a very remarkable dream. She seemed to see Saint Joseph, who was saying consoling things to her: since men were not being very diligent about finishing her healing, he would be able to help her and give her the means of being delivered in Loudun itself, without having to go farther. She should notify the father about it. And Saint Joseph added that she should tell the father to pluck up his courage during the many disagreements and obstacles that he would encounter in his task, before she was entirely delivered. At that point, she awoke, and her whole bedchamber was perfumed with a very sweet aroma. She recounted to Father Surin what had happened.

On the feast of the Epiphany of 1636,⁸⁷ the father was preaching after ves-

pers. The mother was extraordinarily uneasy and was in the grip of a violent turmoil. This caused her face to appear white and almost disfigured, and for a long while she gazed fixedly and with astonishment at the image of the Blessed Virgin. It is plausible that this was the moment when the demons received the order to come out. The father, who was not intending to do the exorcism that day because it was very late, was obliged to make the mother go to the convent chapel so that he could exorcise her. There, she began to hit out furiously at the many people who were present that day. But the father gently conducted her to the altar of the Blessed Virgin and tied her on a bench, and after a few prayers he ordered the demon to prostrate himself on the floor, which he did, having first fallen to the floor. Kneeling, he began to say arrogantly: "What! You want me to pay homage to Mary?" The father believed at the time that it was God's will that this very impure devil pay some homage to the Blessed Virgin, and he commanded him to show the people how venerable she was. The devil then began to speak in honor of the Holy Mother of God, and concluded by saying: "Your power constrains me to emerge at your feet." Hearing this, the father believed that the devil would truly be coming out. He ran quickly to her right hand, to see if the demon would write Mary, as he had ordered him to do; but at the same time the devil, who was kneeling on the altar step, lifted her left hand, where the name Joseph was, and he wrote just above it, in a moment, Maria, in Roman characters that were larger than Joseph. This was seen clearly by a gentleman named Monsieur de Sainte-Marthe,⁸⁸ who was leaning on the altar near a candle; so it was easy for him to see these letters take shape. He

⁸⁶ That is, late November or early December 1635.

⁸⁷ In other words, here the narrative coincides with the events of the feast of the Epiphany that are summarized in the "appendix" to chapter 6, above. In fact, several details appear in both the appendix and this chapter.

⁸⁸ This alludes to one of two possible testimonies whose testimony would have been considered impeccable: either Scévole de Sainte-Marthe (1571–1650), or his identical twin Louis (1571–1656), natives of Loudun. Since the 1620s, the learned brothers had been working

afterward, Isacaron arrived in great fury, and Balaam soon followed; he was visible on the possessed woman's face, and the father asked him if he had carried out his orders. He replied that yes, he had brought the hosts, and never had a burden been so heavy for him. He had found them under a straw-tick in the bed where this magician had placed them. Then, when questioned about how he had done it, he replied that he had been forced by an angel, "Yours," he said, "who made me promptly accomplish what you had ordered me to do." The father then remembered the prayer he had addressed to his good angel, which he had not mentioned to anyone, having forgotten about it. For, when he asked Balaam about the angel, he thought it had been the possessed woman's guardian angel. When he wanted to know where the hosts were, there was quite a fuss, to the point that one of those wretched demons, having endured the shock of the curses for a long time, and having confronted God about the outrage he had received from men during this attack, kept saying: "We had God in our power, those whom he redeemed sold him to us," and other such frightful statements. He was forced to say that these hosts were in a place on the altar, and having been ordered to fetch them himself with the possessed woman's hands, he began to stretch the body of that maiden, who is short in stature, placing her hand all the way into a niche on the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in a silver sun.³⁵ Then, lowering her hand, he took a paper from beneath the base of this sun and, trembling and wondrously respectful, he put it into the hands of the father, who received it and found three hosts inside this paper, which he ordered the demon to adore. The demon did it in a manner that moved the entire assembly. To do it, he stretched the possessed woman's body, touching that sun with her hand in such a way that, when she regained consciousness, she could never come near the place she had previously touched; and it was recognized that the devil had stretched her body two feet.

This success caused the father a *grandissime*³⁶ consolation and animated him greatly to pursue his plan. By contrast, the demons appeared extremely humiliated and downcast, especially the one who was competing at the time and was the most active.

³⁵ A monstrance or *soleil*, "sun": "A crystal box surrounded with a circle of golden or silver rays, posed on a base that is usually made of the same metal and in which the consecrated hosts is enclosed on the altar"; DAF 1694.

³⁶ *Grandissime*: "A superlative form of *grand*. It is only used in the familiar style"; DAF 1704. Of modern readers, the use of this word may seem cosmopolitan, but it actually reflects the familiar style that dominates in this entire text.

3 How Father Surin, Having Undertaken to Uproot the Demons Solely by Making the Mother Prioress Perfect, Was Himself Attacked and Obsessed by the Devil; And How, by the Strength of the Blessed Sacrament, He Began His Undertaking

Up until the time of the challenge that we recounted in the previous chapter, Father Surin had done almost nothing but look at the fortress and the enemies' countenances, without being able to gain entrance. But once the mother prioress had begun to trust him and had resolved to follow all her exorcists' directions, the state of affairs changed and truly began to advance, thanks to this disposition of the mother's spirit.

The father constructed his plan and proposed using a procedure for cultivating her soul that conformed totally to the way God proceeds, using the greatest gentleness possible, attracting this soul to things involving its salvation and perfection, and leaving it full liberty. He devoted time to discovering the movements of grace that were emerging from the seeds he had sown by his discourse, and then he carefully watched them. His first project was to establish in this soul a solid will for interior perfection, without proposing anything specific to it, generally dealing with the good there is from belonging to God. The mother listened to this as much as the demons permitted, and little by little the desire to belong entirely to God took shape in her. Not only at this early stage but also throughout his guidance of her, the father followed this practice of not giving her orders. Although she was very obedient, and he saw what she needed, he nonetheless never said to her directly: "Do that." And he did not declare to her that he wanted something from her; but if it was a question of introducing her to some new practice, he would spend a long time preparing her, gently inviting her, and guiding her to the desired point without her noticing it. She therefore would be the first to propose something, and by this means he achieved everything he wanted in a short time, convinced that it was divine love alone that was operating in this undertaking, and that the Spirit of God does not bother souls but, by agreeable attractions and sweetnesses, places our hearts in his nets.

After a long while, one of the demons admitted to the father that this manner of proceeding had made him lose favor, and that if he had come directly and had proposed the same things, he would have raised terrible obstacles and would have greatly prolonged the matter, but people were saying instead that they had never seen a soul go so quickly to God. Indeed, in a short time she traveled along the three ways of the interior and spiritual life: purgation,

8 How the Mother was Delivered from Another Demon Who was Possessing Her

Once Balaam had come out, Father Anginot wanted the exorcism to continue, in order to question another demon about what had happened. Father Surin continued, as the superior wanted, and Isacaron appeared, saying that God had punished Balaam for the strange insults and obstacles he had been provoking in the mother for a week. Indeed, it had been to resist him that the father, to counteract these vexations, had established a novena to Saint Joseph, which had been very successful.

Next, Isacaron said that, as for him and Behemoth, the two who remained, he would only be chased away at the altar of the Blessed Virgin at Saumur;⁸⁴ and Behemoth only at the tomb of Saint François de Sales, bishop of Geneva.⁸⁵

After that, they finished the exorcism. The next day, having encountered the demon in the mother, Father Surin proposed to her an idea he had had, which was to change the sign of the demon's exit (which consisted of splitting the nail on the middle finger of the mother's left hand), and to have him write the name MARY on her other hand, just as Balaam had written the name JOSEPH. This greatly shocked this demon, who protested that he would do no such thing. But the father, making his thought still more firm, ordered him to do it in God's name. They argued about this for several days, until the demon said that he would write Mary, not on the hand that the father wanted, but on the hand where Joseph was written; to which the father did not want to agree. But Our Lord demonstrated that he wanted to have Mary's name near Joseph's.

A few days went by, awaiting Monsieur the intendent's reply about the coming out of Isacaron and Behemoth. Since he was in Paris, they had to wait until he came back to Loudun. When he arrived, he encountered great difficulties in continuing the judicial procedures and in using the demons' testimonies, because there were many complications that wearied and divided these men. He allowed things to drag on, as he likewise did for taking the mother to visit the tomb of Monseigneur de Genève. And so, all of this was quite a bit behind schedule, although it had begun well. Meanwhile, the father continued his

⁸⁴ Possibly Notre-Dame des Ardilliers?

⁸⁵ François de Sales was consecrated bishop of Geneva but resided in Annecy because Geneva remained under Calvinist control and was therefore inaccessible to him. He was beatified in 1661 and canonized in 1665. See Ruth Kleinman, *Saint François de Sales and the Protestants* (Geneva: Droz, 1962). His diocese became famous throughout Europe for its efficient organization, zealous clergy, and well-instructed laity. The original text calls him "M. de Genève," that is, Monseigneur the bishop of Geneva; this translation says "Genève" wherever it would be awkward to use the English spelling of that city.

name, Balaam, which he had initially agreed to write on that same place to indicate his coming out. On the mother's face, the father could see certain unusual symptoms that made him suspect that the hour of his coming out may have arrived. That is why he began to press the demon strongly to leave the mother and to write Joseph's name on her hand. The demon, who was kneeling, lowered the mother's left sleeve with his right hand. That made the father believe that the demon wanted to hide his action, which is why, taking up the ciborium of the Blessed Sacrament with his left hand, the father pulled up her sleeve with his right hand and warned those present to be cautious about what was going to happen. Suddenly, the English lord took the mother's left hand and held it by the fingertips. The two gentlemen and a few religious approached and saw the holy name JOSEPH appear clearly and distinctly in bloody letters on the hand that had previously been white, and which had not been brought near the other hand. This mark could therefore not be credited to any visible cause. All those who were present gave written testimonials, which were deposited at the judicial secretariat, and one of the gentlemen said that he would make public, everywhere, what he had just seen, and would even tell the king of England. The mother had been delivered.

The English lord, who was an undeclared Catholic, returned the next day to seek out the father, confessed to him, and set off for Rome. He recounted all he had seen to Pope Urban VIII,⁸³ and between the pope's hands he professed the Catholic faith to him. This same lord later became a priest; he even was a member of the council of the king of France, and he always had a good reputation and esteem.

By these two events, they were, so to speak, forced to allow Father Surin to act on the mother alone, which the provincial did against his own judgment, as he later admitted to the father. This was, therefore, the wolf that Leviathan had spun in order to get rid of Father Surin, and which Our Lord broke for his greater glory.

There is one singular thing: on the day when the demon Leviathan was supposed to come out, the father wanted to do his usual prayer early in the morning, and he found himself being pushed so hard that he could not resist, and pushed so gently that he willingly went to the place where he prayed, and said the *Pater*, the *Ave*, the *Credo*, and the rest of the prayers that he used to say when a child. By this, God doubtlessly wanted to show him that, in order to overcome demons, one must be humble and have a childlike spirit.

83 Matteo Barberini (1568–1644), reigned as Pope Urban VIII (1623–44).

illumination, and union,⁸⁷ and all of it with so much liberty that, despite the great troubles she had to undergo, she never lost sight of divine love, who was the great worker in this heavy task. The father therefore understood that there was some hope for mercy. After waiting for four months, he resolved to have as his principal support Our Lord Jesus Christ operating by his grace in the Blessed Sacrament. And he concluded that if he could introduce Our Lord into the mother priestess's soul by Holy Communion, and cause it to receive Jesus Christ fruitfully, little by little this sacrament would achieve everything and would cause disagreement among the demons. Since the mother had been receiving Communion for two years like an animal, with no feeling of piety, he made it his goal to act in such a way that the Son of God would find a worthy reception in this house where the devil had made such filth and ravages, judging that it would be enough to obtain some suitable disposition toward the grandeur of God and the dignity of this Guest, who daily entered an abode where his enemies insolently confronted him. Instead of the exorcisms, he therefore spent every morning preparing the mother for Holy Communion, instructing her, stirring her, and, both before and after she received Our Lord, shaping her spirit by saying into her ears various colloquies and pious discussions, which little by little softened her heart and made her pliant toward God. This was so successful that the mother's soul had totally changed in a short while, and the strength of this holy food for sustaining the body appeared to the father's eyes as distinctly and as clearly as the strength of material bread. This change took place little by little, and the father saw vigor and devotion grow in this soul,

37

During his spiritual journey toward a deeper union with God, the soul must pass through these three stages. In the "purgative" stage, desires and affections must be purged, and the disorder caused by sin must be set right, for a disordered soul cannot perceive or appreciate the glory and beauty of God. The distractions of the world must therefore be diminished and wrongful passions, attachments, and evil inclinations must be subdued. There is a focus on uprooting the remnants and habits of former sin, perhaps through mortifications and the practice of austerity and simplicity. The main virtue to be cultivated during this stage is humility. In the "illuminative" stage, purification is not yet complete, although passions are more under control and mortal sins can be easily avoided. Venial sins continue to cause trouble, because the soul still takes pleasure in earthly things. Although it is becoming more enlightened about spiritual things and about the practice of virtue, it experiences arduities, difficulties, and trials, sometimes more severe than in the past. In the "unitive" stage, the soul becomes detached from temporal things and enjoys great peace. Having largely been purged of passions and desires, it is fixed on God, its united with God by love. Since St. Bonaventure (1221–74), the doctrine of the "three ways" has become general doctrine. Indeed, the Soul in Surin's *Spiritual Poety*, below, progresses poem by poem toward "union" with Love.

liberty increase, and the devil's tyranny diminish, which enraged the devil, who viewed it as a clear destruction of his kingdom. Thus the leader of the possessing demons (it was Leviathan), who until then had scarcely declared himself and who was making his henchmen act, saw that his interest was at stake. He resolved to wage a cruel war against the father, and put him into such a state that, by his own volition, and by that of his superiors, the father would be forced to leave Loudun. To that end, the devil secretly planned diverse inventions against him, including some that simply cannot be discussed, while others will be discussed.

One of the principal inventions involved causing the father to be possessed or obsessed by the devil's henchmen, and in this state to be bothered as much as it would please God to permit. Recalling that the father had asked to bear this maiden's ills in order to deliver her, and knowing that Our Lord often grants such things, the devil was brash enough to make a plan that had never been seen before, which was to persecute and assault publicly an exorcist who was carrying out his function. For the father's good, God permitted him to do this and he continued to observe the order he keeps in all his works, which is to permit those who are supposed to do something for him, to be humiliated, wounded, and annihilated like his Son, who succumbed outwardly, owing to the efforts of the prince of darkness, and then chased that prince from the world. The obsession from which the father suffered was perhaps the most extraordinary one ever seen; and, with the exception of total possession, it could scarcely be greater. He had already been secretly obsessed by Isacaron for some time. It is appropriate to mention this particular obsession before discussing the other one, for by the different things he suffered, one will see just how important is the conquest of a soul, and how God permits afflictions for the persons to whom he wants to do good.

Here then, first, is what happened to the father from the month of January until Good Friday, when the obsession appeared as strange exterior effects. On the night of January 19,³⁸ having gone to bed, he felt himself invaded by something that he could not doubt was a spirit. By effects that he had never before experienced, this moved him strangely. It was like being touched; and like a fire that was penetrating into his marrow and his entrails from the outside. This surprised and afflicted him greatly, all the more so because for several years he seemed to have been rid of such things, the demon wanting to compel his soul forcibly to declare in favor of evil. On the one hand, it was a horrible violence; on the other, it was a great motive for his soul to defend itself, seeing the devil armed against it and wanting to make the soul consent to something against its will and contrary to its duty. The demon was acting from desperation, marking

³⁸ That is, January 19, 1635.

provincial viewed the matter in a totally different way, and thinking that the demon had only come out because Father Doamlup was present, he remained further strengthened in the idea that Father Surin must leave, or that, at the very least, Father Doamlup should be his assistant. Consequently, he wanted these two fathers to exorcise together, in the morning, Sister de La Croix, to whom Father Doamlup was assigned, and in the afternoon, the mother prioress. He sent such an order to Father Anginot,⁸⁰ the superior at Loudun, who carried it out.

In the morning, Father Surin therefore attended Father Doamlup's exorcism, which by its length greatly bored his new companion. After the midday meal, they thought about another exorcism. Between these two events, an English lord arrived (the second son of My Lord Montagu⁸¹). He was a heretic and was accompanied by two English gentlemen, likewise heretics. They presented Father Surin with a letter from Monseigneur the archbishop of Tours,⁸² who begged the father to do the exorcism before this lord. The father sent a message to Father Doamlup, asking him to come as soon as possible, because his lordship was simply passing through and could not stop at Loudun. But Father Doamlup, who usually spent all day, every day, persecuting devils, and who often did not eat until seven in the evening, had not completed his morning exorcism. He begged the superior to permit him to go and finish what he had planned. Father Surin should go to the prioress, and he, Father Doamlup, would come as soon as possible. Father Anginot agreed, and Father Surin began the exorcism alone. The mother was soon in the grip of the demon Balaam. This demon had promised the father that, as a sign that he had left, he would write Jesus's name on the back of the mother's left hand, rather than his own

⁸⁰ Guillaume Anginot (c.1588–1660); see Clément-Simon, *Histoire du collège de Tours*, 329.

⁸¹ Walter Montagu (c.1603–77), the flamboyant second son of Henry Montagu, first earl of Manchester (c.1563–1642). Young Montagu had come to France in the 1620s as part of the embassy to find a French bride for the prince of Wales. During the exorcisms of Loudun, he was an *attaché* to the Paris embassy and was given a letter of introduction to the papal court. At that point, he stopped at Loudun, where he began the process of converting to Catholicism. See *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. "Montagu, Walter"; and Georges Dethan, *Mazarin et ses amis* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1968), 200–223.

⁸² Victor Bouthillier (1597–1670), a close relative of Claude Bouthillier, Richelieu's minister, and first almoner of Gaston d'Orléans, was named coadjutor of Tours in 1630 and was consecrated archbishop of Tours in 1641. At the time of the Loudun exorcisms, the archbishop of Tours was Bertrand Deschaux (1556–1641), nominated in 1617 but inactive, having apparently turned over the administration of the archdiocese to his coadjutor, Bouthillier. In other words, this letter may well represent a Bouthillier desire, even if it was signed by Deschaux. See Joseph Bergin, *The Making of the French Episcopate, 1589–1661* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 606.

reasonable, and the father rector ordered Father Surin to continue that very day, before Father Doamlup. It was nearing the end of September. Many people were present, even members of the royal court, for Madame de Bouhillier⁷⁹ was present. That was the day when Levathan hoped to triumph and obtain what he desired, which was to chase away Father Surin in shame, and to tell the whole assembly that the rector was there for that purpose.

When, therefore, the father had fetched the liturgical ornaments and had reverenced the Blessed Sacrament, he began the exorcism. As soon as he recognized this demon, who usually was not present himself but substituted others in his place in order to sustain the shock of the exorcism, by the power of Our Lord whom he was holding in his hand, the father ordered the demon to show obedience to the church, leave this body he was possessing, and make the mark he had specified. The demon proudly positioned himself to speak and to say what he proposed to say. But he suddenly became speechless and fell to the floor, bending and crawling like a serpent, unable to do anything else. Then the demon prostrated himself at the father's feet, stretched out on the altar step, his arms spread out on the floor in a cross, and then the demon came out at once, leaving the mother free. Regaining consciousness, she rose to her knees and, remaining that way, she appeared with a bloody cross engraved and imprinted on her forehead, which formerly had been white and unmarked. As a result of the demon's agitation, the mother had allowed her wimple to fall, as usually occurred. So each person could bear witness that she had not brought her hands near her head, and that this could only have been done by the demon, who left no other mark of his presence. It was a great joy for the entire assembly, and especially for the mother, who began to praise God.

The exorcists who were present, and the father rector, too, deemed it necessary to continue the exorcism, to make the other demons speak, and to question them about what had just happened. Father Surin was resuming his work, when Isacarou suddenly appeared. They asked him what had happened to Levathan, and he replied: "Joseph came and chased him away, just as he was about to claim that he was confounding the ministers of the church." This showed the father that a grace from that saint had been invoked. After that, Father Doamlup said that it seemed to him that, by this, God was indicating that Father Surin's service in this function was agreeable to him, and that he would not take charge of the mother until he had written his reasons to the father provincial. Father Chedoux and others did the same. Father Surin was therefore ordered to continue until notified otherwise. However, the father

79 Marie de Brageiongne (1590–1673), wife of Claude Bouthillier (1581–1652), Richelieu's *surintendant* of finances.

his rage and his despair against his soul, more than his cunning. He disguised himself as a serpent³⁹ that twisted around the body of the father, who placed all his recourse in God and immediately felt a most extraordinary help from God's power; for after his soul had done some external diligence in order to rebut the devil by humiliating his accomplice, the father went back to bed, totally trusting. The enemy returned and made himself perceptible in the same shape of a serpent, twisting around his members and biting him in order to take away his rest and trouble his purity. At that point, the father found a wondrous remedy: he had recourse to the Blessed Virgin, imagining an image of her holding the Holy Infant Jesus, as he had seen him in paintings. As soon as this representation was established in substance⁴⁰ in his imagination, he felt the strength of this hellish serpent weaken and lose all its vigor. Although it multiplied its bites, passing and repassing over the places in his body where it wanted to make its imprints, its attack caused no discomfort. In a short time, everything being peaceful, the father went back to sleep.

Although this sort of temptation is very irksome and tiresome, Father Surin did not believe it to be as perilous as the other temptations that flow in a way that conforms to nature, by imaginings where it is easy to be deceived. The next day, when he woke, the demon resumed his barrage. The father resorted to the same remedy that had been so successful; and after prayer, he went to the exorcism as usual. No sooner did he see the enemy on the possessed woman's face than he attacked him with these words: *Quis te impedit?*⁴¹ These words referred solely to the secret action that had gone on during the night, about which the father had spoken to no one. He repeated them courageously. The demon replied in disarray and rage: "It is Mary." The father realized that this wretch had been stopped by the operation of the Blessed Virgin. He then asked the demon whether he had noticed the thing that was in the father's spirit, and how. The demon replied: "Yes, for seeing that I could not operate in the sensitive part⁴² of the soul, I wanted to rise up into the imagination, and there I found what was stopping me." Since then, the father has used this same

39 This is the first of several evocations of serpents in Surin's autobiographical writings and in his *Spiritual Poetry*.

40 Surin wrote *en substance*, "in substance," that is, literally, in food and upkeep provided to an army. This does not appear to be his meaning. A more likely reading is "substance." Indeed, *substance* and *substantia* could be used interchangeably in the mid-seventeenth century. DAF 1694.

41 "Who hindered you?"

42 For some of the philosophers of ancient Greece and down to François de Sales (1567–1622), and beyond, the soul was viewed as having two parts. The superior or rational part tells us to rely on wisdom and intelligence, and therefore to resist pain and obey the law, whereas the inferior or irrational part is governed by "movements," thereby urging one to weep, give in to pain, and become stirred up about misfortunes.

remedy, which gave him such rest that, as he himself says, “despite the prodigious efforts and abominable inventions with which the devil tried to molest me, once that image had formed, I became insensitive, and the demon had no vigor.” It is true that on another occasion he was obliged to use other remedies: that was when, having enjoyed an advantage over the demon for six months, during which he made fun of his enemy, the father tested his power not only against Isacaron but also against the others whom Isacaron was sending to his fortress, to see whether they would succeed better than he had. His particular endeavor was to cover and wrap that image, operating diversely in his fantasy and substituting other images superficially, making an imprint on the spirit and darkening it in such a way that no vestige of it could be seen. At such times, he would make some breach; but suddenly, when the Star of the Sea appeared, which it did not delay doing, the tempest would cease.

One night, among others, a demon came whom the father knew to be one of the most powerful, and who wanted the glory for having won the victory. He acted so forcefully with a body that he had borrowed, and he assaulted the father with a spell so powerful that it seemed to flow down into his marrow, and there was hope that it would offer a great occasion for suffering. But the father held firm, looking at his painting, and he felt no imprint; so, having fought for a half hour, he began to speak to this demon with such assurance that he saw clearly that the demon was in disarray. He later learned that it was Leviathan himself, prince of the demons, who, having upbraided his henchmen for their weakness, wanted to teach them how to do things. Still more demons came, and one of them, speaking through the possessed woman’s mouth (he was talking to onlookers about how devils know our thoughts), said to him: “Do you think that I did not see your paintings?” He was alluding to the representation that the father was using against their attacks.

For over a year, this form of obsession was practiced by the demons, not only in their night combats with the father but also during the day, be the father alone, be he with the mother prioress, or be he with the other nuns, dealing with the things of God. And when he was weighing truths of great importance, the demon would declare his rage by taking the form of a serpent and biting his flesh.

There were other operations by which these malevolent spirits inconvenienced him and tested him. Sometimes they made him nauseous, and they usually caused him such continual oppressions in his chest that he seemed to be suffocating in an indescribable way. It was done in a way that he could not doubt came from the devil, who was making himself perceptible to him in several ways, and who did not leave him day or night, running about so quickly inside all his members and inside his entrails that he might have said that there

all the others, told the father, through the mother’s mouth, that he was tangling up a skein for him, and that the father would be very clever if he could untangle it. The father told him that he was not afraid. Several days later, he asked what, then, was the situation with which the demon had threatened him. The demon replied that he wanted to test it first.

The affair began as follows: it is necessary to recall that the father had undertaken the task of delivering the mother by cultivating her interior, removing the demon’s forces by practicing virtue. Now, it so happened that his guidance was being greatly criticized and was considered suspect, because it was unusual and far from the ordinary practice of doing exorcisms. The father did not neglect the exorcisms, but his principal concern was to make her soul conform to grace. The demon, who wanted to have the father dismissed in shame, made the father provincial, who had sent the father to Loudun, form a bad opinion of the latter’s conduct. This principal⁷⁶ was a man of merit, and he was well informed about matters involving possession, having previously been a very successful exorcist. He believed that Father Surin would never succeed, the way he was doing things, as he later admitted to him; he therefore resolved to take the mother from him, and to give her to another person who would proceed more forcefully against the demons. He ordered Reverend Father Rousseau,⁷⁷ rector of the college of Poitiers, to go to Loudun and to replace Father Surin with Father Doamlup,⁷⁸ a famous personage, very zealous and fervent, who did things in exactly the opposite way, spending the entire day on exorcisms, and using all his strength to brutalize the demons. At the same time, he wanted Father Surin to take charge of the woman whom Father Doamlup was exorcising.

One morning, therefore, when they were least expecting it, Father Rousseau arrived, bearing the order, which he abruptly announced to Father Surin, and to the mother. They submitted without resistance, although the mother was very frightened by Father Doamlup’s manner, which was rather violent toward her, who had such poor health, and who was beginning to appreciate the sweetness of the rest that they had obtained for her, and which she was hoping would be very effective for her deliverance. Nonetheless, she submitted, having a very obedient heart. They decided to begin the new guidance the next day; but Father Doamlup said that before assuming this function, he wanted to see Father Surin in action and take the necessary steps. This was deemed

⁷⁶ *Principal*, “principal”: is this a misreading of *provincial*, “provincial”?

⁷⁷ Gilbert Rousseau (dates unknown).

⁷⁸ The 1829 edition spells his name “Deaulup”; but Gustave Clément-Simon, *Histoire du collège de Tulle* (Paris: Champion, 1982), 329, citing the archives of the province of Aquitaine, spells it “Doamlup” and indicates that his first name was Jean.

contemplation that he communicated to her, and that mortified that intellectual vigor. It is a great impediment to the spiritual life, when it is not mastered. In the next chapter, we shall, however, finish the matter of combats with devils.⁷⁴ Those chapters that remain are the most noteworthy.⁷⁵

7 The Great Combats She Had with the Demons, and Their Efforts to Make Her Abandon Penance

In addition to what we have said, there is one more very remarkable thing: the mother had begun to devote herself a great deal to penance. As she was resting at prayer or otherwise, she sometimes would feel that she was being invisibly disciplined, and that blows were falling upon her body through her habit, like whiplashes. And someone would say to her: "That's good." It was the demons, trying to weary her and make her disgusted with that exercise. Various other things would arise in her, for reasons that manifestly exceeded the forces of nature; but since Our Lord was encouraging her in her interior, that was very debilitating to her enemies.

Now, this is how God gave an opening to her deliverance. One day, the principal demon who was possessing her, named Leviahan, who was the leader of

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With no explanation, the numbering in the Purnair edition jumps from "chapter 6" to "chapter 8."⁷⁴ This anomaly is explained in Cavallera, "Autobiographie," *texte primitif*, 1, which details the numbering problems caused by early modifications to chapters 6 and 7; Cavallera notes that the different manuscript versions generally not only merge chapter 6 and the first part of chapter 7; they also tack the subtitle of chapter 7 onto the end of the subtitle for chapter 6. The exception is the version at the Mazarine Library in Paris (which, according to Cavallera, most closely represents Surin's intentions). Cavallera proposed that the note on p. 107 of the printed edition of 1829, and the words that precede it ("following chapter" and "combats with the devils"), actually mark the beginning of chapter 7, which was completed in 1660, after a hiatus of some twenty-five years. (This same passage and note can be found on p. 97 of the Purnair edition.) The better to represent Surin's intentions (and Cavallera's insight), the titles of chapters 6–12 have been made to conform to Cavallera's proposal; in the process, they have been made to conform to the Purnair edition.

The note in the 1829 edition (see the preceding footnote) is reproduced here: "Father Surin, having written these first six chapters, was unable to continue at the time, as one can see in his life, owing to the different ills that he himself suffered from the demons' obsession, which rendered him incapable of writing anything, from the month of October 1636 to the beginning of the month of August 1660, when he resumed writing and continued into this translation to suggest the hiatus of almost twenty-five years. Surin himself comments on this hiatus in *Science*, part 4, first paragraph of chapter 9.

were serpents in his belly. When the father elevated himself to God⁴³ in his interior, the devil would redouble his movements, or would stir up pains, or would suddenly turn into a serpent who, like a beast when struck, turns and bites as much as it can.

The father's continual preoccupation with this impure spirit that was obsessed him, and with the perpetual war he was waging, was very advantageous for him in serving God. He often would tell the devil that, far from being harmed by his obsession, it was very useful to him, and that he did not doubt that it would last until his death, since it was a manner of constantly dealing with God. This enraged the devil. At that time, the father began to understand him, and he later saw very clearly that everything turns out for good, if a person surrenders everything to God; and he saw that the effects of the greatest mischief are occasions for the person to profit, by the goodness of God, who employs his power and his wisdom to make everything succeed to the advantage of the souls who are fighting for his glory.

Another effect of this very strange and irksome obsession was a continual seizing of his heart and his head, by means of which the devil kept the father's interior faculties so bound and so imprinted that he could only use them with great suffering. He always had a sort of cloud over his spirit, and a suffering in the active part of his soul that took from him the vigor of speculation and the force of action when dealing with people. The demon had done that in order to take revenge on the father, because from the very beginning, when he took charge of the mother, the father had also undertaken to help all the other nuns and bring them to God and to the study of perfection. He would do this with all his might, talking to them about prayer and mortification,⁴⁴ and above all about how to use the crosses⁴⁵ that Our Lord sends. He also held weekly conferences for the nuns, which dealt with the same subjects. They seemed to take

⁴³ This word is used throughout Surin's writings. It is a common way of saying "direct your thoughts to God." See glossary, "Elevate."

⁴⁴ *Mortification*, "mortification, mortify": "Afflicting one's body by fasting and austerities: mortify the flesh. Mortification is the action of mortifying one's body. Mortification is necessary for a Christian. One only goes to heaven by the path of mortification"; DAF 1694. For mortification, see Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 78, n3, 173n3, 305; and see Monsieur

⁴⁵ de Kenollet's conversion, in Surin, *Science*, part 1, chapter 3. About crosses, see a text by Surin's tertianship master, Lallemand: "This supernatural course that animated [Father Lallemand] caused him to ask God that, as with Saint Ignatius,

his plans might be contradicted and thwarted by everyone, not only so that he would have the occasion to suffer but also to ensure that the success of his undertakings would be all the more glorious to God because he had had to overcome more difficulties in order to succeed"; Pierre Champions *Life of Lallemand*, "His Love for Crosses," in Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 306.

great pleasure in these conferences and were profiting from them a great deal. This made these demons very spiteful, all the more so because, with everyone being fond of prayer and penance, the mood of the house changed. For these unfortunate spirits lacked the means to trouble the domestic peace and order as in the past. The mother prioress's example set all of that in motion, the father having shown them that, despite being possessed, they could still do a great deal against the demons. A fervor was stirred up among the nuns, and some of them achieved great effects.

Now, because the father was working at this with all his might, this obsession made him totally incapable of doing anything for very long. He could no longer exorcise or produce any fruit by his words and his conversation; and no sooner would he get an idea than it would suddenly be taken from him, and he would remain stupid and lacking in vigor, manifestly feeling that the demon was hiding the images from him by carrying them off. Or if he wanted to make some effort to conserve them, his heart would be seized and he would be forced to drop everything, then and there. He nonetheless proposed remaining at Loudun, doing what he could until Our Lord might put things in order. He found a way to serve the mother prioress. He would remain near her, on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament, praying or applying the Blessed Sacrament to her head, having enclosed it in a little silver box so that nothing irreverent could happen to it as a result of the demons' insolence. The demons made fun of him, however, exalting their power and provoking him to speak as before, asking him where was that courage, that easy eloquence, and the other things that used to give him an advantage. This humiliated the father extremely, without taking away his assurance.

He still had enough strength for the mother prioress, although it was slow, and he would place his hopes in preparing her for Communion, which she received almost daily. For her spiritual advancement, God permitted him to be able to sustain the mother's spirit. While he was waiting to be relieved of his troubles in order to complete his work, he encountered still greater troubles: the obsession that until then had been secret became public, and it was followed by more notable effects that seemed likely to ruin the whole situation. For, because the demons judged accurately that everything he was enduring did not suffice to make him resolve to abandon the undertaking, and because he was concerned about nothing except being where it pleased God to put him, the demons resolved to do things that were capable of obliging the superiors to remove him from there, and to instill fear in all those who, in the future, might be employed to exorcise the mother prioress. It was Leviathan himself who wanted to obsess the father, or to possess him if he could, proposing to show everyone a new effect: a minister of the church might be tormented by

she would not tolerate vice, not when healthy, not when sick, not if she had death between her teeth. All the demon desired was for them to take into account that she was possessed; but neither she nor the father wanted to view the devils other than as a natural inclination, albeit a bit strong, but an inclination that would be done for them, neither more nor less. God would subdue the rascals by his power, provided her soul was faithful; and by this means she and the father saw the end of it.

It is true that the poor maiden was once surprised by the enemy. Having spent a morning doing penance, she wanted to rest. The father came to see her in the afternoon and found her a bit drowsy. That was because the demon was beginning to seize her, in order to make her sink into laziness. The father made her understand that she was in danger; she noticed it a bit, but she thought it would dissipate on its own. No sooner did she neglect this first step than the devil took possession of her senses, and made her sleep and snore near the father, who felt very indignant about it, toward her more than toward the demon. In vain did he give orders to the demon, who would nod his head, make fun of him, and continue to sleep. As for the mother, in vain did the father speak to her; he had to be patient. Finally, after a long while he brought her back to her senses; but the demon, leaving her, gave her an imprint of despair, which worsened her fault. The father did not want to discourage her, and he told her that she must continue. She was very displeased about this, and for a long time she could not pray or do any devotions, seeing clearly that God was angry with her. The father exhorted her to do penance, which she did harshly, using the scourge for three hours in a row. Natural compassion was the father's only movement for making her cease, for he felt that God was awaiting that satisfaction from her. Yet despite this, he himself was not content, for at Communion, instead of giving Communion to her at the grill, he took it away, saying that she was unworthy, and he sent her back to do penance. She was upset all day long, albeit not distressed, and she humbled herself before God, who was very willing to console her, making her know that he had pardoned her fault. Yet she was not content with herself. She begged the father to permit her to be attached to a pillar that was in the room, to be flagellated by her sisters, as Our Lord was at the column. The father did not want that. He told her to remain in peace, and that Our Lord had treated her this way in order to give her a reason for greatly distrusting her nature, and for no longer allowing herself to be caught in laziness. That was very useful to her.

This battle having thus ended, another battle remained that involved the vivacity of her spirit. It involved the divine operation more than it did her own operation. It seemed that, here, Our Lord, through Saint Joseph, assigned her a favor that we shall discuss when we come to the question of the infused

to rest?" She replied: "I don't know, I am usually like that after the noontime meal. It is natural for me, I don't see anything wrong." "There could be a great deal wrong," said the father,

and I think we should search for the root. Cassian,⁷³ who is an ancient and very spiritual writer, tells how, in his day, an abbot complained that his religious could not remain in their cells after the noontime meal, and wanted to amuse themselves and chat. The abbot considered them to be idlers, and he called it "the noontime demon."

"Really?" said the mother,

I have been like that my whole life, especially since I have been possessed. About an hour after the noontime meal, I am overcome with a desire to rest and be idle, and sometimes I lie on my bed. And if I don't feel well, then it comes into my spirit. I feel all that in the afternoon, and ever since I have been serving God, until they call me to the exorcism I pass the time in lassitude, in desiring to chat and spend my time uselessly.

The father told her that this was a vice. Then the devil, mounting into the mother's head, began to speak, and said: "No, that is nature." "Since you are talking," said the father, "you are interested in it; for you are solely interested in vice." The mother, having regained consciousness, said: "Father, if that is a vice, it must be combated, and I beg you to help me, for I am resolved not to tolerate it." He replied: "This vice is the exact opposite of fervor, and it absolutely prevents the high perfection of virtue. A truly spiritual person should always be lively toward God, and always be inclined to do the vigorous actions involved in serving him." He added that a meal could indeed give some feeling of heaviness, but that an indisposition lasting two or three hours and involving objects of piety was a blamable effect, if one was not ill. The mother strongly approved, and resolved that whenever she felt a vapor from this vice, be it after the noonday meal or at bedtime, she would immediately correct it, taking the scourge and continuing to wield it until she had made up for it. And she did not stint about doing this. When she had done a long penance in the morning, the devil would take his time, in order to assail her after the midday meal; or when she was not well, but was not paying attention to it, she would say that

⁷³ St. John Cassian (360–435) was a monk and ascetic who introduced eastern monastic life to the West, specifically to southern Gaul (today, France). One of his most influential writings was the *Institutes of Monastic Life*, book 10 of which deals with the "spirit of acedia."

the devil, by using his ministry to chase the devil away. The father therefore undertook to do that, and God permitted it, for his own glory and for the greater good of the father, who received from it a great humiliation and a great reason for scorning himself.

The first attack took place on Good Friday, in the nuns' house, and in the presence of the other fathers of the Society and a few laypersons, officers serving Monsieur de Laubardemont. A few days earlier, the devil had threatened to make the father reenact the passion; and he did indeed make him suffer a great deal that week, particularly on that Good Friday. The father had withdrawn alone after the snack, and he felt great nausea, which finally ended in a great torment of his members and powers, so that he began to thrash about and twist his body like someone possessed, with certain transports⁴⁶ and with violent trembling that astonished all those present, who thought him possessed. It is true that he still had the use of free reason, but one would not have thought so from the strange things he was doing. He would raise his hand to his mouth in order to bite himself, he would kneel with exterior imprints so violent that he did not know what would become of him; yet the depth⁴⁷ of his soul was very content, and was not worried about it, and in his interior he was making fun of the devil's operation. The fathers who were present exorcised him, and by dint of conjurations⁴⁸ they made the demons withdraw. The father returned to his original state and rested all night, without being kept awake by the usual visits from the devils, which never failed and which have never failed him. It was thought that this would be nothing; but the same effects reappeared in public. First, during the exorcism, when he was saying the usual words or was issuing an order to the demons, he suddenly became speechless and felt bound in some way, so that he could not utter a word. A priest brought the Blessed Sacrament in a silver box, and as soon as the box touched his lips he would regain his speech. That happened five or six times in a row, during an exorcism at which Monseigneur the bishop of Nîmes, who was at Loudun at the time, was

⁴⁶ How Surin and his associates interpreted these "transports" is not clear. The term can apply to the spiritual: raptures, ecstasies; since receiving this agreeable news, he has been in great transports. It can also denote an illness: "A symptom caused by malignant vapors that rise to the brain. He has a high fever, and they fear a transport to the brain"; DAF 1694.

⁴⁷ *Fond*, "depths." Northern mystical theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that describes the soul as having a *fond*, a deep place, a "depth" or "depths," containing the simple essence of the soul, the "divine temple from which God never withdraws." See

Dominique Salin, *L'expérience spirituelle et son langage: Leçons sur la tradition mystique chrétienne* (Paris: Editions Facultés Jésuites de Paris, 2015), chapter 3, esp. 59–67. Connotation: "Words used to banish a demon, the plague, a storm, etc."; DAF 1694.

present several times, offering him the Blessed Sacrament, applying it himself, or ordering the devil to leave him.

Saying Mass in the Ursulines' chapel, the father was stopped short and could not speak. An exorcist had to come and order the devil to leave him, and he finished the Mass. But this is nothing compared with what happened next. Before the eyes of the persons who were coming from everywhere to attend the exorcisms, as they would to the most welcoming theater in France, by a frightful invention the demons grabbed the father, in the way they slip into bodies when they have permission to vex them, and they made him change his countenance, stirred him, and obliged him to fall to the floor, where he was forced to struggle, tormented and agitated, in such a way that the usual remedies were useless. When he was seized in this way, he would feel in his interior a vehemence that he could not resist, and he could only find rest on the pavement, where he was strongly inclined to roll about; and there he would utter frightful cries, with shivering and trembling that made him jump, as if he had a new soul that was giving him inclinations very distant from his own. It was the demon, who was binding himself to his soul so tightly that it seemed that this was not a foreign spirit, but his very own. According to one of these souls, the father was in great and profound peace, and very intimately united with God, not caring about anything that was going on. According to another soul, he was in extreme woe and irremediable misfortune. By the instinct of that peaceful soul, he stretched out his arm for the Blessed Sacrament that the exorcists were presenting to him; and by the impatience of the other soul, who seemed to be he himself, he would push away Our Lord, as if it were something odious and adverse. He would shout exclamations, which showed equally a vehement desire to belong to God and a most extraordinary aversion for God. When one of the exorcists gave the order, he would make the sign of the cross on his lips; and suddenly a movement would come upon him that would make him grab the thumbs of several exorcists, and he would say things that were capable of afflicting the demons who were belaboring him and who felt sharply the effect of his words, as if he had said them to himself. All the while, he would laugh in the face of these unpleasant memories, as something that did not concern him.

This showed him that there were indeed demons, and that within a dominion⁴⁹ they were very different, even though the dominion is but a substance.

One thing that seemed unusual was to see the demon suddenly pass from the mother prioress's body into the father's, and then return to the place where he

49 Surin is referring to "dominions" (also called "dominations" or "lordships"), that is, the hierarchy of celestial beings. They regulate the duties of lower angels. Only rarely do the angelic lords make themselves physically known to humans.

were proportional to the ones due for the different vices procured by carrying out their obligations among us.

It remains to recount the mother's final combat against herself and against her bad denizen, a combat to uproot laziness in her, which the fathers of old called the spirit of *acedia*.⁷² That spirit is one of man's great impediments, one that is as difficult to overcome as vanity is. It is a heaviness that is the direct opposite of the spirit of fervor, by which the devil causes all the vices to flow, and nourishes them in the soul. It was one of the most difficult to vanquish. Its venom consists of a numbness that is made to flow into the senses, by which the soul desires and wishes for repose, and allows itself to flow in a wayward state, in a vague maintenance of its thoughts, in a countenance that is gloomy and sorrowful when things go against its desires. All of that blunts the sharp point of the spirit and keeps the flesh alert. Now, the mother partook of this vice, as all of mankind does, it being a very widespread malady. When this was recognized, all the demons gathered to defend themselves, as if it were their final entrenchment in the sensitive part of the soul, hoping to attract the soul to the sense, and finally lead it to what they willed. And since, as far as the spirit was concerned, their greatest bastions were the vivacity of the intellect that is so contrary to the subjection to God that this part of the soul should have, as far as the sense was concerned, there was the laziness in which they put great trust. But God gave the mother the means to get out of it, although it cost her so much that she believed it impossible. She was fortunate that God had given her the spirit of penance, which is the exact opposite of the spirit of *acedia*; for otherwise she would never have overcome it, considering the longstanding habit she had had since childhood, and the scant reflection she had devoted to *acedia*, never having been wary of it. Also, it is a vice that is only recognizable when excessive, for it never leads to something that is directly contrary or bad: it flows tepidly, and it only prevents the soul from striving for great goods.

Here, then, is how this vice was recognized. One day, the father noticed that the mother's spirit was in a rather good disposition after the noontime meal. But her posture was a bit careless, for she was leaning like a person who was weary. The father, who examined everything closely and asked the cause of that countenance, asked her if she was tired. She replied, "No." Was her spirit vigorous? She replied, "Yes," and she said that she felt like talking about God. "How does it happen, then," said the father, "that you are leaning as if you want

72 *Acedia* is a state of listlessness or torpor, of not caring or not being concerned with one's position or state in the world. It can lead to being unable to perform one's duties in life. This negligence gives rise to a sickness in the soul that is expressed through boredom and an aversion for prayer, penance, and devotional reading.

when they join with it in order to incline it to evil, and notably when they possess it by a sort of incarnation, which they feign in order to thwart the incarnation that God wanted to have our nature by some proportion; for they say that, in Jesus Christ, there were humanly divine and divinely human actions. Thus for these demons, united and incorporated into mankind, God obliges them to undergo in several things the states of nature. In that, he holds back their power, so that they adjust themselves to us and behave like us, adding to the malevolence of our corrupted being a certain excess that marks a loftier birth and a stronger virtue than ours. But in their manner of proceeding, they match human organs, faculties, and inclinations, and from that liaison they receive limitations and very strong character traits, and in the process they show themselves to men far below what they themselves are. That is why some are clownish, others shout, others are afraid, and others are obstinate, according to the plans they have made for themselves and the complexities they encounter in the subjects they possess. A blasphemous and furious demon whose principal task is to anger men will maintain in the person he possesses in that humor, showing himself to be exclusively furious, and producing the effects consistent with passion. A demon who makes men lean toward delights will, if possible, carry out that same function in the possessed person; and in his diabolically human life, he will do soft actions, will seek delights, will be passionate about that just as if it were his natural bent. And so, when one says that this devil is a glutton, a quarrelor, a clown, it is not that this spirit is inclined to be clownish, and so forth; it is because he has taken it as his task to incline men to that, as a tempter. When Balaam was possessing the mother, he would talk of nothing but drinking and playing games; Isacarion, nothing but pleasures and obscenities; Behemoth, nothing but blasphemy and doing ill to someone; and Leviathan, grandeur and festivities. They would behave that way in every-thing, although sometimes they dissimulated. That is why one demon would fear chastisement more than another did: he was obliged to play the role of his personage. Divine justice was binding that demon to certain punishments that

conquer and become conquered, until a uniform quality is reached: the "complexion" The humors give rise to four "temperaments" or fundamental personality types: sanguine (optimistic, leader-like), choleric (bad-tempered or irritable), melancholic (analytical and quiet), and phlegmatic (relaxed and peaceful). The passions had been a subject of debate among natural philosophers since Plato's day, and "movements of the soul" lie at the core of René Descartes's (1596–1650) (*Passions of the Soul*, completed in 1649. As the seventeenth century progressed, these movements would purely and simply be explained more on the humors, the passions, and the devil, see Surin's teacher, Lalleman, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 92.

had started. That was most noteworthy when Monsieur the duke d'Orléans,⁵⁰ the king's brother, came to Loudun. As the father, in his surprise, was speaking with him, the mother appeared, delivered, and the father was suddenly struck by a blow to the heart that toppled him to the ground. Trying to rise, he was again thrown down onto the pavement, in the presence of His Highness and his court. The exorcists being occupied for a moment with relieving the father, the mother prioresse changed her face and became horribly monstrous, which greatly horrified a person who was talking with her at the time. At the same time, the father, who found that he had been delivered, got up and went to pursue the enemy who was occupying the mother, after which they remained free. When the father was turned topsy-turvy by the devil's operation, the demons of the other possessed women made a laughing stock of him and mocked him, saying: "Isn't he a pretty sight, going up into the pulpit after having rolled in the dust?" The mother prioresse's demons were especially delighted: they would say a thousand insolent things about the father, and they were triumphing in such a manner that they were simply awaiting the hour when the father would be removed from his employment, as incapable of continuing it. Indeed, he was reduced to such impotence that almost none of his actions were free; he only had the power to turn toward God in his interior. Even that did not last long, for God allowed the demons to act in proportion to their power, albeit with a limitation appropriate to God's goodness. Leviathan would do stronger and more generating operations than Isacarion and all the other demons. He bound up the father's faculties so that, for around a month, the father could rarely, if ever, do something or turn his eyes toward God. Although he said Mass and prayed, he remained as motionless and as stiff as if he were made of marble, being unable to fix his heart on any clearly recognizable movement. He felt profoundly satisfied about the divine command, and he dealt with things involving the mother prioresse's soul, without knowing how. Since he had almost no understanding or formed conception of it, it seemed that the help that God was furnishing him, in order to do this charity toward the mother, was coming through a hidden channel and along a secret way that was preventing him from participating in the things he was talking about, and which were nonetheless operating greatly in the mother.

The demon who was obsessing the father was spreading such extreme and pitiful bitterness in the father's heart that it seemed to him that all creatures were in mourning, and that he was swimming in a sea of bitter absinthe. Sometimes this would last a week, during which he would have terrible headaches

Gaston, duke of Orléans (1608–60), known as "Monseigneur," was the son of King Henry IV (1572–1610). His older brother was King Louis XIII.

that were very different from the ones he had had in the past; and he would have such great heaviness in his members that he could feel the demon putting himself in his legs, molesting him, and making him breathless, even when he only wanted to go from the Ursulines to his own lodging, which was nearby. For three days, the demon gave him a headache so violent and so acute, accompanied by an interior pressure in his spirit, that he drew from it a motive that served him all his life in order to grasp the devil's domination, and how horrible it is to fall under his power. It seemed that the devil, by giving him shooting pains, was imprinting in his inner ear these words: "You must leave the prioress, and we shall leave you in peace." But in the midst of his greatest troubles, the father felt driven to suffer still more, which always made him livelier than before and more desirous of suffering. He even felt this desire grow beyond bounds: he would jump, and sometimes, in the vehemence of this desire, he would sing words that matched his emotion; but soon the devil would grab his words away from him and would press his chest so hard that he could no longer sing.⁵¹ At mealtime, the demon, more enraged than ever, would prevent him from reaching his hand toward the food, and would stop his arm when he wanted to drink.

During the entire time of this obsession, the father would feel the demon residing in his body, below his stomach, where he always made himself perceptible by a little itch. From there, he would enter all the parts of the father's body, when he wanted to act. The public effects of this obsession lasted from Easter to Pentecost, when the father provincial came to Loudun to see what was going on, especially Father Surin's state. The demons had reserved for themselves the right to work wonders, and to bother the father in the father provincial's presence, in order to make the father provincial want to withdraw the father's employment. But they were sadly mistaken, for during the exorcism that the father did in the presence of his provincial, the devil threatened to throw him to the ground, and the reverend father provincial forbade the devil to do so, citing his rights over the father. That stopped the devil short. Having gone to bed as usual, and having felt the first aggressions, the father perceived that it was stopping there. After that, nothing happened before the people. The father provincial left Loudun without taking Father Surin. The demons were very chagrined, and Isacaron said that the father's good angel had prevented him from bothering him in the provincial's presence; and that, throughout this obsession, he had done nothing but lose, inasmuch as, given the father's experience with the demons' ways of proceeding by vexing and possessing men,

⁵¹ This would seem to be the context in which Surin wrote the *Cantiques spirituels*, first published in 1655.

This sort of punishment, which had succeeded against Leviathan, was likewise practiced against the other demons, who feared it extremely. They were saying that it did indeed involve their master, who was treating them tyrannically and who was letting his rage loose upon them, because something had displeased him. As for them, they did not hold a grudge. They nonetheless were forced to endure it, one after the other, the father taking the opportunity to chastise them in this way for their resistance to leaving the mother at liberty to do her pious functions, which they opposed, sometimes openly and sometimes secretly, by little obstacles, holding the head or the heart in a grasp. Since this was happening often, the father commanded them to appear and ordered them to withdraw totally. If they refused, he would sentence them, in the name of God and of the maiden's guardian angel, to undergo the chastisement that was so odious to them.

His greatest means of compelling them was to have them sentenced by the mother herself, who would demand justice when one of them had troubled her devotions. And the father would render justice, appointing her to be the judge; and when she had given an order, they would have to submit, saying:

It is impossible for us to resist this bitch's will. That is the only thing that can make us submit, for God permits us to resist everything else. We confront the church, we make fun of priests, we stand firm even about the sacraments. But we cannot resist a good will.

It was an admirable spectacle to see Isacaron, who is a sensual demon, not by his nature but by his office, when he was sentenced to this chastisement. He would lament in a childish manner, he would beg, he would kneel, he would feel sorry for his flesh that, he said, he so dearly loved. He would behave according to the spirit that he imprinted on carnal men. It was impossible to make him strike hard. That was less difficult for Behemoth, who is a hard demon, as described by Job, who said that his heart will harden like a stone and will stiffen like an anvil; but the demon of softness was desperate when the time came for the effect. That is why, as soon as he heard tell of it, he would flee, unless the father promptly bound him by the authority of the church. The reason for the demons' different humors⁷¹ stems from their moral links to our nature,

⁷¹ To explain the conduct of demons and the persons they possess, in this long paragraph Surin blends ancient "humoralism" and seventeenth-century discussions about the "movements" of the soul or body that were triggered by the passions. Humoralism held that an excess or a deficiency of any of four distinct bodily fluids (the "humors") directly influences a person's personality and health. Contrary qualities that reside in the four "elements" (earth, water, fire, air) and that mingle intimately with one another alternately

he was making him capable of helping those persons who were oppressed or who would be oppressed by the demons, and in whom the demons usually do their operations, which are difficult to understand and which one cannot aptly understand until one has experienced them. Indeed, this made it so easy for the father to find remedies, be it for the mother prioress, or be it for the other persons afflicted by the malevolent spirit, that he seemed to see clearly every-thing that was going on in them.

4 About the Mother Prioress's Resolution to Give Herself Totally to God, and How God Began to Give Her Great Graces, the Mother Having Devoted Herself to Prayer and Penance

Despite the devil's obstacles, the father continued his plan, which was to make the prioress's spirit perfectly submissive to God. He had taken, as his principal support, the power of Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he was trying to make enter the mother by means of the Blessed Sacrament. And although the violence of the obsession deterred him a great deal, God was nonetheless giving him enough strength and liberty to prepare the mother's soul for this tendency, which consisted of being attentive to what he was saying to her, and which aimed at forming a total resolution to make room for the divine will, for a perfect purity of heart, and for a total surrender of the self to the empire of grace. His words would be interrupted by a thousand inventions and insolences practiced by the demon; but the father believed that he had gained a great deal if, after six hours of laboring and waiting, he could procure for the mother a quarter hour of true liberty to form acts that would bring her to receiving Our Lord Jesus Christ (for the father did not value a half-liberty, mingled with obscurity and disgust, which the devil blends as much as he can in those over whom he has power). The father sensed that God was communicating to him a secret vigor in his words, which traveled through the obstacles of the malevolent spirits and which, by operating in the mother, gave her heart the disposition he desired. And if he was lacking that vigor, in vain did he say the loveliest thing in the world to her; he would make no progress, for the mother remained insensible. Thus a quarter hour a day was a long time for him, and in six weeks such a change took place in the mother that she began to desire to give herself totally to God. So one day, after Holy Communion, the father was helping her with a thanksgiving, and was speaking into her ear and forming conversations for her with Our Lord, when she showed a very impetuous spirit and said to him: "Ah, father, today I am going to choose, and I am taking from your hands the cross of my Savior, Jesus Christ, and I am surrendering myself to him to bear that cross

of what they are feeling, acting there as if they were incarnate in a totally admirable order.) Then, regaining consciousness, she said:

Father, I sense that this devil is very apprehensive about what you have said. He makes me swoon at the thought; but I want him and myself to be humiliated. As long as he is in me, I condemn him, and I demand that he appear and undergo the punishment you will order for him.

Then the demon returned, in order to stop her from talking. He lamented being reduced in this way to the power of mankind, which he scorned so greatly, and above all to the power of a young maiden whom he still possessed. He repeated over and over: "Give me the whip!" "Yes," said the father,

and with her own hands, which you made yours by right of possession, and on behalf of the living God, and of this maiden, your mistress, to the extent that she adheres to Jesus Christ, I order you to take a scourge right now, and in this very place, and with no insolence, you to chastise yourself in the manner that I very well know can be done by order of divine justice, which will make you feel the blows, in order to humble your pride and punish your resistance to grace.

This judgment was like a thunder clap to the ears of Levithan, who did all he could to avoid the effect: he threatened, he begged, he went so far as to be willing to kneel. But the father held firm. And since the chamber was separated by a grill and a curtain before the grill, he did not think he should withdraw. Then the demon, having asked for a nun to come and chastise him, and still refusing to do it himself, declared that he was being forced to do it by the presence of the angels, and that he was doing it at the discretion of the father, who was making him go wherever he wanted. In the end, he took back his garments, and he complained mightily to the father about being treated so outrageously that, ever since he had been created, he had never undergone such punishment or been reduced to beating himself. He said that he knew full well on whom he would take revenge, and that there were magicians in hell who had put him in this body by their magic charms, and that he would pay back by the thousands the blows he had received. As for himself, he simply desired to come out, being henceforth very wretched, because that maiden's will was determined to do everything that would serve God. After that, he withdrew, leaving the mother free. She had not felt any of this scourging, and she did not know what had been said and done, beyond a confused memory that she had undressed and

until I die." What she said was efficacious, for it dealt a mortal blow to the devil, who immediately seized her and, greatly enraged, threw her to the ground, sprawling and rolling her body in a strange way. Ever since that day, her soul has never retreated from something she believed necessary for God's service. That was the gift of herself that she made to her Creator, and which the father had so desired. He believed that she could hope for everything from God, having made this choice between his hands. That is why he no longer doubted that Our Lord wanted to favor with his graces a soul that was so generous to him.

In a few days, the mother felt emotions in her heart that attracted her to penance, and she told the father that, in her interior, she felt that God wanted to convert her totally, and that he was making her want to go to him through penance. The father knew that this was a movement of grace, and he did not want to hurry its execution but would wait until her soul was drawn to it more strongly. Not long afterward, something happened that brought a great change in her and opened the depth of her heart to God entirely. As the father was trying, in his own words, to stir up God's spirit and to prepare her heart more and more, without imposing any specific practice, always waiting until it might please God to do more, one day when there was no one at the exorcism, the mother was at the foot of the Blessed Sacrament, tied to a bench as usual, because of the fury into which the devils put her. With the father near her, kneeling before Our Lord, she had a divine operation that put her outside herself, and she remained in ecstasy for around a quarter of an hour, during which she had a vision that totally changed the state of her soul. It seemed to her that she had been carried before God's throne in a moment, and there, very frightened, she saw herself in the presence of the divine Majesty. Her whole life was shown to her, all the folds of her conscience were displayed to her, and she was in such great disarray and anguish, awaiting God's judgment, that she could not stand her ground. She knew and felt clearly how different is the impurity of the creature compared to God's purity, and the mere presence of God seemed to her so unbearable that, to endure it, she would have thrown herself into the hands of the demons, who were there, it seemed to her, to seize her. In this brief time, she heard and experienced a quantity of things that would take a very long time to narrate in detail.

When this operation had passed, God permitted the demons to bother her, as if she had really been delivered into their power. Thus the father saw a spectacle that astonished him greatly, for this maiden, being in her good sense, was behaving like a person who had already been judged and sentenced by God, with so many lamentations and moans that he could not console her. Acting through a violent impression, the devil was persuading her that she was really lost; and since the vision had been engraved into the depth of her soul, he

overcome everything, wrote out the formula, which said that the mother, in order to honor Our Lord's humility and the humility of his Holy Mother, was promising God, in the event that it pleased him to deliver her from the demons who were possessing her, to embrace forever the condition of lay sister of the Order of Saint Ursula, in the event that those on whom she depended were willing to permit it. This vow was pronounced shortly before Holy Communion, with the father holding the Blessed Sacrament to the window of the grill. No one but he heard it. Leviathan, unable to tolerate this affront, withdrew for several days without daring to appear, giving up the combat that he had previously been waging with extreme obstinacy, and casting out whatever venom of pride remained inside on every occasion where the mother did good. He made his face proud, brash, disdainful, and vain. The father spared him nothing. Leviathan was enraged.

One day, Leviathan came to the grill with extraordinary insolence, a haughty and proud carriage, an assured face, and an arrogant way of speaking, to say that there was no reason to treat the maidens of the house in the way that indiscreet Jesuit was treating a well-brought-up maiden; that it was cruel, and so forth, sometimes speaking like the devil and sometimes like the maiden. The father threatened to whip him, which made Leviathan burst out so angrily, and the anger turned to such fear, that the father could see that this was acutely painful for him. Then, speaking to the mother as he would to a proud maiden whom the church had placed under his power, and sometimes speaking to the devil as he would to a slave who had fallen into the snare of the same church, and where he was caught and ordered to be chastised according to the discretion of its ministers, the father made it understood that he would not tolerate pride in either of them, and that he was resolved to crush that pride by whatever means it took. In addition, the father told Leviathan that he would make him feel the power over him that God had given him, and that he was very assured of the good will of the maiden to whom he would make Leviathan yield. To this, the wretch replied: "That is my misfortune. Accursed good will! For I shall have to go wherever that bitch wants me to."⁷⁰ The father replied: "You can therefore expect me to treat you as a rebel and subject you to the whip." At that, the mother's face, which had entirely lost its liberty, became very pale. It was easy to see how much this wretched demon feared this treatment. And her apprehension was so great that she fainted. (The demon was communicating a part of his feelings to the mother, which is usual in possessing demons: when they have united with the soul, in some way, on the soul, they make an imprint

⁷⁰ Yes, the demon calls her a *chienne*, which Randle Cotgrave (*A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* [London, 1611]) translates as "bitch."

do it, saying some part of it daily, with such clarity, simplicity, and sorrow that the demons, who were raising such effective obstacles, were forced to admit, lamenting, that they had never seen such great clarity in a conscience. One can also say that the manner in which she behaved when doing this was so excellent, and was accompanied by such great peace and such a penetrating spirit, that she could serve as a model, if it could be made known. During the day, she would use part of her examen to expose herself before God, in order to receive mercy at the sight of her past sins; and suddenly she would be enlightened about a certain part of her life. This would go on successively; and the next day she would confess, continuing in that way to the very end. This confession permitted the father to reveal her, there being no intention to oblige her to keep it a secret. She herself always told him that, and she was ready to go and say it before everyone. To this confession she would bring so much humility and such a serious spirit that the father would admire the operation of grace. Sometimes, before receiving absolution, she would go to the far end of the chamber and would then return to where the father was, on the other side of the grill, advancing on her knees with the countenance of a criminal. Prostrating herself, she would ask for absolution with great penance. Now, Levathan had nourished in her spirit some timely plans for spiritual ambition, the depth of which was merely pride and haughtiness. To remedy that, she was inclined to make a vow to be a lay sister for the rest of her life, if those on whom she depended would permit it. No sooner had the demon seen this resolution than he conjured up an excessive rage and desolation. He professed reasons that false spiritual persons advance, in order to sustain their authority. He made the glory of God and the salvation of souls the principal point, and he sustained his cause with colorful pretexts that nonetheless tended merely to preserve in the soul a self-love that was well veiled and well supported. Finally, proposing this vow caused the demon an extreme horror: it shattered the assemblage of his machines and reduced her soul to a total loss of itself. Having thought about it, and having given the mother time to deliberate about this undertaking, the father finally agreed that she could do it at her superiors' good pleasure. He chose the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady,⁶⁹ and since it was a question of consulting about the formula to be used for this vow, he had someone bring him a portable desk so that it could be written down. He took up his pen, and when he tried to write, there was a sort of cloud before his eyes that prevented him from seeing distinctly. He spent some time trying to write, but without success: if he regained his liberty of sight, he lost the liberty to move his fingers. The devil was doing all that in order to oppose the vow. But the father, having

was operating on her violently, and upon her God was continuing to imprint regrets about a great contrition and an ardent desire for him, amid the despair that the devils were making her feel. It was strange to watch her, because this went on for fifty days, at the end of which her soul became strong and gradually settled into a total submission to God by the following ways.

First, she was so greatly attracted to penance that she thought God would win her that way. The father waited until God's way was more fully elucidated, and he merely tried to lead her spirit to making an absolute choice of God, in order to depend so much on him that she would want to surrender herself, in all liberty, into the hands of the one who, by his movements, guides the souls that abandon themselves there. Their talks were only about that, and about some artifices of the demon, who was merely trying to chill this resolution.

Some time after the vision, the father made a plan and undertook to combat the impediments that might be in her soul, where the demon had positioned himself to oppose the operations of grace. By subdividing these impediments, one by one, the fortress was returned to God's possession. The father therefore got the idea that one of the most apparent and ordinary impediments for the mother was a certain natural gaiety and liberty that made her prone to laugh during her conversations, and that greatly distanced her from the serious spirit with which God's things must be taken. He saw that this spirit was very contrary to the plan of a perfect life, and that her natural disposition still remained vivacious and was incapable of having the remorseful heart with which one must convert to God. There was a demon named Balaam, who was sitting in this humor and who, owing to the mother's natural inclination, occupied it almost continually. When he possessed her, everything was games and jokes; and when he left her at liberty, she always restrained the vigor of this humor, and she conserved her lack of devotion and her hearty laughter on the least occasion; so that everything the father had been able to construct was destroyed in the blink of an eye. The father judged it necessary to attack that spirit very forcefully, and to make use of the inclination for penance that God had given the mother, and that he had put in her heart. First, he tried to make her see how prejudicial that humor was to her; and he made her feel great horror about herself, so that she strongly desired to be rid of her enemy. The father, seeing her firm resolution, asked her if she had been doing penance. She admitted that she had not, and that ever since the demons' arrival, she had been incapable of practicing any; but if he deemed it suitable for her, she no longer belonged to herself, so she would obey him in everything. She would find a scourge and a hair shirt, and she had a copper belt with spikes. The father asked her whether, when the demon Balaam came to seize her through her joking spirit, she would really have the courage, in case a little liberty remained to her, to take

the belt and wear it for a while in order to abate the gaiety that would assail her, surmounting in that way the nature that was giving the demon an opportunity. She promised him. The demon suddenly appeared, as if all was lost, and said "No," he would prevent her. But having been dismissed, the demon left an imprint in the mother: an extreme apprehension about the penance, although her resolution to obey remained.

Not long after that, when the mother was at recreation, the devil did not fail to surprise her, reminding her of these lively apprehensions and giving her a strong inclination to enjoy herself with the other possessed women. There was a mighty combat in her about leaving recreation: the demon persisted and pretended not to be astonished. Nonetheless, since her support lay in the nature that was being molested by this suffering, little by little he withdrew and left the mother free. Suddenly, she was wonderfully rewarded by Our Lord: while praying, she remained for an hour in great peace and light. This gave her such strength and virtue that the next day she talked with the father about it, as about a very great grace, saying that ever since she had been possessed, she had been unable to pray for more than a moment. That increased her desire to fight; and on his side, the demon prepared to wage the greatest battle against her.

The next day, at the end of the exorcism, she remained extremely weak, as if all her members had been broken. She stirred compassion in the father, so beaten down was she. The father suspected that this was the demon's artifice, in order to feel assured about playing his game. The father wanted to find a solution, and he prepared the mother to wage a good combat. He therefore asked her whether, if Balaam were to attack her again, she would have the courage to defend herself. She replied that, in her very weak state, it did not look as if she would don the belt, which had entered deeply into her flesh on the previous day, but that she would nonetheless obey to the death. The father, suffering greatly and resisting, ordered her to wear her belt; and he sent her away, so weak that she could not stand. He withdrew, and thinking of the harsh order he had just given her, and fearing that she would not be able to accomplish it, after weighing things, he resolved to revoke his order. He therefore went back and, having summoned the mother, found her very pensive, melancholy, and in pain. Having probed her heart, he told her that it would suffice for him to test her obedience, and that she should not wear the belt. Then she said to him, "Ah! Father, you are deigning to accept my nature. Alas, I beg you not to. Follow the movements that God gives you." The father was very consoled by this response, and he saw clearly that he had been mistaken. The next day, the demon confessed the truth to him. So the father said to the mother: "All right." And since God was giving her courage, he added: "May she resist her enemy."

subtly that the mother did not notice it: she adjusted her words, kept her head up, kept her wimple clean, and maintained an air about herself that was quite the opposite of a nun's humility. She would receive all outsiders with good grace, and she satisfied everyone. She would recite passages from the church fathers, as she had heard them in the past in sermons. Lastly, the devil used everything in order to reign in her head, by which he hoped to do a great deal of evil, had he been able to conserve it. It was Leviathan, wicked, proud, a wondrously subtle spirit, who was carrying on the craft of possessing the mother without giving any sign of his presence; yet he would upset the entire house by unparalleled artifices. Into this maiden's spirit he put a thousand vain plans, under the pretext of good and reform, in order to deceive her and to engage her subtly in a perpetual love for herself. He had made a style of spirituality for her, in which she was so schooled that she charmed everyone who listened to her; but all of that merely led to a vain readiness to oblige. Although there were many operations by the demon, there was a great foundation in her nature and in the habits she had acquired; for she had a very astute spirit that was capable of fulfilling the plans of this malevolent spirit, prince of darkness, accustomed to working similar marvels.

All of that having been recognized, the mother begged the father to humiliate her mercilessly, giving him permission to make public her life, which he knew in detail. She entreated him to help her charitably, and to destroy all the pride that was in her. This he promised to do. He began by humiliating her publicly during exorcisms, when he would sometimes summon paupers and make them put their feet on her face and on her mouth, even when she was mistress of herself. But she had a trace of that haughty spirit. If she pitied herself, he would have these paupers slap her, which was very embarrassing for her; but later she would be pleased about it and would thank the father for doing her such a good turn. After that, many other ordeals were used that were capable of making her exercise humility. One day, the father enjoined her to kneel and beg the cook, who was very young, to use the scourge on her. The cook did this with great simplicity, accomplishing it without worrying about what others might say.

Once, when the sisters had assembled for a spiritual conference organized by the father, he began to reprimand the mother, who knelt to listen to what he was saying, which was very capable of mortifying her. She asked permission to state her guilt in the presence of her sisters, and to accuse herself for the principal faults of her life. This was granted, and she did it with great humility, listing the sins for which she could be ashamed. While she was laboring thusly to conquer herself, she made such an accurate general confession to the father that he said he had never heard anything like it. It took her a month to

her health, and by this means to prevent her full abnegation of the self. That was how he was holding onto several religious persons, who, under pretext of their health, were caught in his snares; and he knew very well that the more delicate one causes oneself to be, the sicker one is, and that the reflections one makes about these inconveniences increase them and provide a reason for holding on to them. The mother, shrewder, and desiring to give herself totally to God, acted in such a way that nothing that remained would give her a lever-

Second, she undertook a determined battle against her affection for some persons, trying to feel so indifferent toward them that she would not be diverted from her pure love for God. She broke connections based on the qualities of the spirit and of nature, so that she no longer had any penchant on that side, having found from experience that it was a great impediment to God. One event served to disentangle her completely: the malevolent spirit, having attempted to make her consent to some evil, and having failed, used a ruse that consisted of giving her a violent colic that made her sigh and complain all night in the very bedchamber where there was a sister whom she greatly loved and with whom she had always had a special familiarity. The devil took the form of that sister and came to her bed, saying soothing things, offering to help her, and asking her what was wrong, using the same friendly words that the other sister used. The mother said that she needed nothing. Then the devil told her that she doubtlessly was afraid, and continuing his game, he added that she would get into bed with her and spend the rest of the night there. The mother refused. That was all to the good, for the devil had strange de-signs on her on this occasion, and if she had gone along with it even a little bit, he would perhaps have kept her enclosed in his snares. But God watched over her, and made her see that the enemy uses everything he finds in us, and that he employs these things in order to doom us. In the morning, she realized that the sister had not gotten up, so she suspected that it was the demon. He admitted the fraud, and that is what caused the mother to distance herself from all personal affection for individuals, in order henceforth to attach herself only to God.

Another difficulty, a difficulty that lasted a long while and that was accomplished by several adventures, was pride, which had to be fought against the most, for it had the greatest advantage over her owing to her nature, which greatly desired honor and which leaned toward self-esteem. She had to deal with Levathar, who had set up camp in that vice and was garrisoned there. He resolved to prevent her soul from humiliating itself fully and achieving scorn for the self. He gave her a certain bearing and gravity, like an abbess who wants to maintain her power and assert her authority. He poured out his venom so

Isaacaron appeared immediately, greatly enraged and saying that this manner of proceeding was going to ruin his affairs. Shortly after that, the father having withdrawn, she took the belt and, while strolling in the garden and feeling the effect of her penance upon Balaam, there was a furious attack by Isaacaron that provoked just in her, in such a manner that the belt was useless for repressing it. The wretch was bringing help to his companion, in order to alter the spirit of the mother who, seeing herself pursued in this way, felt very annoyed with herself. Because it was late and the sisters had retired, she went to get her scourge, and having placed herself in the choir before the Blessed Sacrament, she treated her body so harshly that the enemy, having long maintained a cheerful countenance, was obliged to withdraw and leave the woman whom he was tempting in the hands of Our Lord, who consoled her and delighted her spirit by his extraordinary grace. The next day, she recounted to the father everything that had happened. By the demons' countenances, he saw that they were very ashamed at having been defeated. They were not, however, disappointed by their failure, and they resolved to conduct a still more violent assault.

It so happened that, two or three hours later, the mother had such a copious nosebleed (three bouts within the space of fifty hours) that it seemed as if her veins had been drained. She remained so weak that she was forced to go to bed, where the father visited her. He found her to be very ill indeed, and one might have said that she would be ill for a long time. Toward evening, the demon took his time, and Balaam began to make her want to laugh in her bed, and he made her want to have company in order to take pleasure in vain joy. That would have seemed insignificant in a person who was not determined, considering her need and her indisposition; but the mother knew that this need had been procured by the demon, who was inspiring this scandalous amusement in her, who desired to be faithful to Our Lord. Not thinking about her infirmity, she put on her belt, which was no small mortification, inasmuch as it usually made openings in her skin, which was more delicate than most people's. This remedy quashed the good humor in which Balaam wanted to put her; and having spent some time with Our Lord in great spiritual pleasure, she tried to go to sleep.

Around midnight, there came a more furious jolt than the first one; for Isaacaron, seeing that the sick woman could scarcely move from weakness, concluded that he could tempt her at his ease, and make her burn with his fire, and that she would be unable to extinguish it. He therefore began to pressure her. This surprised the mother greatly; but she saw that it was a war, and, hoping that Our Lord would give her strength, she took her scourge and went down to the choir, so carefully and so dexterously that no one heard her, although the sisters were sleeping in her bedchamber. She was preparing to defend herself, but the enemy did not want to let go, and sometimes he made her faint. She

continued for a long while, and the fortress finally was hers. Having prayed for a long while, she went back to bed, where she still was the next morning, not at liberty but, on the contrary, troubled by the devil Isacaron, who was enjoying playing the sick person. Having been notified that the mother was still ill, the father went up to her bedchamber, and he found that it was Isacaron who was making her languish. By his usual commands, the father tried to make Isacaron withdraw, but that demon kept on lamenting, knowing, on his own, everything that had happened during the night. The father made fun of him, saying that his time had passed, and that he would commit no more outrages against the purity of this maiden, or it would cost him dearly. For this demon had often confessed to the father that, when he tempted a soul and the soul defended itself by penance, the blows would fall on him by order of divine justice; and that demons were chastised on similar occasions, either by the ministry of the good angels, or in another way. Indeed, the demon recounted how, having informed Lucifer about his lack of success in the other battle with the mother, and having said that the suffering was too severe, he added:

Lucifer does not know how powerfully God aids souls in the law of grace, and how much we have to suffer in our undertakings against those souls. We had power before the coming of the Son of God; but upon Jesus Christ's death, we were closely tied to hell, and when we embark upon tempting souls, we risk great tortures.

The father, knowing this and seeing the grace that God was giving to the mother, kept telling this demon that he would make him miserable and would make him pay for his incredible insolence during this possession. And the demon did indeed pay dearly, as we shall see.

The demon having at last withdrawn, the mother regained consciousness and found that she was healed, as if she had not lost a drop of blood. There was reason to be astonished, for she had bled abundantly, as was said earlier. At that point, she recounted to the father her adventure of the previous night, in conformity with Isacaron's deposition about it.

After these exploits, the demons got the idea of astonishing the father with miscellaneous forms of inventiveness. Among others, they worked a horrifying spell by which, for a week, the mother became totally different from the way she really was. Her face appeared unusually beautiful, but affected, and with allurements and rays in her eyes, and her entire face surpassed what is usual in nature. Her speech was totally changed, with honeyed words. Her bearing and her countenance were totally different. At exorcisms, she would say a thousand insolent things to the father; but the principal ones were said in a low voice,

chastise the accomplice who had waged war against God. Although she was sickly and of a delicate complexion, she hoped that God would give her the strength to shoulder extraordinary troubles. She who formerly could not sleep except on a featherbed, and who had to be swaddled like a baby in winter, began to sleep on planks. She now rarely went near the fire. She put her hair shirt over her shoulders, used the scourge on herself at length three times a day, fasted two or three times a week, and wore her barbed belt day and night. Her body stood up to all that, despite the strange aversions that the devil gave her and the obstacles these aversions posed to the least penance.

Early on, the mother undertook to mortify herself about nourishment. She greatly loved fruit: she resolved to abstain from it totally. And although that was extremely hard for her, she spent an entire summer during which she almost never tasted any, and she refused what was agreeable to her. Sometimes, in the middle of a meal, she would have a big appetite. She would rise from the table, indeed, she would withdraw at the beginning of a meal, if she was very tempted to eat all she wanted. In vain did the devils make her very hungry: she would resist them and pay no attention to them. She would choose dishes that were contrary to her inclination, depriving herself of what she liked and eating what she liked least. One day, at the noontime meal, she was extremely aroused to eat well or to enjoy a few dishes. Since she was striving to mortify herself, she saw some beef bile hanging from a nail. She put it on her bread and ate it so reluctantly that she completely lost her appetite. There were things that she did not eat, owing to her delicate stomach; she resolved to disregard all these repugnant things, principally involving leeks. One day, they served her some, and she ate them, although they usually upset her stomach. The father having come, and having asked her how she was, she replied: "Fine, other than a stomach ache, which isn't much." When she told him the reason, the father, who mistrusted everything, was very suspicious that this might be the devil's artifice. He told the mother this. She did not know what to think, but she was solely disposed to do what she was told. "You will see," said the father, "that this stomach ache can be made to go away by discipline." She replied: "Most willingly." Then Behemoth appeared on her face, very angry, complaining about the cruelty of that man who is unwilling to leave anything alone without seeking the causes. He confessed his ruse, saying that he had preserved this evil in order to have something in reserve. The father ordered Behemoth to withdraw and take the ill with him. He refused to do it. The mother, having regained consciousness, went to get the scourge; and despite the loud beating of her heart that she had experienced while fetching it, she came back totally healed, and, ever since, leeks have not made her sick. The devil then told her that he had very much wished to deceive her about something involving a pretext about

Before his eyes was an admirable spectacle, the combat between grace and the devil's malevolence. In the soul, which was the battlefield, the operations of God and those of the holy angels were so well regulated and were applied with such great wisdom, justice, and goodness that spirits were delighted. The operations of the demons were horrible, sometimes so subtle and so crafty that it brought continual astonishment. The poor maiden, in her liberty, was between them, like a prey being fought over by these two great powers of mercy and darkness. The father was the minister and the co-operator⁸⁸ with God and the angels, in order to maintain the work of grace against the demons' artful efforts. This was his daily occupation for six or seven months, and he devoted himself to it with a sentiment that was very distant from that of several persons who, talking about his employment, would say: "What can a Jesuit do all day long with a possessed maiden?" When he heard that, he would think that he alone realized how great the matter was, and how important. He seemed to be seeing heaven and earth clearly, burning for that soul, the former burning from love and the latter from rage, competing over who would carry the day. He would contemplate the ways taken by these two armies. The success of the one or the other depended on the liberty of the creature over whom the dispute was being waged. He would admire the nobility of the liberty that could either doom a person or win that person over to God, a thing he desired so vehemently that he would have been willing to give his life in order to succeed. It seemed to him that God was awaiting his ministry, in order to preserve the prey that was so dear to him, and to conquer for him the soul which, owing to the lengthiness of the possession, was a spectacle for God, for the angels, and for mankind. It is true that the view of this very lofty matter would make him forget everything else, and he would remain plunged in it as if he had already left the earth. Not a day went by that he did not see things capable of keeping him busy in a wilderness for the rest of his life, and he saw clearly that she in them could be discerned here as in an extraordinary subject that God was providing in our time, to instruct some people about knowing the interior life. This having been shown, it remains to see how the father worked in conformity to his lights, in order to accomplish such a work.

First, he and the mother agreed that everything that could be found in her that was contrary to the highest perfection would be reformed and ripped out, unreversedly. On her side, she offered total obedience, and she never strayed from it. She begged the father not to be concerned about her body as far as penance was concerned. She wanted to devote herself to it seriously and to

⁸⁸ That is, the person who "operates" in collaboration "with" (co-) God and the angels.

and secretly, when everyone had retired. The devil was thinking that, in this way, he would disgust the father and make him hate this maiden; but, to the contrary, God gave the father the grace not to worry about it and to pass over everything, as if it were nothing. He remembered that charity goes everywhere and suffers everything. None of this made a painful impression on him, beyond compassion for this poor nun. He loved her like a daughter, and he would not have felt more pain at seeing her throat cut than at seeing her in this condition. Finally, the spell yielded to the exorcisms; and it seems that they were of the same mind, for the devil lost the strength to continue this mischief.

After that, the father resumed fighting both Isacarion and Balaam, who supported one another. The mother had resolved not to yield to them, whatever state she might be in, and to resist them by the weapons of penance, even if she had to smash herself to pieces. This resolution made the demons lose courage, and they believed themselves lost. In fact, in less than two weeks Balaam was totally flattered, and the mother had such power over him that he no longer had the power to trouble her or disturb her devotions. Only once, when the mother had neglected to resist something that was just starting, did he take advantage of it, and he occupied her, to the point that the father was very astonished, when he came to exorcise and found the demon occupying the mother. However, seized with a zeal that came upon him suddenly, the father slapped the devil, who was so upset about it that he was obliged to withdraw. The mother thanked the father profoundly, and begged him to do the same to her and to treat her very rigorously if she was in a similar disorder, confessing the cause of her ills, which was this flighty committing. Soon, Isacarion was made reasonable in the same way, so that the mother gained great peace in that respect, and an unparalleled liberty, keeping subordinate to her, like her slave, the one who had confronted her with such audacity. She had convinced herself that, possessed as she was, it was impossible to defend herself from those who behaved like masters; but once she had entrusted herself to divine help, and once she had reinforced her desire to please Our Lord, she found that there was a way not only to shake off this tyranny but also to make herself mistress of the demons themselves, by receiving everything from the grace of Jesus Christ, which is strong in order to help a good will that is seeking to content it. And I can say, having seen such things, and others still greater, that nothing is impossible for a good will and a firm resolution, especially when it is helped by guidance.

The father saw these good successes, and having reason to hope that Our Lord's mercy was greatly preparing itself for this soul, he talked one day to the mother about praying seriously, and doing that exercise. The demons feared at this, as if the proposition were ridiculous. They would often say, mockingly,

that, for her, being possessed and saying prayers did not go together. However, the mother received the father's invitation very joyfully and trustingly, expressing her desire to devote herself to it, if it pleased God to give her the grace, as will be recounted in the next chapter.

5 On the Way that was Followed in Guiding the Mother Prioress's Prayer, and the Devils' Great Resistance to It

When the proposition to devote themselves to prayer had been decided between the father and the mother prioress, they viewed this plan as the most advantageous one that had been presented.⁵² They talked about it as if they had been obliged to go to a country of delights. This enraged the demons, who interrupted their conversations with inventive remarks about the mother's liberty, being unable to endure the fact that, although possessed by them, she was daring enough to talk about something they hated so much. They made threats that surprised no one.

The father therefore began to introduce her to the way of prayer, and he accurately judged that, owing to the possession in which she found herself, he ought to lead her by the hand and guide her everywhere. He told her that, in order for this plan to succeed, they would have to pray together; that she need only listen and consent, and that, in her ear, he would say the same prayer that she might have said if she had been at liberty; and that he would supply her with affections that conformed to her need and to the state of her soul, about which he had full knowledge. He did not feel that he had to proceed artfully and methodically, but he proposed to let himself be entirely guided by the divine Spirit, exposing himself to it submissively and trusting that it would give him the means suitable for the good of her soul. One day, they therefore began at the very place where exorcisms were conducted, the mother being tied to a bench owing to the rage of the demons, who always tended to offend the father cruelly. Kneeling near her, the father began to talk about converting one's heart to God, in a spirit of penance and from the desire to consecrate oneself entirely to him. He chose three points, which he discussed in detail in an affective manner, acting the role of the mother, prostrate at God's feet like

⁵² In order to make the chapter title conform to one of the manuscript versions, Jean-Joseph Surin, *Triomphe de l'amour divin sur les puissances de l'Enfer et Science expérimentale des choses de l'autre vie, 1658-1660*, ed. Jacques Prunair (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1990), 55, adds the following: "And how it was laid out according to the form of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, with the great blessing that God gave to that way."

Where do they want me to lodge? I was quite nicely settled in a prioress's head, and now they want to reduce me to modest quarters, for they are taking away the things that sustained and maintained me. I prefer to be outside, rather than lose all my rights here. I have only the strength that vice gives me. If we wage war against vice, I shall have to defend myself; if they ruin it, I shall have to succumb. And that is the greatest misfortune that could happen to me in my earthly undertakings. The more a person mortifies himself, the more power he has over his passions, and the more power he has over me, who holds a loftier rank than that person. This is a new hell for me, and it would be better for me to be there than here. One of the great misfortunes that has happened to me since I was created is having entered this body.

That is how these wretches would talk about the truth of the doctrine that the father was ceaselessly inculcating into the mother, telling her that as soon as she had uprooted everything in her that could provide food for the demon, God would be merciful to her and would deliver her.

Once she had been fortified in prayer and was warmed to desiring penance, the father began to consider in detail all the movements of her soul, about which she obligated herself to render an account so exact that he would know her soul's anatomy for every quarter hour of the day. She fulfilled this faithfully. And experience showed the father that there was scarcely a moment when the devil was not doing something to put a stop to the father's plan, and to advance his own. Extreme vigilance was therefore necessary, as was studying the principle of all the movements of this soul. The father did this as attentively as someone who is observing bees at work, through a crystal. This occupation seemed to him so great in its purpose, in the multitude of things, in the economy of the two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, that it seemed to him that he was governing an entire world. So he was continually attentive to this situation, thinking about it day and night, as if he had four kingdoms on his hands, that is, the four demons who were possessing the mother prioress. He had to fight each of them with his aspirations, his artifices, and his understanding, be it with magic as a support, be it with hell as a consultant, or be it with nature, in order to maintain himself subtly with it. There was no little gesture, no little phrase, for which he did not try to learn the origin; and indeed, he often found it. During a brief moment of haste, he would uncover the enemy who was pretending to be far away; and wanting to examine this all the way to the end, he fought great battles and experienced troubles that lasted for entire days; for he allowed nothing to go past him, no matter how small it might be. This enraged the devils.

a penitent begging for mercy. When one point was finished, the devil would come and talk through the mother's mouth, and he would say a thousand in-solent things and abominable words, which the father would disregard. But with authority, and with greater assurance than usual, the father would order the demon, in God's name, not to prevent the divine work, after which the wretch would withdraw, leaving the mother prioress.

The father would then move on to the second point; and when he had finished, the demon would show the horror and desolation in which he found himself. But he would once again be dismissed, and prayer would end that way. That sort of thing went on for several days. In order to avoid these interruptions, the father finally resolved to take up the Blessed Sacrament, which he put into a little silver box that closed tightly. When prayer began, he placed it on the chest of the mother, who received a wondrous devotion from it; and he, kneeling close to her ear, as usual, would say what it pleased God to suggest to him, in order to elevate the soul of the prioress, who would pay very close attention to what he was saying, and who was profoundly recollected. Everything he proposed during these initial days tended to form in her a disposition to repent for her past life and to feel remorse at the sight of divine goodness. The effect of grace was so great in the mother that as soon as she had settled down on her bench, and the father was beginning to speak, tears would flow from her eyes, and would not cease until the end of prayer. Sometimes, she would kiss the Blessed Sacrament, which the father was holding to her chest, in order to stop the demons who no longer dared to appear, and she would melt in the presence of her God, in admiration and in sorrow over her past negligence. It happened, at this early stage, when she was forever deploring her past life, that the demons were giving her a sort of torment; but God was mingling many graces with these tortments. I could not express myself better than to say that, in her, it was like Job's lamentations. God was giving her a lively depiction of the misfortunes of a soul that, having received many graces and lights, was about to lose them forever. And since the demons had the power to trouble her, they took away her reflections about the things that could make her hope, leaving her with the opinion that she was already doomed and separated from God. Feeling this way, she would utter cries and would say things capable of melting hearts. "Why did I know him," she would say, "since I would have to lose him? Would it not have been better if I had never heard tell of him?" The father wanted to console her, but he turned out to be totally incapable of it, and he merely made her tears increase when she remembered God's mercy. Then he would bring the Blessed Sacrament to her mouth or to her chest, but that was almost unbearable for her, and she would flee the presence of Jesus Christ, whom, however, she loved

to it by the corruption of nature and of the will, and over which it secretly establishes its kingdom. All the more so, since the enemy had revealed himself within the mother by a sort of possession that was so spiritual and so moral, that it seemed as if the demons only had strength by the principle they were finding in nature. For truly, they had few operations that were not founded on what original sin and its effects leave in the soul. They therefore would take natural habits or vicious inclinations as a subject for action. From this, the father knew that the most efficient way was to attack them not only by the direct way of exorcisms but principally by the indirect way, taking away their nourishment and the right they could claim in the soul.

Having accepted all that, and pushed by the spirit of truth that was helping her, the mother believed what the father was telling her: she should no longer view the demons as authors of the untruly actions that she did during her distress, but she should attribute these actions to herself, and should be humiliated by them as things whose principle was found in her. Indeed, experience showed that, as she worked to conquer her inclinations, the demons became weaker and less capable of agitating her. At the end, she therefore was usually free, and she no longer molested her sisters, as she used to do before having mortified herself and having worked toward victory over the self. Also, the father took the opportunity to confront the demon Behemoth, who was extremely crafty and disagreeable, making him see the power of grace in this change. This demon was forced to confess that, in the possession, they were taking advantage of what they were finding in nature. "I would resist the exorcisms," he said, "but I am incapable of resisting mortification."

The father had clearly understood that although he greatly revered the exorcisms of the church as very efficacious against demons, his principal study should be to combat the principle that was contrary to grace, imagining that this way was, so to speak, infallible, and that he would gain more from that than from being an exorcist, which he frequently did reluctantly, viewing God's work in his interior as a greater task. He also noted there a greater help from heaven, having more strength against the demons, who were being forced to remain quiet when he brought them to the tribunal of conscience, and when he catechized them as supporting nature's share. This made the demons say that, during the exorcism, they would take revenge for the affronts done them. They offered to obey everything when people were present, and to do every-thing that was desired of them, provided the combat of the senses and the natural inclinations were no longer pursued. "This dooms us," they would say. "We no longer reap glory from possessing bodies. We were masters, and now we are slaves, and it is the greatest possible affront to our pride." Isacaros cried out: "They destroy my house, they undo my nest." Levathan said:

greatly in the depths of her heart. The excessiveness of her pain involved simultaneously operating and lighting a great love in her, with a very ardent desire for it and an extreme affection for possessing it. On the other hand, the demons were imprinting on her the conviction that she would never enjoy it, and that Jesus Christ had rejected her. Sometimes, she would utter blasphemies, like the ones in Job, which plausibly were uttered by that holy man, who was troubled by the malevolent spirit that not only was afflicting his body but was even flowing into his soul. For it is true, as God said of Job, that he had only sinned with the words of his lips. In like manner, this maiden appeared to be profoundly touched by God with a powerful movement and an inexpressible thirst for possessing and loving him. Yet she believed that she was condemned for her sins and could not hope to see him. This anguish purified her in such a way that she could say, like Job:

You torment me in an admirable manner by a mixture of despair and love. Oh, how strange are God's ways, especially in the tempering of his grace with malevolent operations; and there is reason to revere his conduct for purging souls, when he prepares them for union with his love!⁵³

The mother had gathered much fruit from this guidance; and the demons, in great disarray, were saying that God had used their undertakings as an opportunity for making his grace flow in her, and that God was more involved in such vexations than they were.

The father's principal intention, in this whole state of affairs, was that her soul be grounded on real penance and humility, and that it fear nothing as much as superficially fulfilling this very important part of the spiritual life, which consists of converting the soul to God. Most of the time, souls hasten through this part, in order to go quickly to what brings more contentment. In this, they are strangely mistaken, for one would have to go to Our Lord with the intention of remaining in tears at his feet until death, or until he himself withdraws us by the strength of his love. One willingly hastens through this situation that is naturally bitter and thorny in nature; that is why one rarely climbs high in the edifice of virtue. Now, by God's movements and by the father's guidance, the mother was held back for a very long time in the posture of the supplicant, weeping and prostrate at Jesus Christ's feet. For three months, she spent two or three hours a day weeping, which was not her natural bent, but which was a true touch of the divine Spirit and a special dispensation of

53 An allusion to two of the three states of a soul: purgation and union. For more on these three states, see Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 173n5.

If we obey the first command that an exorcist gives us, people will say that we are not in those bodies, and they will doubt that the possession is true. For, the more we resist doing good, the more convinced one should be that we are devils, especially since it is infinitely evil for us to do something good. We nonetheless do it, despite ourselves, because the church orders us to do it. And so, the more repugnance we show, the stronger its strength seems to all those who see that we finally are doing everything the church wants, no matter how angry we are.

"Since it is God's force that keeps you here," I said to him, "do you feel less the force of the exorcisms and the weight of the curses that God gives you?" He replied: "We feel them equally, and that makes us despair at having to serve God's glory; and until he makes the power of his grace shine forth, we will be continually flailed by the church's, which torments us far more than the suffering of hell."

"What glory does God reap from this possession," they asked, "since everyone makes fun of it?" "He reaps a lot," replied the demon,

because so many maidens resist all our power, and we have been unable to win out over them. Is that not the means of making them great saints, and also of making saints of the exorcists who suffer no less than these maidens do? Is it not also a glory for God to show everyone that, despite our horror for him, we are forced to obey the least of his ministers? It is also a great glory for God that, for love of him, so many persons are laboring to relieve these nuns in both the spiritual and the temporal.

6 How the Mother Prioress Joined Penance to Prayer; And concerning Her Struggle to Mortify Her Nature [and] the Great Combats She Had with the Demons, and Their Efforts to Make Her Abandon Penance

The mother needed more than a little courage to adhere to her resolution to make Our Lord the absolute master of her heart. When she wanted to set to work, she knew with whom she should speak; for the strong and powerful demons who were possessing her were resisting to the maximum, and she had to undertake to chase them away forcibly by mortifying her natural inclinations and destroying the passions in which they had lodged with such assurance. It seemed that the Almighty's hand alone could make them leave. This is common for all those within whom the enemy fortress reigns, by the right granted

The angels are opposed to it, wanting this soul to have the leisure to create a depth of virtue, after which we hope that we will be permitted more. Meanwhile, we are enraged about not being able to harm that soul.

I replied to him: "When this depth has been assembled, all your work will turn to its advantage." "That," he said, "is what makes us despair; but we have the advantage of throwing at God all the foam of our anger."

One day, this demon said a few words about prayer that is done by effort.⁶⁷ I especially pressed him to explain that sort of prayer to me. "It begins,"

he replied,

with a great tranquility that increases little by little, until the will burns with love. Loss of the senses and ecstasies usually follow these conflagrations of the fire of charity. If the soul is not very faithful, it often mixes many imperfections into it, turning rather to the gift than to God himself; the soul rushes toward the good that it savors, and it loses itself in enjoyment. At that time, it should pay attention to God alone, without consideration of its own interests and its current satisfaction, and it should always seek to humble itself before God and before all creatures.

The demon was asked why he was possessing the nuns for so long, and why he kept resisting the church that was ordering him to come out. "We are not constrained to come out," he replied,

and the church, by its ministers, has no power over us, particularly if God is participating in it. Now, God does not participate in the command we receive to come out, because the time has not yet come. God waits until men are disposed; he does not show the strength of his arm until men do something. That has been said all too often; but nothing is done. Those who, from malevolence, have put us into these bodies, did everything they can to make us withdraw, fearing justice owing to the great attention paid to this possession. But they have been unable to achieve it, for at present it is God's specific order that we remain there in order to convert several persons, and to show the church's authority.

They replied to him: "Your resistance raises doubts about the strength of the church, rather than proving it." He replied:

grace to make her soul surrender to God. Once her tears had ceased, the same practices were continued, and her heart was also brought to see her woes and her serious remorse for her sins. Now, in order to establish this in a totally solid way, the father believed that every evening the mother should make a careful examen of her conscience,⁶⁴ putting herself before God in order to receive light about what it would please his goodness to make her understand concerning the state of her life. So from then on, toward evening, she began to withdraw to a corner of the garden or to a convenient and solitary place in the house. Putting herself in God's presence, she would behave like a criminal before him, awaiting his mercy or his punishment, as it pleased him. As soon as she dropped to her knees, she would feel that her understanding was open- ing, and she would find an instruction as distinct as if someone had spoken to her, or wanted to show her in detail the disorder of her life, going all the way to the root of her flaws, or as if someone had counted one by one the principal headings in the book of her conscience, which was placed before her eyes as in a mirror. The next day, she would recount everything to the father, who would admire God's care for this soul, to which he was communicating things of which she had never heard tell, with notions so clear, so deeply engraved, and so much in conformity with what his divine mercy had previously communicated to the father himself, when he was at the same stage, that it seemed as if this had been collected from his soul, and from the most secret part of his interior, in order to be transferred to the mother's interior. Among other consolations that the father received from this discovery, one of the most noteworthy was that all the ideas of the spiritual doctrine with which he was filled, and about which people had often expressed doubts and felt apprehensive, immediately seeped from God into the mother's heart, and she would enumerate them accurately, as if she was already acquainted with them. This was the foundation not only of her good and praiseworthy life but also of the secret life in her interior, about which so many persons debate and where one thing is so often mistaken for another, as in a very delicate science. For several days, the father was astonished when she listed, with wondrous facility in terminology, the most sublime points of the doctrine of the spirit, concerning the heart's perfect enrichment and intimate conversion to God. Her discussion dealt with how the soul should be established in naked faith and should walk in that faith

⁶⁴ The practice of self-correction known as the examen is recommended in the *Constitutions* [261], and in Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* [32], [24–26]: "And they shall practice the daily examination of their conscience. To examine oneself, asking account of his soul of that particular sin or defect, which he wants to correct and amend. Let the particular examen be made to rid oneself of defects." See also Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 107.

before God. This was put into her spirit in a very gentle manner, yet it made her see the contrary imperfection in which she had lived. Tears never left her eyes. Generally, this doctrine led to a serious reform of nature, to a freeing of all the ties she might have to creatures and to herself, and to the discovery of all the subtlety of self-love. This light was so bright that she condemned in herself not only what is not blamed but also what was approved and praised by several persons who present themselves as good. Several maxims involving mortifications that were considered excessive were very smoothly established and imprinted in her, who surrendered with the submissiveness that one must bring to the truth. Since that created a certain link in the heart between the father and her soul, the father, who from the beginning had planned to make these maxims flow into the mother's spirit, merely waited to see her disposed to and capable of bearing them. He saw that God's finger was writing them in her with such conformity that it seemed to be one and the same thing; which gave rise to such a mutual agreement between these two hearts that the demons sometimes said they had never seen anything like it. This took place during the time allotted for the exams, which was not a quarter hour but a full hour, despite all the demons' ruses, which could never trouble her during this sweet occupation. That is why the demons began to molest her exterior in several ways; but they reaped only shame from it.

Sometimes, when she was kneeling, they would hit her hard with their fists on her spine and would make her fail at the things she undertook. Although the marks were visible, she merely laughed at them. On other occasions, when she was prostrate on the floor, they would beat her and try to interrupt her with their importunities. One time, among others, when she was in a small room that opened onto a path, and was sitting and thinking about her conscience, at the end of the path she spied a fearful beast who had the shape and size of a lion, and whose eyes sparkled like fire. It was almost nine in the evening. As soon as it saw her, it ran toward her, putting its claws on her chest and contemplating her with its horrible eyes. It remained in that position for some time. The mother did not become emotional; gripped by great fear, she was waiting for what it would please God to order her to do. Shortly before, her spirit had been assailed by temptations, thinking about how she could succeed at such a great plan as the one she had undertaken. This thought made the devil give her this terrible depiction, in order to overwhelm her; but the depiction served no purpose and did not prevent her from returning to the same place the next day at the same hour. There, God communicated with her more abundantly, and continued to illuminate her with his light, which increased more and more and showed her an excellent purity. This daily examen on the one hand, and prayer on the other, polished this soul to such a degree that in a short time

the temptation. But he quickly rose and, digging a ditch, buried himself up to his neck, leaving only his head to see the sky. He did other great penances.

Allumette,⁶⁵ the demon who currently is possessing Sister Élisabeth, caught Martinian⁶⁶ through a courtesan whom we sent to him.

"How," I asked him, "did the attack upon Saint Macarius give you such a good reputation with Lucifer, since you did not doom him?" He replied: "I showed what I knew how to do." Having said that, the demon began raging, shouting, and trying to strike me, because I was forcing him to speak favorably about mankind. His fury intensifying, he said to me: "I want to eat you." Then, turning to those who were present at the exorcism, he said:

I want to eat all of you. I want to eat all creatures, annihilate all of God's works, and then annihilate myself. How crazy I am, to have embarked in this mortal body! For I have been greatly deceived. I thought I could turn that maiden into a sorceress, and I am being forced to make a saint of her, and to serve God's plans for men's salvation.

One day, Leviathan, extremely furious, said:

I am very unfortunate at having come here to play the role of a nun. For while that soul is devoting itself to the holy exercise of contemplation, I have to be in a corner of her head, not daring to stir. In addition, I have to fast, wear a hair shirt, and I can do nothing to avoid it. I assure you that this is harder for me and more unbearable than hell.

When we undertake to possess a person, we have a chance of making great gains, or undergoing great troubles; since all the good that the person does increases our torments. I would have left here long ago, if God had not kept me by force. I have always been involved in possessing bodies; but I have never been as bored as I am in this body. For there is nothing so firm as a will that is determined to serve God. Three months ago, we demons, along with the magicians, cast twenty evil spells to prevent this soul from advancing; but we were not permitted to complete a single one.

65 One of the lists of possessing demons names the cherubim called "Alumette d'impurete" (literally, "Matchstick of impurity"), as one of the five demons who possessed Élisabeth de la Croix (dates unknown). De Certeau, *Possession at Loudun*, 90–91.

66 St. Martinian (c.350–c.98), a hermit, offered hospitality to Zoe, a courtesan who then tried to seduce him. He converted her to Christianity.

We even have souls that have seen God in his humanity; and we show them this great beauty that is lost to them forever. They even have imprints that are stronger than while they were on earth. This causes them more pain and bitterness than the torments of hell.

One day, I forced Isaacaron to tell me how he behaved in order to turn souls away from God's service. Having resisted as long as he could, he was finally obliged to answer: "What puts me in a fury toward God," said he,

is that he pardoned man so easily, but he did not pardon me. It is true that man is weak and fragile in his nature, and that God, being good as he is, cannot refuse him his grace, when he repents for having offended him and returns to him by penance. But I think it very harsh that, after I sinned, God did not offer me the means of returning to him.

In truth, the occasion for sinning is very different for men and for angels, for we did not sin by an appetite for any voluptuousness, as mankind did. We had nothing that was leading us to sin; on the contrary, the knowledge that God had given us, the goods with which he had enriched us, should have preserved us. It was pride that made us sin. It blinded me and prevented me from seeing the consequences of my crime. If I had had time to delve into those consequences and return to myself, I would have converted more easily than several men whom I see, who are shown their duty again and who nonetheless do not want to stop sinning. That puts me into an extreme rage against God, and against them; because they exploit a great good that is presented to them, and that is refused to me. It makes me continually despair, and I have a burning desire to prevent creatures from being faithful to God; for that is the thing in the world that pleases him most.

That is why, in order to turn souls away from the way of salvation, and to corrupt them, I use a means: impurity. Asmodeus and I do some good jobs by carnal temptations. My first conquest earned me great credit with Lucifer, who ever since has given me tasks on earth. This conquest was the fall of Macarius the Younger,⁶⁴ whom I visited in the wilderness. All his life, that pious hermit had served God with great perfection. I caught him by placing a woman's shoe in his path, and a perfumed handkerchief that he sniffed for three days; and I made the poison of sin flow into his heart. After three days, I visited him as a woman, and he succumbed to

⁶⁴ St. Macarius the Younger (c.300–95), also known as Macarius of Alexandria, became a monk at forty and lived as a recluse in the Egyptian desert. Anecdotes about his austerity and his penances abound.

she became very enlightened and fervent about divine love. As for prayer, it do it again in the afternoon, in addition to the examen. She was making such progress at this, by always doing it with him (for it was impossible for her to do it alone), that the father judged that this exercise demanded a greater silence and a more convenient place than where they were doing it, which was the chapel and the place for exorcisms. The two of them thought about where they could do it, separated from the noise and the gaze of the public. The mother already seemed to be sufficiently fortified, and did not need to have the blessed Sacrament applied to her, all the more so because, for a long span of time, the father had always kept her within arms' reach, lest the demons not leave her in peace. They found a chamber inside the convent walls where there was a grill that opened onto the outer wing, and they proposed saying their prayers there, the mother inside the convent walls, and the father outside them. This little place soon became a delightful place, where tears would flow abundantly as soon as they knelt, their spirits being totally applied to meditating on the life, the death, and the passion of Jesus Christ. They would select a mystery or an action of the Son of God, about which the father would begin an affective discourse. Exposing himself to the movement that it would please God to give them, he would think about the mother's state, which he knew perfectly; and, according to her needs, he would go through his subject as if he were speaking for her. Drawing out the appropriate affections, he would always return to the principal movement that he wanted to be imprinted on the mother's heart: to cry out to God for mercy. She would do this with marvelous strength and very peacefully, only being troubled by receiving, and always remaining passive concerning the father's words and the operation of grace. God's savor would chase away all the other savors in which her soul was steeped. They would run through the principal points of the mysteries of Our Lord's life, adopting the instructions that could be drawn from his examples and his words, and making everything lead to the self's disarray, and to a humble heart.

Around that time came the feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin,⁶⁵ prior to which the father told the mother that it was necessary to prepare to receive some favor from that Holy Mother of God. Nine days earlier, they had begun to await the blessing that it would please her to give them; and indeed, they received one that astonished them at first, and that left them totally obliged to that Mother of Mercy. That is, on the very eve of the feast, the mother's condition changed totally. During evening prayer, her tears ceased and never returned, other than on a few very rare occasions, perhaps. All her tendernesses

⁶⁵ February 2, 1635.

and infirmities had gone away, and the mother remained arid and totally distant from her previous dispositions. It seemed that things were going badly for her; but the father, seeing that this was continuing, said to her: "Here, my daughter, is the gift from the Holy Virgin who took you from infancy in order to give you solid nourishment." And indeed, the mother herself felt such a great difference in her spirit and in her soul, and how this state was more solid than the other, that nothing more could astonish her. "Dear God," she would say,

so many imperfections in these tears, so much self-love in this tenderness, so many searches for the self in this sweetness! It is true that the tears were sincere, but the soul receives great support from the senses into which grace bubbles up. This is much better. I do not feel like weeping, I feel a great determination for God and a firmness that makes me scorn the agreeable perfumes of the past.

Some time later, moving through the stages of Jesus Christ's life, they reached the mysteries of the passion, where she seemed to see new things. An incomparably larger, purer, and more devout spirit was communicated in this material about the Savior's suffering, so she would say that all the rest was nothing compared with what was being uncovered here. The father would continue his discourses, but would focus more on love and on the savor of the loftiest evangelical maxims, according the thoughts supplied him by the grandeur of the subject. The mother was burning to understand and practice them, and God imprinted them deeply, to show what Our Lord had suffered. To make us understand what he was saying, this discourse is among the most noteworthy: before their eyes was Our Lord, in the state in which, burdened with scorn and sorrows, he appeared to the eyes of all his people. A single mystery would serve them for several days. In view of this spectacle, the father, not knowing what path to take, set about imperceptibly showing the mother how man, having fallen by sin into an extreme self-love that made him forget God, could only find a remedy in a contrary affection, that is, self-hatred. Entering this, with the help of grace, he comes to fight himself, to resist his inclinations, and to seek things that are contrary to nature, so that by this means he can be separated from the self and from using creatures contrary to God's order. He ought to love confusion and scorn, poverty and sorrow, and seek such things; but because this remedy is extremely difficult, God, moved by this poor mankind who was so abused by the disordered affection he had for himself, had taken on human nature and, with it, the things suitable for healing mankind. Thus this sick person, seeing his God in that state, courageously took the necessary medicine. And to this end, our divine Savior, pressed by an ardent love, espoused the

The rage we feel about our doom causes us to try to rob him of the pleasure he takes in souls that are faithful to him: as much as we can, we turn them away from the narrow path of the Gospel.

Once, I asked the demon what mainly kept mankind attached to the creature. "It is," said he,

the pleasure of the senses. The order we observe, in order to distance man from virtue, is to make him forget God. We try to keep him in that forgetfulness. To succeed, we make him expend great care and worry on the goods of this life; we strive to make the ways of salvation difficult and thorny. Man having therefore forgotten such a loveable God, in the midst of the cares and predicaments of the world in which he is engaged, and his heart being unable to forego loving, we inspire in him affection for created things. Therefore, since his soul no longer remembers God and is attached to creatures, we do whatever we want with it. For we easily give man the love of grandeur, of comforts, and of the pleasures of our day; and thus we guide him to the abyss of sin.

I also asked him if there were special torments in hell for the souls who had savored God in the exercise of divine love, and in the exercise of contemplation. "Yes," he replied,

we have souls in our dark dungeons who have savored God in the prayer of union, and the state of the unitive life: but we have very few. For these great souls that have experience in the ways of Christian perfection are scarcely taken by surprise; they are taken by a secret vanity that slides into their hearts, and that so blinds them that, scorning others, they finally fall into sin. We do not fail to be present at the deaths of God's servants, in order to catch them, if we can, by this vanity; and when we succeed, they have a demon in hell who at every moment reminds them of God's saviors, and of the favors they have received, in order to look after the worm that is devouring them.

When a soul is delivered to us upon leaving its body, we know all the causes of its damnation, and that is necessary for us, because we are the executors of what is decreed for it, so that we can impress upon it forcefully, and forever, the things that can most increase its suffering. We show it the graces that God prepared for it, the opportunities that it neglected, the favors that God did for it; and for everything that was recalled to it, we give it a punishment, and we burden it with torments.

troubling a heart that is leaning toward union with God makes me ignore all that. We lose all our rights owing to three things: prayer, humility, and penance.

I asked him how a soul that has gone astray can return to God. "If I had my liberty, as man does," he replied,

I would think about the benefits I have received from God. I would try to return to him by the way of holy love, and to satisfy him with that love. Love is the life of the heart; it makes a heart far firmer than fear does, and it attaches that heart to good more than to anything else. That is why we try to engage mankind to love perishable things; for love, being accompanied by gentleness, penetrates more easily and attaches the creature to the objects it loves. So I, who cannot love good, having lost grace, which alone could make me capable of that love, I love evil, and I try to take delight in it. But I cannot achieve it. For since I only love offending God, and causing him to be offended, if I do not succeed I am full of rage; and if I do succeed, I am overwhelmed by new chastisements. Hence nothing pleases me, and I am very wretched.

He was asked whether, before his fall, he had tasted the sweetness of divine love. He replied that he had not, and that he was quite glad of that; because it would be a great torment for him to be deprived of such a good, and to remember it for eternity. I said to him: "You have, however, received charity and grace." "That is true, he replied, "but I never produced acts⁶³ from them, which might have left me an impression of the vivacity of that love." I also said to him: "You are truly wretched at being unable to love such great goodness. Your state is therefore deplorable and unfortunate!" I did not reproach him in order to afflict him. "Indeed," he replied after uttering some horrible moans,

I did great wrong to God by sinning, because I withdrew from him, I who am his creature, whom he held so dear! The purer love is, the greater it is. That is why God's love for his creatures is infinite. He created us all in order to share his delights with us, as a good father does with his family, with his children; and we have robbed him of this by dooming ourselves.

Acts, "acts"; "In morals, everything that is done, be it good or bad. The same acts repeated several times form a habit. Act of faith, act of contrition, act of humility"; DAF 1694. "The interior life consists of two sorts of acts, that is, thoughts and affections. In that alone perfect souls differ from imperfect ones and the blessed from those who still live on earth"; Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 171.

quality that men hate most, having been considered a fool in Herod's house and having been treated by the Jews as a blasphemer unworthy of living, and then had submitted to torture. In this state, our divine Savior presented himself to us, in order to give us courage to hate ourselves and the things that were harmful to us, and to make us embrace the things that lead to salvation. Seeing ourselves subjected to extreme woes, his love had engaged him to act this way. The secret of the Gospel and the wellspring of Christianity was not to flatter oneself, to hate oneself generously in the view of one's God, afflicted and humiliated by love. Out of respect and reverence for him, we ought to do like him and esteem his livery;⁵⁶ considering that he, who was our God, donned it for our good, and a religious soul ought to fight such things with the same ardor as worldly people do, who seek the honors and the grandeurs of earth. And there, inside, one finds Jesus Christ and felicity in God.

As the father was listing these points, Our Lord wanted to confirm this very important truth by a great grace that he gave the mother. He sent her into ecstasy, and she remained there for some time. She later told the father that she had come near God, that she had in a way moved him, and that she had, so to speak, been kissed by him in a manner she could not describe, but it had filled her with an inestimable sweetness. She added that this grace had been assigned to her in order to fortify her in the truth that she was hearing, and that this kiss by God is like a science⁵⁷ that he reinforces in the soul. She received great effects from this grace, and a certain notion of God, which greatly served her in her needs, which were not small. For the demons became so enraged and envious toward her that they resolved to do their remaining mischief in order to prevent her from reaching the goal that God had given her. And for that, they used artifices and force.

First, the demons used ruses, in order to make her leave the state of contrition and humility. They made her think that weeping all the time, thinking for so long about her faults, and remaining for so long contemplating her woes, would make her lose courage and would make her melancholy, by taking from her the feelings of trust that a child of God should have. The demons made her aspire toward loftier and sweeter matters, where she would receive great

56

Livree, "livery," can be roughly translated as "uniform." It denotes "the colored clothes worn by pages, lackeys, coachmen, groom, and so forth. The royal livery is blue. It is also said collectively about all the persons who wear a given livery"; DAF 1694. Seventeenth-century Jesuits sometimes used this word to evoke their fidelity to the Society. See, for example, Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 6323; "Jesus Christ takes pleasure in seeing us wear his livery, and the angels are jealous of this honor"; and St. Ignatius, *Constitutions*, general *examen* [101-02], who evokes the "uniform" worn by Jesuits.

57

For the "science of the saints," see Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 146n80.

contentment and gather much fruit. They did all of this in order to withdraw the sharp point of evangelical abnegation and the solid death of nature. Since they saw that they could win nothing by suggestion, the father not having recommended anything more than that, they wanted to try another way.

One night when the mother was in bed but could not sleep, there came some sweet words, as if spoken by some good angel, which attracted her spirit's attention to listen. She was being promised a very excellent spiritual way along which her soul would soon belong to God. "God," she was told,

is only a sweetness. God is only love. One must go to him by love. All these thoughts about penance and woes do nothing but lower the spirit. If God permits temptations to arrive, one must view them as an exercise toward him, resign oneself, and be patient. Becoming so emotional removes peace. In God there are so many lovely things that are capable of elevating the heart and, by a short path, attaining union with his love! To that, my daughter, we want to lead you easily and solidly. Trust us: this comes from those who desire your salvation and who want to lead you to a high perfection.

Thus spoke the voice, very sweetly in truth; but the mother was suspicious of it and replied that she was in the hands of obedience, that she would let herself be guided, and that she hoped that God would bless her in that.

After she had told the father everything, he knew very well that this was the voice of the enemy, who wanted to catch this maiden in the snare where he has caught a quantity of souls in this century. He persuades them to do a superficial mortification, and he leads them to premature elevations by means of subtleties of nature, that, as much as nature can, make the vigor of the spirit flee, and that, under pretext of love, toss the soul into sluggishness and trouble, when truth comes to declare itself. He warned the mother that if the voice returned, she must not listen to it and must reject it as the devil's, which she did.

Seeing that he had been discovered, the devil resorted to another ruse. One day, quite late, the father wanted to withdraw, although the time for prayer was not completely over. He proposed leaving the mother to continue alone, for he wanted to test whether she could henceforth do without him. He therefore told her that he was going away, and that, continuing the same subject, she should try to converse with God all alone. The devil took his time. Seeing the mother alone, he believed he could deceive her. He took the father's exterior form and, pretending that he wanted to retrace his steps, he entered her bedchamber and, with a voice very much like the father's, said to the mother: "My daughter, I am back. I thought it better to continue with you, for fear something might

2

As soon as the demon named Isacarion came out of the mother prioress, on the feast of the Epiphany, 1636, Leviathan appeared, and he explained how the Blessed Virgin had forced him to leave his fortress, saying that he had received a specific order to report about it. Next he said many things, which I, with alacrity, pressured him to do. "I know very well," said he,

that the sweetness of self-love had never reigned as much as it is reigning in this century. Those who profess the spiritual life take as a model a few holy persons of our day in order to live a sweet life, supposing that these persons lived that way, because they had made some charitable arrangement. But people do not think about all the interior and exterior travails that they endured, before God gave them so many celestial sweetnesses, and they always persevered in the mortification of the senses and of the passions, from which these spiritual people of our day distance themselves greatly. We catch a great number of them in this way: for by neglecting this holy practice, they are very weak, and we convince them that they are something before God. Then, on the pretext of charity, we engage them in perilous friendships. Oh, I know some who have let themselves be caught in that snare! We work a great deal among spiritual persons, and we make maxims flow subtly into them that will help them avoid the rigor of evangelical abnegation. We cause religious persons to lead a comfortable life, using their health as a pretext; by that means we keep almost all of them in the life of the senses.

We show a great deal of rage during exorcisms, because we are forced to obey the ministers of God and the church. But we certainly endure another violence, when God repels us, when we want to prevent a soul from making progress.

I asked him why. "Because," he said,

it is less painful for us to obey the ministers of God and of the church than it is to see a soul advance along the path to Christian perfection, because of the glory that God gets from it, and the eternal disarray that comes to us for being unable to prevent it. I run all over the earth; I see men's business, wars, developments in states, edifices, the sciences, and the arts. I mock all that, and I never focus on it. What chiefly occupies me is creating obstacles to God's love for his creatures, and I willingly leave the empires where idolatry reigns, in order to come into Christianity and to importune someone who has undertaken to serve God. It is true that I expose myself to suffering great travails and new hells; but the hope of

this way?" And when I called him Behemoth, he said: "You are mistaken, there are two of us. The blasphemies against Mary come from Isacarou." I asked them the cause of their rage. "We shall not do another thing," he said, "for the farther I go, the more rage I feel toward God, because I see him being served by men, and I see that people are strengthening themselves against me." Then, using God's name to swear, he said: "Those fine novenas! I no longer want to give repose."⁶² Cursed be novenas!

I again ordered him to prostrate himself at the feet of Jesus Christ, child of the Blessed Virgin. "We would have preferred to have eaten them," they said.

I intoned the hymn *O gloriosa Domina*. Through the mother's mouth they uttered horrible blasphemies. Pressing them to obey, and ordering Isacarou to make a formal apology to the Blessed Virgin, and ordering Behemoth to do the same to Jesus Christ, Isacarou said: "What! You want to obligate me to pay homage to Mary?" From that, I judged that God wanted it, because this very impure demon hated her more than anything else. I therefore pressured him to show the people how great Mary was before God. The demon obeyed, and said to her: "You are the one whom God chose among all creatures to be elevated to the honor of Mother of God."

I had the mother united. Her body underwent strange convulsions. Isacarou appeared anew, with a hideous face, letting himself fall to the floor, where he cried out: "Cursed be Mary and the fruit of her womb!" I again insisted that he make amends for his horrible blasphemies. I even ordered him to sprawl on the floor, like the serpent whose head she had crushed, and to lick the pavement of the chapel. He did this with an air that was full of fury. I took the Blessed Sacrament in my hand; I obliged him to make a formal apology and to say some words in honor of the Blessed Virgin that would repair his affronts to her. Then, speaking very rapidly with a voice that came from the mother's chest, and bending his body, he said: "Queen of heaven and of earth, I beg Your Majesty's pardon for the blasphemies I have uttered against your name. Your power constrains me to come out at your feet." Hearing those words, I said to those present: "He is going to come out." I then ordered him to write Mary's name. With cries and howling, he lifted the mother's left arm, and he went away from the mother, leaving on her left hand the holy name MARIA, in roman letters. They were deep into her flesh, above the name SAINT JOSEPH, which was in smaller letters. The mother having regained consciousness, the *Te Deum* was sung in thanksgiving, while the act was being drawn up for those present to sign.

happen to you. Let's begin again." She thought it was the father, and she was preparing to listen to him. The deceiver picked up the thread of the conversation that had been begun. At first, he continued it in the same style; and then, acting increasingly insincere, he brought the mother's spirit to the contemplation of divine things. He said wonderful things on that subject. The poor maiden began to see the difference, and finally, when a statement was made that tended to scorn the incarnation, she became wary of the enemy. It was Leviathan, a great enemy of that mystery, who, of all the demons, demonstrated on various occasions a special hatred for Jesus Christ. Suddenly enlightened, she said to him: "Go away! You are not my father." Seeing that he had been discovered, the malevolent spirit took her by the shoulders in an invisible manner (for he did not pass his arms through the grill) and he held her there by force, saying to her the most vile and abominable things possible for nearly a half hour. Then he threw her to the ground and went away.

As for violence, Leviathan did a great deal of it. Spite sometimes made him come and take this maiden away from the father, during the prayers they were saying together; and Leviathan would throw her down very roughly onto the pavement. On other occasions, the same spite led him to come and strike the grill where she and the father were kneeling, and make noises in the chamber in order to deter them. But his great rage was directed at the mother, who being already somewhat advanced in the exercise of prayer, asked the father's permission to get up at night in order to spend an hour in prayer and to seek, in the silence that is favorable to divine conversation, the devotion one finds there. The father having granted her permission, she never failed (unless she was extremely ill) to rise at midnight and kneel. Usually she was arid, yet she would persevere without becoming weary. On the first nights, the devil tried to terrify her, and once he appeared to her in such a horrible and frightening form that her fear lasted for some time. He took the figure of a hideous beast that resembled a dragon with sparkling eyes and a great mouth full of flames, which it vomited out as it approached to devour her. But since she kept going back to doing that same duty, armed with trust, she was beaten so excessively that the bruises remained on her body for a long time. Despite this, she would return to her prayers without worrying about all her enemies' violence.

Sometimes, this midnight prayer was very useful to her, and she would leave it with unparalleled savors of God, relishing the things on which she had meditated during the day. In the end, this was such sweet food for her that she would spend several hours at it without becoming bored, as we shall later see when discussing the contemplation to which she was elevated. However, I must point out that while guiding her prayer, the father strictly observed the manner prescribed in Saint Ignatius's Exercises; and although he did not plan to do

it, having no other will than to follow the movements that Our Lord inspired in him, after reflecting on the manner he had employed, he found that it was the same as the one set forth in Saint Ignatius's book. And although this teaching about preparatory prayer, about the prelude, and so forth, seems to trouble the liberty of some spirits, who, approaching this with too much planning and foresight, limit the operation of God's spirit and restrict its amplitude, he nonetheless clearly experienced that, when this occurs smoothly and is exercised without constraint, it is the shortest and most certain path to true supernatural contemplation.⁵⁸ Reflecting on the past and considering the guidance he had given the mother, he therefore noted that he began with an elevation to God, in order to put the soul in his presence. Then came a recounting of the story that was going to be meditated upon, a particular reflection about the place, with the perceptible circumstances, and therefore the application of the spirit to important things, and the application of the senses to what can move the affection of the will. He kept to this order, which is the usual one for Saint Ignatius's meditations; for although he sometimes inserts discussions and reasoning, they are rare. Of twenty meditations, nineteen are of that type, which invariably attracts souls to contemplation. What they say is true: it is awkward to furnish a method for supernatural prayer, or quiet prayer;⁵⁹ nonetheless, one can say that if there had been one, this great saint would have found it, and the person who delves deeply into it will recognize its hidden treasures; for this saint's spirit does not reason all that much, because discursive activity prevents the divine operation. But that is only in order to employ, with great simplicity, the soul's powers to see people, words, and actions, weighing what it sees by a simple glance and applying the interior senses to them in order to draw from it admiration, peace, agreeableness, and fervor.⁶⁰

58 For what Surin was taught about contemplation, see Lallemand, *Spiritual Doctrine*, 264–82.

59 Surin calls it *oraison de quietude*, literally, “prayer of quietness.” Compare this with Lallemand, his teacher, who uses the expression “silent prayer,” *Spiritual Doctrine*, 251–64.

60 At this point, the Prunair edition, 69, inserts the following sentences, after which the text moves on to the final brief paragraph that ends this chapter: “Thus the father, who had never been able to seize every opportunity to apply these methods, allowed his spirit to roam and be reduced by the very one who had inspired them in his father and founder [St. Ignatius], in order to show him, by a significant experience, the strength of praying that way against the demons, and how pressing it was to guide a soul to holy quietude and supernatural contemplation, where God operates and agreeably attracts the spirit that submits to his guidance; for truly, when the mother prioress reached the mystery of the flagellation, on which they spent an entire month, she was elevated to this very desirable contemplation and to this sweet peace where, with no trouble, the soul receives from God the infusion of his light. But because this way of praying was preceded by great travails,

Next, we shall report how the mother arrived at that highly desirable contemplation and that sweet peace where, without effort, the soul receives from God the infusions of his light. But because this manner of praying was preceded by great travails, and since a long exposé is required to account for the things that happened, this requires another chapter.

[Appendixes 1 and 2: January 8–9, 1636]⁶¹

1

I had resolved not to do exorcisms on the feast of the Epiphany, because after vespers and the sermon, the day was almost over, and because the mother was indisposed. But she was so troubled during the sermon that I was forced to do so; and when I was leading her to the altar of the Blessed Virgin, she hit out at everyone and wanted to abuse me too.

I ordered the demon to prostrate himself and to honor the childhood of Jesus Christ, adored by the magi. He refused to obey, uttering horrible blasphemies. I began to sing *Magnificat*, and when I reached the *Gloria Patri*, he began to shout loudly: “Cursed be the celestial court.” He continued to vomit out his curses while I was singing hymns. Finally, I asked him why he was cursing his Creator in this way. He replied: “Because he curses me, and because I hate him.” I then sang *Ave maris Stella*. The demon said: “I curse that star of the sea. I fear neither God nor Mary. I defy them to take me from here.” I asked him why he was defying God, who is all-powerful. “It is from rage,” he said, “that I speak in

and because lengthy reasoning is necessary in order to represent the things that went on there, we shall not discuss it until we have talked about what must be endured in order to acquire such a great favor, and also to remove some obstacle that the light of meditation and understanding were obscuring and which, lying in the depth of the natural, should be ripped out by the soul's travail, mortifying itself wisely in order to prepare the place for the Holy Spirit who wanted to dwell in it [that soul].”

61 January 6, 1636. Ferdinand Cavallera describes this “appendix”: “In a sort of appendix to this first part of the narrative, all the manuscript copies, except the one at the Mazarine Library, provide two documents that are also by Surin and that are not directly related to the subject at hand. The first is a sort of anticipation of the sequence of events: ‘Account of what took place at Loudun when the mother prioress of the Ursulines was delivered on the feast of the Epiphany 1636.’ [...] The second, likewise written on the feast of the Epiphany, is a declaration by the demon concerning the spiritual life. [...] This document contains, among other things, a very strong critique of the unmortified spiritual persons who misinterpret the doctrine of St. François de Sales.” See Ferdinand Cavallera, “L'autobiographie du Père Surin,” *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 22 (April 1925): 143–59, and 24 (October 1925): 389–411. Both documents were published in the Prunair edition, 70–79.