

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER

VOL. XXXVI (No. 5)

MAY, 1922

NO. 792

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SUPERNATURALISM AND SATANISM IN CHATEAUBRIAND.

BY MAXIMILIAN RUDWIN

“MILTON has converted many a man to Diabolism,” says Max Beerbohm in his recent story, “Enoch Soames.”¹ Among these converts must be counted François René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand. His return to Catholicism was not inspired by his mother’s death, but incited by Milton’s Devil. Chateaubriand himself, as is well known, attributed his religious conversion to his mother’s death-bed appeal to him to return to her faith. “Ma conviction,” said he, “est sortie due cœur. J’ai pleuré et j’ai cru.” This story, however, is the purest of his fictions. It is truthful only to the extent that he inherited from his mother the tendency towards Catholicism. The abruptness of his transition from the scepticism of his *Essai sur les Révolutions* (1797)—“a book of doubt and sorrow,” as he himself called it—to the certainty of his *Génie du Christianisme* (1799-1802) is a suspicious circumstance. The interval between “Quelle sera la religion qui remplacera le Christianisme?” (the title of the last chapter of the *Essai*) and his panegyric of the genius of Christianity was too brief. The fanatical Voltairian was too suddenly transformed into a fervent votary of the Catholic faith.

As a matter of fact, Chateaubriand remained the sceptic even while writing his *Génie du Christianisme*. This is shown by marginal notes to the *Essai* in the author’s own handwriting found by Sainte-Beuve in a copy which had belonged to Chateaubriand him-

¹ Enoch Soames is the most recent imitator of Theophilus, the ambitious priest of Adana, who, as is well known, was the first to discover that man could enter into a bond with Beelzebub. The story “Enoch Soames” first appeared in the *Century Magazine* for May, 1916, and was reprinted in Max Beerbohm’s book, *Seven Men* (London, 1919; New York, 1920).

self.² On the basis of this discovery alone our author's sincerity in matters of faith may well be called into question.³ This inaugurator of the religious reaction in France believed in nothing, as he himself repeatedly asserted, adding the words, however, when he recollected himself, "except in religion."⁴ But this position is an impossibility. One cannot be a believer in religion and a disbeliever in everything else. Faith in God implies faith in man; disbelief in man cannot be reconciled with belief in God.

No, this "restaurateur de la religion," as Chateaubriand was pleased to call himself, had no religion. Honored as he was as the latter-day apologist of the Christian religion, no man of genius of his day, Byron not excepted, had less of the Christian spirit. His Catholicism, if the hackneyed simile may be pardoned, was much like the play of *Hamlet* with Hamlet left out; it was a religion with the religious element wanting. Our defender of the faith remained virtually a pagan at heart—"an epicurean with a Catholic imagination," as Sainte-Beuve calls him. It was Chateaubriand's imagination rather than his heart that was touched by Catholicism. His creed was esthetical rather than ethical. His religion consisted in symbol and ceremonial rather than in faith and philosophy. He was attracted by the decorative shell of Christianity, by the pomp of its ritual, by the poetry of its legends, rather than by the truth of its dogmas and the power of its precepts. His argument and appeal in behalf of the Christian religion was not based on right and reason, but on sentiment and imagination. It was not the truth but the beauty of Christianity that our apostle proclaimed to his irreligious generation. His Christian apologetics did not spring from any religious convictions, but resulted from his esthetical sympathies. He viewed esthetically everything that had to do with Christianity—even Hell, as Professor Irving Babbit has incisively remarked.⁵

² Cf. Auguste Sainte-Beuve, *Chateaubriand et son groupe littéraire*. Nouv. éd. (2 vols., 1872), i p. 183; cf. also, i, 297; see also Georg Brandes, *Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature* (English translation, 6 vols., London, 1901-5), iii, 78.

³ See, on the other hand, Georges Bertrin, *la Sincérité religieuse de Chateaubriand* (1900) and F. Saulnier, *Chateaubriand et sa foi religieuse* (1900). Reprinted from the *Revue de Bretagne, de Vendée et d'Anjou*, t. XXIII, pp. 325-40, 422-31. The abbé Bertrin's efforts to defend the sincerity of our author's Catholic convictions have been aptly called *bertrinades*. See also J. Croulois, "la Religion de Chateaubriand," *Revue d'histoire littéraire religieuse* for 1901.

⁴ Cf. Georg Brandes, *op. cit.*, i, 12f.

⁵ *The Masters of Modern French Criticism* (Boston, 1912), p. 68.

I

Chateaubriand's advocacy of the Supernatural is no indication of his Christian beliefs, and far from being the consequence was rather the cause of his vindication of Christianity. Throughout his discussion he demands the substitution of *le merveilleux chrétien* for *le merveilleux païen* not on ethical but on esthetical, not on philosophical but on psychological, grounds. Chateaubriand follows Boileau in considering the marvellous machinery an essential element in epic poetry.⁶ He differs from him, however, in advocating the employment of the mysteries of the Christian faith, which this "lawgiver of Parnassus" has put under ban.⁷ Modern poetry and art must build, he argues, upon Christian theology, as the ancients built upon Greco-Roman mythology. A poet, according to his view, should draw his material from the religion of his own country and of his own period. Moreover, Christianity is richer, he holds, than Paganism in rhetorical means and machines. Our religion, with its great diversity of spirits—deific, angelic, beatific and demonic—is better qualified, he maintains, as an instrument of poetry. The Christian Heaven has a larger population than the classical Pantheon, and the Christian Hell is larger than the heathen Tartarus inasmuch as it has absorbed the Olympus also. The angels and demons offer an especially fruitful field to the poet, who at will can populate with them the earth as well as Heaven and Hell. The ranks of the supernal and infernal powers, moreover, can be endlessly extended by angelicizing and diabolizing our various virtues and vices. It should, furthermore, be remembered that with Chateaubriand as with Boileau the marvellous element is but an artificial embellishment, a rhetorical adornment, of an epic.⁸ The truth of the mysteries of the Christian religion is not involved in this discussion at all. Neither was Chateaubriand the first to rebel against the classical creed. Boileau did not have it all his own way even in his own lifetime.

⁶ The classicism of Chateaubriand has been well pointed out by Louis Bertrand in his Paris dissertation, *la Fin du classicisme et le retour à l'antique* (1897).

⁷ "De la foi d'un chrétien les mystères terribles
D'ornements égayés ne sont point susceptibles."

(Boileau, *Art poétique*, chap. iii.)

⁸ For a discussion of Chateaubriand's theory of *le merveilleux chrétien* the reader is referred to Hubert Matthey's *Essai sur le merveilleux dans la littérature française depuis 1800* (1915). Many details in our present discussion of Chateaubriand's esthetical theories have been drawn from this brief but brilliant survey of the Supernatural in modern French literature.

Already as far back as the seventeenth century the authority of this dictator of the French classical school was not left unchallenged. Many poets believed that an epic poem should "renfermer la théologie de la nation pour laquelle il est écrit." Chapelain, the formulator of the theory of the *épopée pacifique*, advocated what he called "poétiser à la chrétienne."⁹ It is now evident that Chateaubriand had but revived the two hundred years' quarrel between the "Ancients" and the "Moderns."

That Chateaubriand's appreciation of the poetic possibilities of Christianity had really nothing to do with his religious beliefs is proved by the fact that even in his earlier sceptical *Essai*, where the story of Christ is treated as a variant of the pagan myth of the death and resurrection of vegetation,¹⁰ he could see in the *Messiah* the sublimity of Klopstock's poetic tableau of the passion of Christ (*Essai*, chap. lviii). It was in the work of the great Christian poets of foreign lands,—Dante, Camoens, Tasso, Klopstock, Pope and Milton,—whom Chateaubriand studied in his exile, that he realized the beauties of Christianity and was struck by its literary availability. Our author was first attracted to the German poet, in whom he found the combination of sensibility with some measure of epic instinct,¹¹ but he soon transferred his interest to Milton, of whom he speaks, as M. Dupuy expresses it, "avec une vraie dévotion." Chateaubriand himself says that he lived for thirty years with Milton under the influence of his poetic inspiration, of his poetic vision. Milton above all others fired our poet with that great enthusiasm for Christian Supernaturalism which he expresses in his *Génie du Christianisme*. Throughout his argument for the superiority of *le merveilleux chrétien* to *le merveilleux païen*, Chateaubriand refers again and again to Milton. He had an unbounded admiration for *Paradise Lost*, that greatest of modern epics, finally translated it into French prose and published it with a preliminary *Essai sur la littérature anglaise* (1836).

"The finest thing in connection with this [Milton's] *Paradise*," says H. Taine, in his *Histoire de la littérature anglaise* (1863), "is

⁹ In his own epic, *la Pucelle* (1656), Chapelain represents Satan as the inventor of gunpowder and owner of a cannon foundry. According to a plate in Iohanness Brantzius' *Artifices de feu* (Strasbourg, 1604), the Devil instructed Schwartz in the art of making gunpowder.

¹⁰ "La persécution, le martyre et la résurrection du Christ ne sont que le dogme allégorique persan concernant le Bon et le Mauvais Principe, dans lequel le Méchant triomphe et détruit d'abord le Bon; ensuite le Bon renaît et subjugue à son tour le Méchant." (*Essai*, chap. xlv.) A reconstruction of the ancient fertility ritual has been attempted by the present writer in his *Origin of the German Carnival Comedy* (New York, 1920).

¹¹ The reader will recall that when somebody once called Klopstock the "German Milton," Coleridge promptly retorted that Klopstock was a very German Milton.

Hell; and in this history of God the chief part is taken by the Devil." What fascinated Chateaubriand also in Milton's poem was the character of Satan. Our author praises the poetic personifications of evil in all Christian poems, but finds Milton's Satan the finest conception of all. He considers this irreconcilable and irremediable archangel an incomparable creation—a mighty angel fallen! The reader cannot but be affected by a sense of sorrow for this fall. Some of the most eloquent passages in the *Génie du Christianisme* treat of the empyrean rebel in Milton. In Chateaubriand's opinion there is no poetic character, ancient or modern, that equals this Devil. Contrasting Milton with Homer, he finds nothing in the *Odyssey* that can be compared with Satan's address to the sun in *Paradise Lost* (*Génie*, Pt. II, bk. vi, chap. 9). "What is Juno," Chateaubriand asks, "repairing to the limits of the earth in Ethiopia, compared to Satan, speeding his course from the depths of chaos up to the frontiers of nature?" (*ibid.*, Pt. II, bk. iv, chap. 12). "What is Ajax," he exclaims, "compared with Satan?" "What is Pluto," echoes Victor Hugo, "as compared with the Christian Devil?" It was the Satan of Milton who revealed to Chateaubriand the poetic beauties of Christianity. Of all Christian supernatural beings it is the Devil who, as a poetic figure, is superior to all pagan divinities. The poetry of the Christian religion is mainly manifested in the Prince of Demons. The genius of Christianity is finally reduced, in its poetical aspect, to the Adversary. Chateaubriand, who throughout the book takes issue at every turn with Voltaire, seems to agree with his erstwhile master that the Fiend was the fount and foundation of the Christian faith. ("Cette doctrine [du diable] devient depuis le fondement de la religion chrétienne." *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations*, chap. iii.)¹²

II

The unique position of Chateaubriand consists not in the restoration of Supernaturalism but of Satanism. In his advocacy of *le merveilleux chrétien* he had a rival in Mme. de Staël; both he and she turned the eyes of their countrymen to Christian legend. Mme. de Staël, also, protested against the ban which Boileau had put on Christian Supernaturalism. But he differed from his brilliant con-

¹² Voltaire must have meant that from the old orthodox point of view Christianity was inconceivable without Satan. What need would there be for salvation through Christ if there were no Satan constantly plotting against man?

temporary and co-precursor of Romanticism in regard to the place of the Devil in French literature. Mme. de Staël, who borrowed much that was germinal from Germany, was unwilling to bring Mephistopheles over to her country. In contrast to Chateaubriand she believed that the Fiend would not fit exactly into French literature. In her essay on Goethe's *Faust*, she writes:

“La croyance aux mauvais esprits se retrouve dans un grand nombre de poésies allemandes; la nature du Nord s'accorde assez bien avec cette terreur; il est donc beaucoup moins ridicule en Allemagne, que cela ne le serait en France, de se servir du diable dans les fictions” (*De l'Allemagne*, 1810).¹³

The rehabilitation of the Devil as a puissant personage in poetry constitutes Chateaubriand's greatest contribution to posterity. It is the most striking literary phenomenon of the nineteenth century. Victor Hugo tells of the famous and indisputable apparition of the Devil in the rue des Bernardins in the last year of the eighteenth century (*les Misérables*, 1862). This marks the Devil's return to literary glory through the kind offices of our Christian poet. But although introduced from across the Channel, Diabolus seems to have taken out naturalization papers in France. He was made over by the writers of that country into their own image and likeness and dominated the literary movement of that period to such an extent that the terms “demonic” and “Romantic” came very soon to be wellnigh synonymous expressions.¹⁴

Les Martyrs, Chateaubriand's great Christian epic, was also written primarily in behalf of the Devil. The Preface maintains that the book is the result of the author's efforts to mold into poetical form his theories in regard to *le merveilleux chrétien* already advanced in his *Génie du Christianisme*. The book is offered, Chateaubriand claims, as the first illustration of his contention that “the marvellous of this religion might well contend for the palm of interest with the marvellous borrowed from mythology.” This, however, seems not to be correct, as an earlier work, *les Natchez*, written prior to his theoretical book, already contains in part the Christian scheme of the Supernatural. *Les Natchez*, although published long after *Les Martyrs*, is now generally conceded to have been written

¹³ “The belief in evil spirits is to be met with in many pieces of German poetry; the nature of the north agrees very well with this description of terror; it is, therefore, much less ridiculous in Germany than it would be in France, to make use of the Devil in works of fiction.”

¹⁴ On Satan as the patron of Romantic poetry and the ideal Romantic hero see the Introduction to the present writer's *Devil Stories: An Anthology* (New York, 1921).

much earlier.¹⁵ The truth of the matter is that neither of the two was primarily composed as an illustration of the availability of Christian Supernaturalism for poetical and fictional narration. They represent Chateaubriand's two attempts at writing an epic poem. In Milton's England he caught the epic mania and became obsessed, as Jules Lemaitre has put it, by "le préjugé de l'épopée."¹⁶ Chateaubriand would show that Voltaire was wrong in maintaining that "les Français n'ont pas la tête épique." Our author wished to give to the France of the nineteenth century what Voltaire, in his *Henriade* (1728), had attempted to give to the France of the eighteenth century—a great national epic. In further confutation of Voltaire, who had enounced the theory that Christianity was as much opposed to poetry as Paganism was favorable to it, Chateaubriand's poem was projected as a Christian epic. He first attempted to transform into such an epic *les Natchez* (originally a romance of American life, written under his American impressions in the manner of Rousseau and Saint-Pierre), by interspersing in it several passages of supernatural interferences in the manner of Virgil and Tasso. This attempt, however, turned out to be unsuccessful and was abandoned at the end of the first part of the book. He then extracted from it the two short stories *Atala* and *René*, which he sent out as feelers, and published also his great work, *le Génie du Christianisme*, in which he elaborated and defended his esthetic theories.

During a stay in Rome, Chateaubriand conceived the idea of making a second attempt at composing an epic. In conformity with the literary tendency of his day, of which he himself was the foremost exponent, he avoided contemporary events. Undoubtedly there was in this procedure also a great deal of caution. The subject which he selected for his epic was, however, not without bearing on the political situation of that period. As a matter of fact, the book was almost as much of a political pamphlet as his *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons* (1814). It is no exaggeration to say that *les Martyrs* is a *roman à clef*. The persecution of the Christians under Diocletian, which forms the historical background of this book, was a symbol of the sufferings of the royalists and Romanists under the Revolution. Rome stood for Paris and Hiéroclès for Vol-

¹⁵ The composition of *les Natchez* is mainly attributed to the author's second stay in London (1797-1800), although parts of this work may already have been written in Suffolk, as M. Anatole LeBraz, *Au pays d'exil de Chateaubriand* (1908), has shown plausibly enough. The book was left, its writer maintains, in a trunk in London, and did not appear until 1826.

¹⁶ *Chateaubriand* (1912). p. 177.

taire,—the bugbear of our Bourbonist.¹⁷ The infernal council represented the Convention. Just as Dante consigned personal enemies to his *Inferno*, so Chateaubriand placed his political opponents in his equivalent for Hell. The philosophers of the eighteenth century and the leaders of the Revolution figured in his book as the spirits of darkness. Chateaubriand hated the philosophy of the preceding century with its levelling tendencies and its belief in human equality. He was also full of contempt for everything connected with the French Revolution. We will not go very far amiss then if we say that *les Martyrs* was primarily written to credit the Devil with the rebellion against the Lord's anointed.

III

It is an interesting fact that the Devil generally comes into vogue after a war or a revolution. Each of the great poetic personifications of evil has appeared after a critical moment in the world's history, when the old order was disappearing to make room for the new. Periodical upheavals in the social and political world give men a renewed realization of the fact that a power of evil is always at work in the midst of them. This unifying, growing, begetting life-force has been personified in the human mind and is called the Devil. It is, indeed, strange that at the very moment when we cease to believe in the existence of the Devil, we have borne in upon us a new and appalling sense that all the attributes which go to form his personality are more rampant in the world than we in our former blindness had ever dreamed. Just when we have consigned Lucifer to Limbo and have lulled ourselves into the fond conviction that all is for the best in this best of all worlds, we awaken to a new and sudden realization of a unity in all the various forms and elements of evil, which seems to point to a personality if not to a person. "We may not believe in a personal Devil," says Mr. Stanton Coit, "but we must believe in a Devil who acts very much like a person." Victor Hugo, who, like most modern thinkers, was a Manichean, said: "It is certain that evil at one end proves the Evil One at the other" (*les Travailleurs de la mer*, 1866). It was the lesson that the French Revolution and its attendant Reign of Terror

¹⁷ Voltaire, the great champion of justice and tolerance, was conventionalized by the Catholic Church into Mephistopheles. The Jesuit Patouillet, a victim of Voltaire's scathing sarcasm, was of the opinion that his enemy was of diabolical descent. Joseph de Maistre, Chateaubriand's fellow-reactionary, called Voltaire the man "into whose hands Hell has given all its power"—"the ambassador plenipotentiary of his Majesty the Devil" (Albert Guérard. *French Prophets of Yesterday* (1913), p. 101.

taught the sceptics of the eighteenth century, and it was again the lesson that the devil-doubters of our own day learned from the recent war and its deplorable aftermath. This new realization of the Devil as the controlling power in the world's affairs takes form in the imagination of a Dante, a Luther, a Vondel, a Milton, a Goethe, a Chateaubriand, a Flaubert, a Victor Hugo.

It may also be noted in passing, that most of the re-creators of the Devil were exiled from their country or ostracized from the society of their class. We need but refer to Dante, Luther, Vondel, Milton, Byron, Heine, Lermontov and Hugo. Vigny voluntarily withdrew from his fellow-men into his "ivory-tower." Chateaubriand, in writing *les Martyrs* under the Empire, still retained the point of view of an *émigré*, that point of view from which his first romance, *les Natchez*, was written. These men, suffering banishment or imprisonment for their opposition to a tyrannical government, were naturally attracted to "le grand banni," who, in the words of Milton, "opposed the tyranny of Heaven" (*Par. Lost*, i. 124).¹⁸

"Pour comprendre un écrivain," said J. J. Ampère, "il faut comprendre son ciel," and, we might add, "son enfer." Chateaubriand's political views may best be inferred from his Heaven and Hell. In the administration of his celestial and infernal worlds the most outstanding feature according to our author is order. The Lord permits no disorder or discord even in Hell. No insubordination is tolerated in either the upper or the lower regions. The sin of the most profoundly corrupt spirit of the Abyss consists in nothing more than wishing to establish a different order of precedence in the court of Heaven. Chateaubriand pictures a disturbance during the session of the infernal council and calls upon the Lord to restore harmony among the spirits of darkness. "A terrible conflict would have resulted," he tells us, "if God, who maintains justice and is the author of all order, even in Hell, had not ended the turmoil" (*Martyrs*, VIII).¹⁹ In upsetting discipline in Hell and employing Heaven to re-establish it, our author lays himself open to an accusation of unfairness. The Devil is no Lord of Misrule. Hell may be a region of disorder as far as Heaven is concerned, but it is very

¹⁸ Moncure Daniel Conway, the well-known American demonologist, was an outcast from Southern society, into which he was born, on account of his anti-slavery propaganda. Paul Carus, author of *The History of the Devil* (Chicago, 1900), and former editor of *The Open Court*, was not American born. He had to turn his back on the country of conservatism and kaiserism as a consequence of his liberal religious views.

¹⁹ Cf. also Georg Brandes, *op. cit.*, iii. 149.

apparent that some sort of order must prevail among the infernal spirits. Milton also says:

"Devil with Devil damn'd
Firm concord holds."

(*Par. Lost*, ii. 496-7.)

If the demons cannot always control themselves in council let us not be too harsh with them; let us rather recall what Byron said: "Even saints forget themselves at times in council." The idea of a Tartarean tumult, by the way, is not as new as Chateaubriand would have us believe. Lucian set the infernal gods to quarrelling over the ferry hire in Hades. Moreover, the tumult in *les Martyrs* was really caused not by the devils but by the damned. The demons in council conduct themselves as gentlemen and reason like *encyclopédistes*.

Another characteristic of our royalist author is the fact that his Heaven and Hell contain many throned, crowned and sceptered spirits. Not only the monarch of Hell sits upon a throne and holds the scepter of Hell in his right hand, but his daughters, as the princesses of Hell, also have marks of royalty. The demon Rumor sits upon a throne, the demon Death wears on her head a sparkling crown, and the demon Night holds a scepter in her hand.²⁰ Royalty is highly respected in Chateaubriand's Heaven. Saint Louis is king in Heaven as he was on earth, and Queen Esther at the court of Heaven enjoys all the privileges of a royal visitor.

Chateaubriand's anti-revolutionary views may also be seen in that he places the poor man in Hell. He is proud of his achievement, and admits that the idea would never have occurred to him prior to the Revolution (*Martyrs*, VIII, n. 16e). "Here," says Jules Lemaitre, "is frankness with a rather Nietzschean hardness."²¹ Our author must have remembered well the frightful conduct of the Paris mob in the days of the Revolution and during the Reign of Terror.

It may also be noted in passing that when this religionist employs the Jew as an agent of Hell, he represents him as an unbeliever. He is a Jew who has renounced the faith of his fathers. In the Theophilus legend, from which this tradition may be traced, the in-

²⁰ It is interesting to contrast the despotic monarch of Hell in *les Martyrs* with the Devil who boastfully says, "I am a constitutional, democratic king," in a recent book, *De kleine Johannes*. The author of this new "Pilgrim's Progress," the Dutch folk-lorist and novelist, Dr. Frederik Willem van Eeden, who expressed in this book strong anti-Catholic views (cf. *The Open Court*, vol. XXXV (1921), p. 527), has just announced himself in his new book, *Significant Broodings* (1921), a convert to Catholicism.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

termediary between man and the Devil is a believing Jew. The zealot in one religion prefers a zealot to a liberal even in an opposing religion. In his eagerness to point out the infernal connection of the unbeliever our author resorts to magic, a method which was already condemned by Chapelain as "la vieille mode."

IV

Following the lead of Milton, Chateaubriand represents the Arch-enemy of mankind as a fomenter of revolutions. Satan, it must be remembered, is still waging on earth the war he started in Heaven.²² Our author is deeply impressed by his discovery that Milton's Satan was the personification of the English Revolution. Moreover, Chateaubriand was keen enough to discern under the diabolical masks in the epic of the Puritan poet those energetic rebels, who, although defeated, refused to submit to the royal authority. The Frenchman must also be given credit for his critical acumen in observing that Milton himself was, in the words of Blake, "of the Devil's party."²³

"Nous sommes frappé dans ce moment d'une idée que nous ne pouvons taire. Quiconque a quelque critique et un bon sens pour l'histoire pourra reconnaître que Milton a fait entrer dans le caractère de son Satan les perversités de ces hommes qui, vers le commencement du dix-septième siècle, couvrirent l'Angleterre de deuil: on y sent la même obstination, le même enthousiasme, le même orgueil, le même esprit de rébellion et d'indépendance; on retrouve dans le monarque infernal ces fameux niveleurs qui, se séparant de la religion de leur pays, avaient secoué le joug de tout gouvernement légitime. et s'étaient révoltés à la fois contre Dieu et contre les hommes. Milton lui-même avait partagé cet esprit de perdition; et, pour imaginer un Satan aussi détestable, il fallait que le poète en eût vu l'image dans ces réprouvés, qui firent si longtemps de leur patrie le vrai séjour des démons" (*Génie*, Pt. II, bk. iv, chap. 9).²⁴

²² "The Devil," says Anatole France, "is the father of all anarchy."

²³ "The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of angels and God, and at liberty when of devils and hell, is because he was a true poet, and of the Devil's party without knowing it" (William Blake).

²⁴ "An idea strikes us, which we cannot forbear to communicate. Whoever possesses discernment and a knowledge of history must perceive that Milton has introduced into the character of Satan the perverseness of those men, who, about the middle of the seventeenth century, filled England with mourning and wretchedness. You even discover in him the same obstinacy, the same enthusiasm, the same pride, the same spirit of rebellion and independence; you meet with the principles of those infamous levellers, who, seceding from the religion of their country, shook off the yoke of all legitimate government, revolting at once against God and man. Milton had himself imbibed this spirit of perdition; and the poet could not have imagined a Satan so detestable unless he had seen his image in one of those reprobates who, for such a length of time, transformed their country into a real abode of demons."

Already in his *Essai sur les Révolutions* our author had maintained that a revolution is under no circumstances to be justified. This partisan of potentates and pontiffs believed with the abbé Genoude that "la révolte n'est jamais permise." He shared the viewpoint of the Catholic Church towards the Revolution and all its works. Joseph de Maistre, his fellow-reactionary, also considered the Revolution a Satanic work. In the eyes of the Catholic Church France was possessed by the Devil of the Revolution. The priests taught the French peasants that the Constitution which confiscated their property was the diabolic masterpiece of the Revolution.²⁵ Victor Hugo in his royalist days also described the Convention as a creation of the Evil One (*Odes et poésies diverses*, 1822).²⁶

Satan in *les Martyrs* is not so much the fallen archangel of Christian tradition as the moving spirit of the French Revolution.²⁷ He employs many of the expressions of the revolutionary leaders. In his address to the infernal assembly we find echoes of the oratory of the Convention. Chateaubriand even goes so far as to put the revolutionary-patriotic hymn of his country, *la Marseillaise* (1792), one of the world's great martial songs, into the mouth of the Fiend. An anachronism of so conspicuous and disconcerting a sort does not in the least freeze this reactionary and royalist when venting his hatred on the Revolution and all its works. Perhaps in this respect the self-canonized *père de l'église*, as our author was pleased to call himself in a letter to Mme. de Custine,²⁸ is following the lead of the other Fathers of the Church in ascribing to the Devil a marvellous sort of prescience. For when the early Christian missionaries discovered that pagan beliefs and practices were similar to their own, they could

²⁵ The Catholic view of the French Revolution down to the present day may be seen in *le Diable et la Révolution* (1895) by that impostor Léo Taxil, a work dedicated to Pope Leo XIII.

²⁶ *Livre i, ode 4.*

²⁷ Perhaps Napoleon, whom he bitterly hated, also reminded our author of the leader of the insurgent hosts of Heaven. Napoleon was considered by many of his contemporaries as a devil in human flesh. Victor Hugo in his Bourbonist days pronounced Napoleon to be an emissary of Hell (see his ode "Bonaparte" in his *Odes et poésies diverses*, 1822). For Marie Louise, Napoleon was Antichrist (Letter of July 8, 1809). Mme. de Krüdener believed Napoleon to be the devil himself (cf. Brandes, *op. cit.*, iii. 188). Adam Müller in a letter to Gentz used Bonaparte as a synonym for Satan (*ibid.*, ii. 324). In comparing this world to the Dantean *Inferno*, Schopenhauer finds the only difference in the fact that on our planet man himself is the devil to his fellows ("homo homini diabolus"); and the arch-devils in this philosopher's opinion are those world-conquerors who get hundreds of thousands of men lined up against one another and then call out: "Suffering and death are what you are born to; now fire away at one another with musket and cannon!" "And," says Schopenhauer, "they do it, too."

²⁸ Cf. *Correspondance générale de Chateaubriand*, p. par L. Thomas (1912 seq.).

only explain the fact by assuming that long before the advent of Christianity the Devil had put Christian beliefs and practices into the heads of the pagans in order to confound the faithful. Justin Martyr thought that by overhearing the celestial council the Adversary learned the intention of the Almighty and anticipated them by a series of blasphemous imitations (*Apol.*, i. 54). In this manner was explained the similarity in creed and cult between Christianity and Paganism. Cortez, it will be remembered, also complained that the Devil had positively taught to the Mexicans the things which the Lord had taught to the Christians. If the Devil had wind of Christian rites and ceremonies centuries ahead, he might easily know in the third century what hymn Rouget de Lisle would compose fifteen hundred years later. And why, pray, not believe that it was the Evil One himself who put the *Marseillaise* into the head of the poet of the Revolution? Diabolus is known to have inspired the brain of many a philosopher and poet. Bruno and Servetus, it was believed, owed their scientific theories to the inspiration of Satan. Beelzebub, wishing to take vengeance on the devil-fighting knights of medieval days, whispered *Don Quixote* into the ears of Cervantes,²⁹ and Asmodeus avenged himself on the monks by inspiring Boccaccio with his *Decameron*. The Devil might very well have composed the hymn of that Revolution which he himself brought to pass.

The address of Satan to his companions at the infernal council is perhaps the most powerful passage in the supernatural portions of *les Martyrs*. The fame of Satan's oratorical ability renders further comment superfluous. Lord Broughman, as we know, recommended Satan's speeches to barristers and parliamentarians. The Fiend is even famed as a pulpit orator.³⁰ Satan's address in *les Martyrs* is the one original passage in a book which, by the admis-

²⁹ Charles Nodier speaks of Cervantes as "l'ingénieux démon qui assiste en riant à l'agonie de l'ancien ordre de choses et qui lui donne le coup de mort avec sa marotte."

³⁰ The Devil's speech to St. Guthlac, the Irish St. Anthony, is not, as has been somewhere stated, the only instance extant of a diabolical sermon. Satan is known to have occupied pulpits in many parts of Christendom. He is said to have preached a sermon, among others, in the church of North Berwick. Lord Morley recently told the French story of the monk who was a particular friend of the Devil. One Sunday morning the monk was too ill to preach, and as Diabolus chanced to appear in the sacristy, he asked that obliging personality to occupy his pulpit for the special edification of his congregation. The Devil preached a most masterly sermon, covering himself with shame and confusion. "How now?" said the monk when the Devil came down, "you have pretty nearly ruined yourself with that sermon." "Oh! dear no," answered the Devil, "no harm done, no harm done; there was no unction in it." (Quoted by Jack O'London in a recent number of the *New York Times*.)

sion of the author himself, is but a mosaic of quotations. "*Le Génie du Christianisme* est un tissu de citations avoué au grand jour." Chateaubriand admitted in a letter to M. de Marcellus. "Dans *les Martyrs*, c'est un fleuve de citations déguisées et fondues." Chateaubriand's lack of originality in the supernatural parts of *les Martyrs* as well as of *les Natchez* is now generally conceded. His borrowings have formed the subject of several critical studies,³¹ but the limits of this study forbid detailed consideration. Our author plucked plumes from all of his predecessors, but particularly from Milton. Satan and the other demons in *les Martyrs* have been conceived in slavish imitation of the English poet, the repeated references to Tasso in the notes to the book in question notwithstanding. For Chateaubriand, perhaps unwittingly, always attributed the influence exerted upon him to any but the right person.

The opening speech of Satan to the infernal assembly, though suggested by a study of the Pandemonium in Milton, reveals a modicum of originality on the part of his French follower. The Puritan poet, with all his admiration for the empyrean rebel, would never have thought of putting such beautiful words into his mouth:

"Dieux des nations, trônes, ardeurs, guerriers généreux, milices invincibles, race noble et indépendante, magnanimes enfants de cette forte patrie, le jour de gloire est arrivé; nous allons recueillir le fruit de notre constance et de nos combats. Depuis que j'ai brisé le joug du tyran, j'ai tâché de me rendre digne du pouvoir que vous m'avez confié. Je vous ai soumis l'univers; vous entendez ici les plaintes de cet homme qui devait vous remplacer au séjour des béatitudes. . . ." ³²

The other debates among the infernal spirits in council do not differ essentially from their models in Milton.

³¹ The first man to make an exhaustive study of Chateaubriand's plagiarisms was the Swiss Ernst Dick in his Basle dissertation: *Plagiats de Chateaubriand* (1905); *idem*, "Chateaubriands Verhältnis zu Milton" in *Festschrift z. 14. Neuphilologentage in Zürich*, 1910; *idem*, "Plagiat, Nachahmung und Originalität bei Chateaubriand," in *Germanisch-romanische Monatschrift* for 1911. Cf. also W. Wright Roberts, "Chateaubriand and Milton," in *Modern Language Review*, vol. V (1910), pp. 409-29; A. Köhler, *Quellen-untersuchung zu Chateaubriands les Martyrs* (1913); A. T. Baker, "Milton and Chateaubriand," in *The French Quarterly*, vol. I (1919), pp. 87-104; J. M. Telleen, *Milton dans la littérature française* (1904); H. Matthey, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-21.

³² "Gods of the nations, thrones, ardeurs, generous warriors, invincible armies, noble and independent race, magnanimous children of this powerful country, the day of glory has arrived; we are about to reap the fruit of our constancy and of our combats. Since first I broke the yoke of the tyrant, I have endeavored to render myself worthy of the power which you have entrusted to me. I have reduced the universe to your control; you hear the groans of the posterity of that man who was to have succeeded you in the abode of blessedness. . . ."

As an imitator of Milton, Chateaubriand has been most successful in the expression of human emotions which he imparts to his Satan when this fallen angel descends into his doleful domain to summon the infernal council. Satan's pity for the sad plight of the spirits who fell with him and his compassion for man, to whom he must bring destruction, are lines in *Paradise Lost* which our author never tires of praising. The idea of the repentant rebel, to be sure, is not original with Milton. This is common in all forms of mediæval literature and may be traced to the apocryphal *Vision of St. Paul*. It is, moreover, of pre-Christian origin and was acquired by the Jews from the Persians from whom we have taken our Satan. The writer of the *Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (written between 30 B. C. and 50 A. D.) already represented the apostatized angels as "weeping unceasingly." In Satan's descent to Hell and in his address to his synod, Chateaubriand almost succeeded in breathing life into his Devil. Satan stands forth from the rest of the supernatural personages, who have not the slightest breath of life in them.

(To be Continued)