SUPERNATURALISM AND SATANISM IN CHATEAUBRIAND.

BY MAXIMILIAN RUDWIN

(Continued)

Chateaubriand falls particularly short of his models in the delineation of his supernatural beings. These are not persons but marionettes, manufactured out of the tinsel borrowed from the classical and Christian poets. Our author is especially unsuccessful in his descriptions of the demons. The illustrious painter of Atala, Chactas, René, Eudorus and Velléda could not paint the portrait of his infernal majesty. The Devil as the Deity in *les Martyrs* is but the grand "machinist" of the poem. Chateaubriand aspired to surpass his models in the creation of Satan. "Dante," he asserted, "has simply made of Satan an atrocious monster, locked up in the center of the earth. Tasso, by giving his Devil horns, has almost rendered him ridiculous. Misled by these authorities, Milton had, for a moment, the bad taste to give the measurements of his Satan" (*Génie,* Pt. II, bk. iv, chap. 9). Chateaubriand, for this reason, refrains from detailed description of the figure of his Satan. We learn only that "he no longer resembles the star of the morning, but is like a baleful comet" (*Martyrs,* VIII). Dante, however, meant his Dis to be nothing but a foul and frozen fiend—an object of horror and hatred.[33] Tasso's Pluto fully retains his imposing dignity notwithstanding the traditional horns. Milton describes Satan as a powerful giant, but enters into no details of his physical appearance, leaving them to the imagination of the reader (*Par. Lost,* i, 194ff.). But Chateaubriand's Satan is so far inferior to all of these devils that he can bear no comparison with them. Chateaubriand's Satan is so much below Milton's Satan that we blush to think how he could ever sustain a conversation with him or even appear in

[33] Cf. the present writer's article, "Dante's Devil," in *The Open Court* for September, 1921.

his company. It is only after a prolonged sojourn in the dread and dismal darkness that the Devil of Milton has become the Devil of Chateaubriand. The Devil of the latter is, indeed, the Miltonic Devil, "but oh how fallen! how changed!" (*Par. Lost,* i. 84). In Milton's poem, Satan is still full of the memories of Heaven. His recent fall has not deprived him of his celestial beauty. He is a stranger as yet to his new and nebulous surroundings, while in Chateaubriand's book several thousand years of reprobation have passed over his head. The long habit of criminal thought has effaced from his brow every vestige of his past splendor, and he now appears as black as the regions which he inhabits. He has neither the greatness of intellect nor the charm of personality with which he was clothed by Milton. We meet in *les Martyrs* no longer the proud and bold archangel who would rather "reign in Hell than serve in Heaven" (*Par. Lost,* i. 263).

Chateaubriand's Devil answers to both of his biblical names, Satan and Lucifer. Satan was not generally identified with Lucifer before the time of Anselm (1034-93). Among the early Church Fathers, Eusebius was the only one who applied the name Lucifer to the chief rebel. In medieval literature Lucifer and Satan are not blended, though they are thoroughly in agreement. Lucifer is the Prince of the Pit, while Satan is but a second rate devil as in the Latin apocryphal book *Descensus Christi ad Inferos,* which forms the second part of the *Evangelium Nicodemi* (third century). Satan is Lucifer's chief minister and bosom friend, a "clever rooster," as his master calls him. A sharp line of demarcation is drawn between the characters of these two devils. Lucifer is a weakling, a cowardly despot, and Satan is his strong arm. The arch-regent of Hell is nervous and timorous, sentimental and brutal, vacillating and temporizing, always whimpering and whining for his past glory. Satan, on the other hand, is bold and proud, ever optimistic, never regretful. He submits to his fate without a murmur. He is far manlier than his master and often upbraids him for his womanish manners. After the fall from Heaven, Satan marshals all his powers of oratory to cheer and comfort his crest-fallen and despairing lord.[34]

The worst fault of Chateaubriand's Satan in contrast to Milton's is his lack of freedom of action. The two conceptions of the Devil, the Catholic and the Protestant, are well illustrated by these two authors. In Catholicism the dualism is less pronounced and

[34] On the differentiation of character and personality between Lucifer and Satan and the lesser demons, see the present writer's monograph on the Devil in the religious plays of medieval Germany (Baltimore, 1915).

the Devil less powerful than in Protestantism.[35] Milton's Satan, acting of his own free will, is really an epic, majestic figure, a Promethean character who vainly but valiantly opposes a power which he knows he can never conquer. Chateaubriand's Satan has no will of his own. He belongs, to speak in the language of the Church, not to himself but to God (Anselm, *De casu Diaboli*). The Adversary in *les Martyrs* is but a tool in the hands of the Almighty, who knows his plans in advance, overhears the discussions of his council and takes a hand in its deliberations whenever he deems it necessary.

Another weakness in Chateaubriand's diabolistic conception is the representation of Satan and his angels as writing in physical torments and frightful agonies. Thus Chateaubriand robs them of all dignity. In this respect our author follows Milton, whose devils also suffer from fire (*Par. Lost,* ii. 88). But this material pain is in Milton very insignificant as compared with the spiritual sufferings of the devils. It is the inward torment on which Milton lays chief emphasis, and this inner pain shows itself in the face of his Satan. "Myself am Hell," he cries in the anguish of his soul (*ibid,* iv, 75). What gnaws at his heart is not a serpent, but

> "The thought, both of lost happiness and lasting pain."
> (*Ibid,* i. 54-5.)

The pain of Milton's Satan is psychical rather than physical. His is the boundless horror and despair of one who has known "eternal joys" and is now condemned to everlasting banishment. Marlowe's Mephistopheles also complains of moral rather than material sufferings. His torment is to be hopelessly bound in the constraint of serfdom to evil. There is a suggestion of peculiar horror in the tortured protest which bursts from his lips when asked as to his condition:

> "Thinkest thou that I, who saw the face of God,
> And tasted the eternal joys of heaven,
> Am not tormented with ten thousand hells,
> In being deprived of everlasting bliss?
> O, Faustus, leave these frivolous demands,
> Which strike a terror to my fainting soul!"

Chateaubriand, moreover, on this point runs counter to the teachings of the Church. "The everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," is not to be lighted until the Judgment Day. Up to that time the punishment of the devils consists only in the

[35] The English reformer, John Wycliffe, in his *De dominio divino,* seems to imply that here on earth God must obey the Devil

fact that they must torment the souls of the wicked (*Book of Enoch.* x. 37). It is only the chief devil who was laid in everlasting chains by Christ during his descent to Hell, "as a special punishment for his audacity in tempting and persecuting our Lord on earth or for some other unfathomable intention of the Lord for the salvation of his Church and his elect" (Suraez, *De angelorum;* cf. also Gregory, *Moral. Lib.,* xxxv). The confinement of Satan, however, has in no way fettered his activity on earth. No matter how often the Devil has been bound and sealed in the lowest pit of Hell, his baleful influence on the affairs of men has never suffered any diminution. Satan apparently directs the work from his dungeon and despatches myriads of myrmidons to effect his will on earth. This conception of the imprisoned rebel, by the way, is a pre-Christian tradition. It may be found in many of the ancient ethnic religions. Ahriman, who fought against Ormuzd, was bound for a thousand years; Prometheus, who assailed Zeus, was chained to a rock in the Caucasus; and Loki, the calumniator of the northern gods, was strapped down with thongs of iron in his subterranean cavern.

Another serious deviation from tradition in *les Natchez* is Chateaubriand's placing the demon Rumor at the southern extremity of our earth. To be canonically correct he should have domiciled her in the north. The north and not the south was looked upon as the Devil's special domain. It is described as the Devil's dwelling in the passage where the Lucifer legend first finds expression (*Is.* xiv. 13; cf. also *Jer.* i. 14f. and *Par. Lost,* v. 689). "The Lord." says Lactantius, "so divided the world with the Devil that *occidens, septentrio, tenebrae frigus* fell to the sphere of his Adversary." This accords with the saying, "ab aquilone omne malum." The good Goethe also said:

> "The further northward one doth go,
> The plentier soot and witches grow."

By taking up his sojourn in the north, Satan is but following his Persian ancestor Ahriman, who, as a winter-demon, had his habitation in the cold north, from whence he sent down hail, snow and devastating floods. The north side of a churchyard is considered unconsecrated ground and is reserved for suicides. As the entrance to a church is at the west end, the north is always to the left. For this reason the left has always been the seat of, and has practically become a synonym for, the Opposition. The Devil, like the traditional Hibernian, is always "agin the government" of Heaven or of earth. As a matter of fact, Dublin was by some demonologists con-

sidered to be Satan's earthly capital. The Scandinavian form of this name is Divelina. Burns had this fact in mind when he wrote:

> "Is just as true's the deil's in hell
> Or Dublin city."

Chateaubriand may have been thinking of the *daemon meridianus* of the Vulgate for Psalm xc. By this term, however, is meant the demon of middle age and not of the south. It was applied by Joseph de Maistre to Napoleon,[36] and recently served as title for a novel by Paul Bourget (1914).

The greater part of Chateaubriand's demons are but dull and dreary abstractions devoid of body and blood. Our author resorts to the simplest method of personification, in the medieval manner of the *Roman de la Rose,* which consists in writing an abstract noun with a capital letter.[37] In vain does he claim scriptural sanction and orthodox authority for his method of diabolizing our various vices. The objections which he raises against the physical allegory of classical mythology (*Génie,* Pt. II, bk. i. chap. 2) hold just as well against the moral allegory of Christian theology. A personal devil is a lot more interesting than an abstraction. The Eternity of Sorrows our author considers as "the most daring fiction of *les Martyrs.*" But Eternity of Sorrows is the counterpart of the Augustinian "aeternitas felicitatis." From the fact that Chateaubriand counts among his allegorical characters the demon of Labor, it would seem that he believes with the Arabs that Leisure comes from God and Labor from the Evil One.

Allegory as a form of literature has long since passed away. Chateaubriand's allegorical phantasmagoria belongs to the antiquities which pseudo-classicism bequeathed to him. His devils even multiply with synonyms. There are two demons of Death: *la Mort* and *le Trépas.* This duplication is rather unusual. Hell is known for the precision of its distribution of labor. There is in addition an angel of Death. Our author puts an emissary of Heaven and one of Hell in charge of every natural act and of every human emotion;[38] and one must at times be a perfect connoisseur in spirits to know

[36] *Correspondance diplomatique* (published posthumously in 1860), ii. 65. Cf. K. R. Gallas, "A propos du titre *le Démon du midi,*" in *Neophilologus,* vol. IV (1918-19), pp. 371-2. The writer of the note makes no mention of the passage in Joseph de Maistre.

[37] Cf. W. Wright Roberts, *loc. cit.,* p. 422.

[38] Contrary to popular belief, but in conformity with his esthetical views (cf. Matthey, *op. cit.,* p. 32), Chateaubriand maintains that, though leaving to Satan the power over most natural processes, the Lord has reserved for himself the storm and the thunder (*Natchez,* X). He admits, however, that Satan

who's who. Uriel, the angel of Love, is supposed to be the antithesis of Astarte, the demon of Love. They are to be as far apart as Heaven is from Hell. In Chateaubriand's descriptions, however, the twain meet rather often. "The birth of Uriel, the angel of Love," we are told, "was coeval with the universe: he sprang into being with Eve, at the very moment when the first woman opened her eyes to the newly created light (*Martyrs*, XII). According to the rabbis, however, it was the Devil who entered the world at the same time as woman. He is believed to have issued from the aperture caused by the removal of the rib from Adam.

Chateaubriand's method of attributing sex to his allegorical characters, it must be admitted, bears the charm of novelty. The demon of Voluptuousness is a man, while the demons of Death and of Pride are women. We will not contest the quality of pride with the beautiful sex, but as far as Death is concerned we protest in the name of fairness. In our ignorance of the rules of personification we have always represented the Reaper as a member of the sterner sex.[39]

Chateaubriand falls far short of his model, Milton, in his portrait of Death. In Milton's description of this demon all is vague, shrouded, confused, tremendous, terrible and sublime in the highest degree, while in Chateaubriand this demon is depicted in odious and hideous detail. Our author praises the manner in which Milton represented Death (*Génie*, Pt. II, bk. iv, chap. 14). His praise is more apt than his imitation.

often unchains a storm against the will of God (*Martyrs*, XV) and even raises a hurricane (*Natchez*, IX). In the popular mind, however, the wind and the storm have always been identified with the Devil. "We read in the Old Testament that the devil, by the divine permission, afflicted Job; and that among the means which he employed was a tempest which destroyed the house in which the sons of the patriarch were eating. The description in the *Book of Revelation* of the four angels who held the four winds, and to whom it was given to afflict the earth, was also generally associated with this belief; for, as St. Augustine tells us, the word angel is equally applicable to good and bad spirits" (Lecky, *Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*). This is the origin of the belief in the four chiefs of Hell. The medieval expression "faire le diable à quatre" is now easily understood.

[39] It must be admitted, though, that in the Basle *Dance of Death* (15th century), the figure of Death is feminine (cf. W. Vischer, *Ueber die Entstehungszeit und die Meister des Grossbasler Todtentanzes* (Basel, 1849). This may be due to the fact that in the temptation scene of the medieval mystery plays the Tempter usually appeared as a serpent with a woman's head. According to the Venerable Bede, Lucifer chose to tempt Eve through a serpent which had a female head because "like is attracted to like." Peter Comestor in his *Historia Scholastica* concludes from this fact that while the serpent was yet erect, it had a virgin's head. Ruskin shows an unfamiliarity with medieval literature and art when he states that the serpent in Paradise was for many centuries represented with the head of a man. In Grandchamp's painting of the Temptation, however, the serpent has the head of a handsome young man.

Nor has Chateaubriand equalled his master Milton in his delineation of the lesser lights of Hell. In *Paradise Lost* there is a distinct differentiation. The personality of each devil reveals itself. Satan is not merely a devil; he is the particular devil Satan. Beelzebub, we feel, is distinct from Belial, Moloch is not Mammon, nor is Dagon Rimmon. Milton's devils are not metaphysical abstractions. Even his allegorical figures are living symbols. His demons are not ugly beasts. They have no horns, no tails. Nor are they wicked men. But they act in a manner which men can understand. The Devil should not be human, but he must have enough in common with human nature to play a part intelligible to human beings. In the artistic treatment of diabolical material the chief difficulty lies in preserving the just mean between the devil-character and the imparted element of humanity.

Like their author, Chateaubriand's devils—and angels, too, for that matter—are lacking in humor; and humor is a devil's redeeming quality. We cannot warm up to Chateaubriand's demons. They leave us classically cold.

Chateaubriand's devils are like nothing upon earth. An exception is the demon of False Wisdom, whose prototype on earth is the eighteenth century *philosophe*. Chateaubriand claims originality for this demon. "It is true," he says, "that he has been better known in our times than in the past and that he has never done so much harm to men" (*Martyrs*, VIII. n. 27). He also boasts that the idea of the demon of False Wisdom as the Father of Atheism was original with him and was well received by the public. (*Ibid.*) In conformity with the orthodox view this reactionary to Romanism calls a deist an atheist. Similarly our great and recent Roosevelt called Tom Paine, "a filthy little atheist."[40] But whatever vices the demon of False Wisdom may have fathered, he is certainly innocent of the vice of atheism. Satan and his satelites are not and cannot be atheists. We know upon the authority of our Evangelists that the devils believe in God and "confess Christ" (*Mark*, i. 24; *Luke*, iv. 34). It would never occur to the Devil to deny the Deity. If he were to reason God out of existence he would have to apply the scalpel of self-obliteration to himself as well. The Lord is as neces-

[40] Dr. Frank Wicks, of Indianapolis, whom the present writer first heard refer to this passage in Roosevelt's *Gouverneur Morris* (1888), is authority for the statement that proofs of Paine's theism had been submitted by the Thomas Paine Association to Roosevelt, but that he refused to make a correction in subsequent editions of his book.

sary to Lucifer as Lucifer is to the Lord. Though they oppose, they complete each other. They are part and parcel of the great universal system. Wesley's famous cry: "No, Devil, no God!" may just as well be reversed: "No God, no Devil!" The words that Chateaubriand has put into the mouth of this father of Atheism were never spoken by any demon in time or in eternity. To apply to this atheistic devil the remark of the cook in regard to Tennyson's parents, "If you raäked out Hell with a smaäll-tooth coämb, you weänt find their like."[41]

VI

Chateaubriand's best and most successful diabolical creation is the demon of Voluptuousness. This demon is described as the most beautiful of the fallen angels after Lucifer. She left Heaven, she informs us, not from any hatred against the Eternal, but solely to follow an angel she loved. At last we find a sympathetic devil in Chateaubriand's Hell. The demon of Voluptuousness is, in the opinion of Jules Lemaître, the charm and the grace of this insipid and sordid Hell. The author gives us a very sensuous description of this demon of Voluptuousness.[42] He portrays her with such passionate concern that the reader is not at a loss where to find the author's sympathies. With what complacency does Chateaubriand put beautiful words into her mouth! Commenting on the speech of this demon, Jules Lemaître exclaims: "Ah que le peintre de cet enfer aime visiblement le péché!"[43]

"Dieux de l'Olympe, et vous que je connais moins, divinités du brahmane et du druide, je n'essaierai point de le cacher; oui, l'enfer me pèse! Vous ne l'ignorez pas; je ne nourrissais contre l'Eternel aucun sujet de haine, et j'ai seulement suivi dans sa rébellion et dans sa chute, un ange que j'aimais. Mais puisque je suis tombé du ciel avec vous, je veux du moins vivre longtems au milieu des mortels, et je ne me laisserai point bannir de la terre. . . ."[44]

Chateaubriand tries to conceal his admiration for this demoness by referring to her as a member of the sterner sex. This, however,

[41] Quoted in *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir.* By his son (New York, 1905), p. 15.

[42] A similar sensuous description is given in *les Natchez* of the demon Night, daughter of Satan.

[43] *Op. cit.*, p. 186.

[44] "Gods of Olympus, and ye with whom I am less acquainted, divinities of the Brahman and of the Druid, I shall not attempt at all to conceal it; yes, I cannot bear Hell! You well know that I cherished no hatred whatever against the Eternal, and that I only followed an angel whom I loved in his

is an error of judgment on his part. He describes the demon of Voluptuousness as the most dangerous of the spirits of the Abyss. This leads us to suspect that this demon must be a woman if we agree with Daniel Defoe that "a lady devil is about as dangerous a c ture as one could meet."[45] Her name, Chateaubriand informs us, was Astarte among the Phoenicians and Venus among the Greeks. Now both Astarte and Venus were goddesses. This demon could not have changed sex after entering Chateaubriand's Hell, inasmuch as the demon of Jealousy is represented as the son of this demon and of Satan (*Martyrs,* XIV). Our author is unfair to wish to monopolize voluptuousness for himself and for his sex.

The reason why Chateaubriand succeeded so well with the demon of Voluptuousness is because here he approached Greek mythology. It is rather strange that in this book, supposedly written to show the superiority of the Christian Supernatural, the devils are only interesting in so far as they represent Greek divinities. Our author was far more successful with the gods of the Greek Pantheon than with the spirits of the Christian Heaven or Hell. Whatever touches upon Hellenic mythology in *les Martyrs* is pleasing and charming; whatever relates to Christian Supernaturalism is heavy and laborious. This book, written, as its author claimed, to show the beauties of Christian legend, charms us only in so far as it is permeated with the Hellenic spirit. Chateaubriand pleaded the cause of Christian theology and won the triumph for pagan mythology. "Chateaubriand," as G. Pellissier says, "set out with a pilgrim's staff; this staff changed to a thyrsus in his hand."[46] We may well say of him also what A. Barine remarked in regard to Saint-Pierre: "He desired to open the door for Providence to enter; in

rebellion and in his fall. But since I have fallen with you from Heaven, I wish at least to dwell among mortals, and shall not suffer myself to be banished from the earth. Tyre, Heliopolis, Paphos, Amathus, demand my presence. My star still blazes upon Mount Libanus; there I have enchanted temples, graceful festivals, swans which bear me in the midst of zephyrs, of flowers, of incense, of perfumes, of fresh lawns, of voluptuous dances and of smiling sacrifices. And the Christians would snatch from me this trifling compensation for celestial joys, would transform the myrtle of my groves, which has given so many victims to Hell, into a savage cross in order to multiply the inhabitants of Heaven! No, indeed! I will this day make known my power. Neither violence nor wisdom is necessary to obtain a victory over the disciples of a severe law: I will arm against them the tender passions; this girdle assures to you the victory. My caresses will ere long have softened these austere servants of a chaste god. I will subdue the frigid virgins and will disturb, even in their solitude, those anchorites who think to escape my fascination. . . ."

[45] Cf. Thomas Wright, *The Life of Daniel Defoe* (New York, 1894), p. 336.

[46] *Le Movement littéraire au XIXe siècle* (8e éd., 1908), p. 61.

fact he opened the door for the great Pan."[47] In *les Martyrs*, Chateaubriand represents Satan in the effort of bringing the old religions back to life. "He carries the fatal spark to all the temples, and lights again the extinguished fires upon the altars of the idols." Well, this is exactly what Chateaubriand himself did.[48] When he believed that he "raised the cross among the ruins of our altars," he placed wreaths of laurels upon the brows of the neglected Greek gods.

A further point must not be overlooked. In his great efforts to show the originality of his Hell, Chateaubriand maintains that it differs from all the hells of his predecessors by containing the Olympus. This claim stands perhaps unparalleled in the annals of literary history as a case of colossal self-deception. From St. Paul to Savonarola the pagan gods were considered as fallen angels. The Church Fathers were very explicit on this point. Tertullian states unequivocally that all the old gods were demons (*De spectaculisia*). The Church regarded the gods of mythology as devils who beguiled men into worshipping them in the form of idols.[49] In literature as far back as the Middle Ages the name of almost every Greek and Roman god was applied to the devils. In the French medieval mysteries the demons often bear the names of classical divinities.[50] The *chansons de geste* called the devil Apollin (*Chanson de Roland*, l. 8); hence the line in Victor Hugo's *le Marriage de Roland*

"l'Archange saint Michel attaquant Apollo."

In Huon de Méri's *Tornoiement Antechrist*, we find among the infernal barons Jupiter and Neptune together with Beelzebub. Dante and Tasso both drew upon Greco-Roman mythology to fill their hells. Milton, Chateaubriand's own master and model, places the "Ionian gods" in his Pandemonium (*Par. Lost*, i. 508; cf. also i. 738ff.). Chateaubriand needed, however, no foreign models for raising classical gods to demonhood. He could plead precedent in the poets of his own land. The pseudo-classicists Godeau and Desmarets already turned the gods of classical antiquity into demons by preserving their names and attributes. But there is yet another con-

[47] *Bernardin de Saint-Pierre* (1891), p. 133.

[48] Cf. also Bertrand, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

[49] "But the fundamental cause (*consummativa*) [of idolatry] must be sought in the devils, who cause men to adore them under the form of idols, therein working certain things which excited their wonder and admiration" (St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II, ii. 94).

[50] H. Wieck, *Die Teufel auf der mittelalterlichen Mysterienbühne Frankreichs* (Leipzig, 1887).

sideration. If the Greek gods are devils, and if the Greek gods are beautiful, it must syllogistically follow that the devils, too, are beautiful. If, furthermore, the demons are diabolized vices, it must necessarily follow that vices, too, are beautiful.[51] This amounts to an esthetic appreciation of that which is morally condemned. Thus, we already scent in this first of Romantics Baudelaire's fragrant and flaming *Fleurs du Mal.* But of this later.

It must be admitted, however, that in his great eagerness to be original, Chateaubriand tried to outdo his masters and sank the very Olympic rock, together with its inhabitants, into his Christian Hell. But by placing the Olympus as well as the Tartarus in his Hell he robbed it of its terrors.[52] The bright gods of Greece dispersed the gloom of his Gehenna. Chateaubriand followed his masters with a vengeance, indeed, and assembled in his Hell the gods of a goodly number of ethnic religions. To the Oriental and classical divinities that had been consigned to Hell by his predecessors he added characters of northern mythology as well. His demons are a truly cosmopolitan company. We find in his Hell, Belial of the Hebrews, Moloch of the Ammonites, Baal of the Babylonians, Astarte of the Phoenicians, Anubis of the Egyptians, Mithra of the Persians, Brahma of the Hindus, Neptune and Apollo of the Greeks, Teutates and Dis of the Gauls,[53] Odin of the Scandinavians and Erminsul of the Saxons. In *les Natchez* the ranks of Satan are swelled also by the divinities of the North American Indians. This motley assemblage of discarded deities brings chaos into Chateaubriand's descriptions of the infernal hosts.

Even the physical torments of Chateaubriand's Hell hold no great terrors. "Any great modern poet's notion of an everlasting Hell," says Swinburne, "must of course be less merely material than Dante's mechanism of hot and cold circles, fire and ice, ordure and mire." Our author did not feel the need of presenting a Hell less material than that of this medieval poet, whom he followed in this respect, not having found any descriptions of the agonies of the lost souls in Milton. Chateaubriand's Hell, taking it all in all, is indifferent and insipid and not at all to the taste of a modern man.

Still Chateaubriand was more successful with his Hell than

[51] Cf. Jules Lemaître, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

[52] Cf. François Guizot, *le Temps passé* (*Mélanges de critique*) (1887), ii, 218.

[53] Teutates (Tuisto in Tacitus) was originally the god of the Teutones. He may even be identical with Dis. The Teutonic god of light became the Gallican god of darkness. In the history of religion the god of one people is the devil of another.

with his Heaven. His remark in regard to his predecessors, that they achieved greater success with Hell than with Heaven, holds good of himself also. He himself admitted that it is easier to conceive of eternal unhappiness than of endless happiness (*Génie,* Pt. II, bk. iv, chap. 14). We can grasp Hell and even Purgatory but not Heaven. "Our imagination," says Anatole France, "is made up of memories." We can easily form a Hell out of the materials taken from earth, but we lack on our planet the stuff with which to construct a Heaven. It is Hell and not Heaven which is most real in the consciousness of man. We all know what Hell is, but when questioned in regard to Heaven we feel embarrassed to answer. The information is so scanty, as a brilliant French lady once remarked to Sainte-Beuve. It was Hell and not Heaven, which, according to the testimony of his contemporaries, had left deep marks on Dante's face. "There may be Heaven, there must be Hell," is the conclusion reached at the end of Browning's poem, "Time's Revenges." A further illustration of this idea is the legend of the three monks of Mesopotamia, who set out one day on a journey to the departed and who found Hell and Purgatory, but not Heaven.

VII

When not taken from Milton, Chateaubriand's imagery of Heaven is borrowed from the *Revelation of St. John,* but our author failed to adapt the ecstatic visions of Oriental imagination to the feelings of a modern man of the Occident. Julian Schmidt could get no idea of the Catholic Heaven from Chateaubriand's descriptions.[54] Lady Blennerhasset says truly: "Visions of Heaven have been denied to Chateaubriand."[55] No, our author has not succeeded in making heavenly bliss any too attractive. Chateaubriand is a greater master in the description of an earthly than of a heavenly environment just as he is a better painter of earthly than of heavenly passions. Of all men, Chateaubriand was least fitted to offer a description of the regions of the blessed. One who claimed that he delighted in speaking of unhappiness ("Je me délectais à parler du malheur") could form no conception at all of Heaven. He was certainly more in his element among the spirits of darkness than

[54] *Geschichte der französischen Literatur seit der Revolution* (Leipzig, 1858).

[55] *Chateaubriand, Romantik und die Restaurationsepoche in Frankreich* (Mainz, 1903); see also her essay on Chateaubriand in *Sidelights* (New York, 1913), pp. 212-45.

among the spirits of light. From his descriptions of the different sorts and degrees of punishment it would seem as if, to speak with Erasmus, he "were very well acquainted with the soil and situation of these infernal regions." [56]

Chateaubriand lacked the qualities of a poet of the Supernatural. Only a great poet can leave with impunity the solid ground of nature and give solidity to the Supernatural. Our author was less fitted than many another of his day to do justice to his chosen subject. He wanted the soul of a mystic and was no symbolist. He possessed no sense of myth and mystery. "The taste of Chateaubriand," says G. Merlet, "was of a different school from his talent." [57] He had the taste but not the talent for the miraculous and marvellous. He was too much of the earth earthy to portray the Spiritual and the Supernatural.

Chateaubriand achieved the antithesis of his purpose by his interjection of the Supernatural. He not only failed to show the superiority of the Christian to the classical Supernatural, but also spoiled the story. The Supernatural, which was designed to raise *les Martyrs* to a poetic dignity, impaired its value as a work of art. It does not add to the beauty of the book, but detracts from it.[58] Had it not been for *le merveilleux chrétien* this novel of the Christian origins would have been beautiful: A woman gladly abandons her father and her faith to follow the lord and master of her heart and after a long separation joins him in the arena of the gladiators, where a common martyrdom seals their virginal union. But Chateaubriand preferred to write an epos, and a Christian epos at that, and needed scenes of divine and diabolic interventions and of celestial and infernal assemblages.

But why call Heaven and Hell to witness? Chateaubriand supposes that the martyrdom of Eudorus and Cymodocée will bring about the triumph of the Christian religion. Consequently Heaven and Hell must be tremendously interested in this pair of lovers. Our author thus distinguishes from the vast number of Christian martyrs two persons whom nothing in the world puts in a class by themselves. Why, we ask, should Eudorus and Cymodocée have

[56] It may be interesting to note in this connection that after 1830 Chateaubriand bought a pavilion situated in the rue d'Enfer, which, however, as Professor Todd suggests, probably is more correctly spelled rue d'Enfert.

[57] *Tableau de la littérature française de* 1800 *à* 1815 (1878), iii. 157.

[58] The English translator of *les Natchez* (1827) very wisely omitted all supernatural parts. The English translator of *les Martyrs* (1812; new version, 1859), though including the "Christian marvellous," considered it nevertheless "tedious and misplaced and rather diminishing than increasing the interest of the story."

been chosen to make up the required Holocaust to the exclusion of all others? Indeed, in what respect do Eudorus and Cymodocée stand out above all other martyrs? Why is it that only through their martyrdom is the Devil to be put in chains? They do nothing that other Christian martyrs before and after them have not done. There is nothing in their characters, in their personal worth, in their sufferings, to explain the striking distinction made by the poet between them and all other martyrs.[59] Moreover, why should the merit of the martyrs be unequal? Within the bounds of human understanding we are not made to see what could fit certain individuals more than others for the work of the salvation of the Church. As a matter of fact, if we followed our reason we should say that Eudorus was less fit to accomplish this aim than most other martyrs. Even admitting that his repentance was sincere, a repentant sinner is not greater than a saint. "Le repentir sincère égale l'innocence," says the French proverb. Sincere repentance equals innocence, but does not surpass it.

Chateaubriand's great and fundamental error, from the theological point of view, is his effort to make of his Eudorus the equivalent of a second Christ. It has already been noted by his contemporary critics that in the colloquy between God the Father and God the Son, the question is of a new Lamb to wash away the sins of the world, of a new Holocaust chosen for the triumph of the Christian religion, of a new Host necessary to hurl Lucifer into the Abyss. It would almost seem, as Sainte-Beuve ironically remarks, that the author of the *Génie du Christianisme* had the presumptuous air of wishing to reform Christianity. Commenting on the death of the two characters, Chateaubriand says simply and solemnly: "The Host was accepted: the last drop of the blood of the righteous to make triumph that religion which was destined to change the face of the earth." Of whom does our author speak in such terms? Of Jesus Christ? Oh, no! Of a fictitious person by the name of Eudorus. But all the rivers of blood which have been shed by men and women who sacrificed their lives for their faith are, in the opinion of the Church, not worth a single drop of the blood of the Saviour. To hear and heed Chateaubriand we would say that the first and great Victim, which is none other than Jesus Christ, is no longer sufficient as a ransom for our sins. We know that the Son of God died for our salvation. We have been taught that by the fall of Adam man became the slave or subject of Satan, but was

[59] Cf. Alexandre Vinet, *Etude sur la littérature française du XIXe siècle* (2e *éd.*, 1857), pp. 286f.

redeemed from bondage by the death of the Lord. It was not necessary for Eudorus to be torn to pieces by lions in order to fetter the Fiend. We know upon the authority of the Evangelist St. Matthew that Lucifer was put by Christ "in everlasting chains." The Devil's overthrow occurred on Calvary and not in the arena at Rome.

Did Chateaubriand really think that the Lord Jesus did not bring salvation to man? He was overanxious to show that his treatment of the Supernatural was in accord with the teachings of the Church Fathers.[60] But on this point he revealed an utter ignorance of patristic literature. The idea of salvation according to Irenæus, Origen and Gregory the Great is briefly as follows: All men, by reason of the Fall, became the rightful and exclusive property of Satan; and it would have been unjust on the part of God to take from him by violence that which was in reality his due. Satan, however, was willing to relinquish his claim to the human race on condition that Jesus should be given to him as the ransom price of humanity. But Heaven outwitted Hell in the bargain for man's redemption. When Satan got the price he found that he could not keep it. In demanding Christ as payment he did not know the dual nature of his prize; and, as Ruffinus puts it, in swallowing the bait (the humanity) he was tortured by the hook (the divinity) and was only too glad to relinquish both.[61] Whether by fair dealing or foul, the fact remains that through the death of Christ man was redeemed from the power of Satan. Of course, we will leave this matter for the doctors of the Church to discuss, and we do not envy Chateaubriand in the least to have on his hands an affair with these learned gentlemen. All we wish to point out is that Chateaubriand erred grievously when he believed that Heaven and Hell were greatly concerned whether or not his lovers were happily united in the end.

Furthermore, Chateaubriand's reason for the persecution under Diocletian does not hold good in the face of facts. In vain does our author appeal to the authority of Eusebius, who explains the persecution as a visitation from Heaven for the sins of the Christians in their prosperity (*Martyrs,* I n. 2). Chateaubriand's own story

[60] Chateaubriand is so anxious to follow tradition that he has the Virgin Mary walk about in her body amidst the blessed souls in Heaven. It is on this point in particular that Jules Lemaître (*op. cit.,* pp. 73f.), raised the laugh against him. Cf. Juan Manuel's *Treatise showing that the Blessed Mary is, body and soul, in Paradise* (14th century).

[61] An excellent presentation of the evolution of the theory of salvation will be found in Hastings Rashdoll's, *The Idea of Attonement in Christian Theology* (London, 1919).

of the Christians of those days, however, does not bear out their alleged prosperity and perfidy. Throughout the book we get a picture of the life of these early Christians wholly opposed to the affluence and apostasy with which they are charged. With the exception of Lasthénès, whom our author represents as the richest man in Greece, all Christians belong to the lowest classes of society. They are recruited almost wholly from the proscribed and despised of men (*ibid.*, V). We read of the evangelical poverty in which they live (*ibid.*, IV, XI, XII), of their innocent lives (*ibid.*, XIII), and of the bitter torments which they undergo for the sake of their faith (*ibid.*, IV, VI, VII, XV). They gather for worship at midnight (*ibid.*, V), have tombs for temples and wounds for treasures (*ibid.*, XVI). The Church had already suffered nine persecutions within the brief period of less than three centuries.[62]

Moreover, the triumph of the Christian religion (the title of the book) consisted, according to Chateaubriand, in the adoption of Christianity by Constantine and the official promotion of Christianity to the rank of a State religion. But this triumph, which is in the form of a support lent to truth by a temporal and political power, cannot well be called the triumph of the powers of light over the spirit of the Abyss. Some of us would even go so far as to call this union of Church and State the defeat of the Christian religion. From the days of Constantine the religion of Jesus of Nazareth has been so linked with political and financial interests that its moral and spiritual power has been largely overlooked. The Church has become the handmaiden of the State and has been willing, sometimes, at least, to sponsor whatever the latter wished.

Furthermore, the imprisonment of Satan, which is supposed to have been caused by the merit of the martyrdom of Eudorus and Cymodocée, in no way changed the conduct of the men and women in Rome, or in the rest of the world for that matter. The Princedom of the air does not seem to have been overthrown even by the vicarious death of Eudorus and Cymodocée, and has been in commission all the ages down to the present day, as recent events have conclusively proved. Even the ecclesiastics believe that in the eternal combat between the Deity and the Devil for the mastery of this

[62] This does not mean, however, that there are not even nowadays men who hold the Devil responsible for the persecution of the Christians under the Roman emperors. A century and a decade after Chateaubriand (November 16, 1919), a clergyman in the metropolis of America said from his pulpit on a Sunday morning: "Working through Nero, Diocletian, and other emperors, the Devil deliberately and carefully planned literally to wipe from the earth all the Christians."

world the latter gradually has been gaining the upper hand. The *Malleus maleficarum,* a large volume written by two inquisitors under the papal bull against witchcraft of 1484 and published in Germany at the end of the fifteenth century,[63] contains the very singular avowal that the Devil is constantly gaining ground, or in other words, that the Lord is constantly losing ground; that Man, who was created to fill a vacancy in Heaven, is rather headed downward.

All this Supernaturalism is extraneous and extravagant in *les Martyrs.* Chateaubriand erred greatly when he believed that "the good and bad angels sufficed to carry on the action without delivering it to worn-out machinery." The supernatural agencies hinder rather than help the action; and instead of composing an epic, our author created a creaking work of pulleys and puppets. "In few pseudo-epics," says Professor Babbit, "is the creaking of the pulleys with which this "machinery" is managed so painfully audible as in the *Martyrs.*" [64] The interweaving of the spiritual with the material, of the superhuman with the human is as infelicitous as the mingling of earthly and heavenly passions. There is too much stiffness and awkwardness, too much pedantry and puerility, too many inanities and inconsistencies in his "merveilleux chrétien." It was too laboriously imagined and too coldly applied. His machinery of marvels is simply monstrous. We are irritated by the complexity of his supernatural characters. We are bewildered by the mazes of his mechanisms. We are dazed by the *mélange* of the different *merveilleux*: *merveilleux chrétien, merveilleux mythologique and* (in *les Natchez*) *merveilleux indien.* The incomparable absurdity of this farrago makes us at times nearly burst into laughter. A specimen from each of the two books will suffice to show the ludicrousness of this epic machinery: The demon Rumor in *les Natchez* quits her palace upon the command of her father, Satan, and sets out upon a secret mission. And what is the object of this flight through the air? What mighty empire is the demon thus charged to overturn? Hear Reader and marvel at this marvellous! Rumor goes "preceded by Astonishment, followed closely by Envy and accompanied by Admiration" to play the gossip in an Indian wigwam! Satan in *les Martyrs* mounts upon a chariot of fire,[65] places

[63] *Malleus maleficarum. Der Hexenhammer.* Verfasst von den beiden Inquisitoren Jakob Sprenger und Heinrich Institoris. Zum ersten Male ins Deutsche übertragen u. eingeleitet von J. W. R. Schmidt. 3 Bände. Kritische Ausgabe, Berlin, 1905.

[64] *Op. cit.,* p. 65.

[65] It is, mind you, a real chariot with wheels and drawn by winged horses. But what is the matter with Satan's wings? Have they been so badly singed

at his side the monster whom he calls his son, and they both drive in state to the valley of the Alpheus to visit Hiéroclès. And what, pray, is the aim of this journey? Never was a finer bit of bathos. The demon of Jealousy, disguised as an aged augur, approaches the bed of the proconsul of Achaia and touches his breast with a rod that he holds in his hand. And all this fuss, as Jules Lemaître rightly remarks, to inspire in a man the most natural of sentiments![66]

Chateaubriand's efforts to make his supernatural characters act naturally are also absurd. Satan "borne down by the might of his crimes descends *naturally* towards Hell." We read also that during his physical contact with Velléda the language of Hell escaped *naturally* from the lips of Eudorus.

Chateaubriand's mystic notions of the workings of the universe may be characterized as too silly for words. How amazing must sound to a modern man the explanation of high and low tide which the angel of the seas gives to Gabriel! Our author here speaks after the heart of his yoke-fellow Joseph de Maistre, who wished that a scientist might come forward and credit the Lord and not the moon wth the ebb and flow of the tide. What shall we say of Chateaubriand's cosmogony? Uriel, the angel of the sun,[67] informs in *les Natchez* the guardian angel of America how his planet was created This star, he tells him, was not at all formed as men imagine, and then goes on to explain the origin of the sun: When the Lord thinks, his thoughts send forth beams of light throughout the universe. The child Emmanuel, playing one day with these thought-beams, breaks one of them; and out of a drop wh'ch he lets fall, the sun is formed. The sun-spots, this angel instructs us further, are caused by the shadow of his wings, which he spreads whenever a thought crosses the Divine intelligence: otherwise the universe would be consumed.[68] And this in the days of Laplace! Mr. John Foster in a review of

by cannon fire during the war in Heaven that they cannot bear him aloft? His means of locomotion may, however, be the result of his wish to counterfeit Christ, who has "a living chariot with wheels which hurl thunders and lightnings" (*Martyrs*, III). The tendency on the part of the Devil to mimic the Deity in every detail of his character and conduct has earned for him the appellation *simia Dei*. For the Evangelists, the wind is the proper vehicle of Satan and his angels. "Rain seems to have been commonly associated, as it still is in the Church of England, with the intervention of the deity, but wind and hail were invariably identified with the devil" (Lecky).

[66] *Op. cit.*, p. 188.

[67] In *les Martyrs*, Uriel resigned as guardian of the sun to take up his new duties as angel of Love.

[68] In *les Martyrs* it is the old Fiend himself who darkens the universe with his bat's wings.

les Martyrs said that its author "has introduced some of the most foolish extravagances that ever Popish fancy mistook for grandeur." [69]

(To be Continued)

[69] *Eclectic Review* of September, 1812. Reprinted in his *Critical Essays Contributed to "The Eclectic Review"* (London, 1856), vol. II, pp. 263-78.