

THE DEVIL'S DWELLING

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THE dwelling place of the Devil is in hell whither he and his "angels" have been cast as punishment for their revolt "to be reserved unto judgment" (Peter ii. 4; *cf.* Jude 6 and Rev. xx. 3) The Jews speak of seven hells or seven compartments of hell in contrast to seven heavens. The Spaniards seem to know of seventeen hells, as may be seen from the following expression: *Que te lleven todos los demonios de los diez-y-siete infernos.* (May all the devils of the seventeen hells get you!) The negroes in Victor Hugo's novel, *Bug Jargal* (1819), believe likewise in seventeen hells (ch. XXXIII.)

Hell has been located by the Catholic theologians in the bowels of the earth; and in order that our planet should not be blown up by the infernal blasts, which would be rather disagreeable for its inhabitants, openings have been created which are none other than the volcanoes. The volcanoes of Iceland are connected with hell in some of the travels in Purchas' *Pilgrimage* (1613). Mt. Aetna, which was already considered in classical days as the habitation of the giants, is now believed to lead down to hell. According to a belief current among Neapolitan peasants, hell is situated under the volcano Mount Gibel (Prosper Mérimée, *Federigo*, 1829). The earthquakes are caused by the movements of the flames and the convulsions of the damned in hell, which cause the earth to roll and toss in its bed.¹

¹ The authoritative interpretation of the Catholic conception of hell will be found in Joseph Bantz' *Die Hölle* (1882) and *Das Fegefeuer* (1883). See also the Abbé Carle's treatise, *Du dogme catholique sur l'enfer* (1842). As a matter of fact, Catholic eschatology is about all to be found in the sixth book of Virgil's *Aeneid* except for the fact that the Latin poet knows nothing of torments for wicked mortals.

The shepherds in the Middle Ages sometimes saw in the depths of the caverns the infected mouths of hell.

The essential element in the Christian hell is fire. This idea rests upon many biblical passages.² It has been supported by medieval theologians (see Thomas Aquinas, *Suma Theologica*), by Milton and other poets and rendered almost certain by the testimony of many a preacher now departed, who is not to be lightly doubted. The intensity of the fire of hell is so great that, in the belief of the Jews, the heat of the hot springs of Tiberias is due to the fact that its waters pass the gates of Gehenna.³

There are three gates of hell, one is found in the inhabited land,

But although the Devil has been put into "everlasting chains" (Jude 6; cf. II Peter ii. 4; Rev. xx. 3), he appears to enjoy the liberty of leaving his prison at will in order to walk up and down on our earth to tempt and torment us.

"The Devil," so runs a proverb, "is nowhere in particular but everywhere in general." Nevertheless it would seem that certain parts of this earth are more favored by his visits than others. China simply teems with demons; indeed there is one particular province in that country which is known as "Demonland." As far as Christian Europe is concerned, the North is the Devil's preferred place of residence. The North was anciently believed to be the region of darkness and later was thought of in a transferred meaning as being the region of evil.⁵ The Cornish still believe that the North is the region of demons. It is described as the Devil's dwelling place in the passage which has, erroneously enough, given rise to the Lucifer legend (Is. xiv. 13.)⁶ Evil is described as coming upon Judah from

² Is. ix. 17-18, xxx. 33, xxxiii. 14, 9-11, lxv. 5, lxvi. 24; Jer. xvii. 4; Matth. iii. 10, xiii. 30, 50, xviii. 8; Mark ix. 43; Luk. xvi. 24; 2 Thess. i. 8; 1 Cor. iii. 15; Hebr. x. 27, xii. 29; Rev. ix. 2, xviii. 19-20, xx. 9-10.

³ Cf. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, v. 8. the other in the wilderness, and the third at the bottom of the sea.⁴

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The idea of the North as a region of darkness has two roots. The first is the sun—cultus. The sun goes around south and never north of the observer living north of the equator. This idea is emphasized in the sun-stations of some secret societies. The second root of the idea is the fact that some travelers may have got far enough north in winter time to experience very long nights.

⁶ This passage has no connection with any Lucifer legend. The Semitic equivalent of the Latin "Lucifer" in this passage is one for the last crescent of the waning or dying moon.

the North in several passages in Jeremiah (i. 14, iv. 6 and vi. 1). These references are obviously to Babylonia, but Church tradition has given a symbolical and universal meaning to them.⁷ "The Lord," says Lactantius, "so divided the world with the Devil that *occidens, septentrio, tenebrae, frigus* (the west, the north, the darkness, the cold) fell to the sphere of his Adversary" (*Institutiones Divinæ*.) This accords with the saying: *Ab aquilone omne malum*. (All evil comes from the North.) The good Goethe also said:

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

In Marlowe's play of *Dr. Faustus*, the Devil is, on the other hand, described as "Prince of the East" (II, 1,) presumably on account of his connection with Oriental heathenism. This connection is seen as early as Rutebeuf's *Miracle de Théophile* where Saladin is introduced as the intermediary between Theophilus and Satan.

On the mediæval stage, the position of hell generally was in the North. In the stage directions of *The Castle of Perseverance*, the oldest English Morality, the scaffold of Belial is expressly placed in the North. Milton, in his *Paradise Lost* (v. 689), follows mediæval tradition to this point.⁸

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 for the reason that the altar facing it must be to the east, the worshippers entering the church have the North to their left. For this reason the left has always been the seat of, and has practically become the 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 considered to be Satan's earthly capital.

⁷ The women wail over the dead Tammuz at the north gate of the Lord's house (Ezek. viii. 14).

⁸ Professor Ed. Ch. Baldwin, in his efforts to account for the left hand position of hell in Milton ("And on the Left Hand Hell," *Modern Language Notes*, XL, 251), goes far afield in trying to find Milton's authority for this belief in the writings of the rabbis. Milton had no need to draw on the Talmud for his theology or demonology. On this point, as on so many others, the Puritan poet had but to draw on Catholic teaching and tradition.

The Scandinavian form of this name is Divelina. Burns must have had this fact in mind when he wrote:

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

But let not the English rejoice too soon at the expense of the Irish. Their country is no less frequented by demons than the Emerald Isle. As a matter of fact, England, partly perhaps on account of its Northern latitude and its harsh climate, once had the reputation of being the chief abode of the spirits of hell. This is perhaps the reason why the English have never treated the cloven hoofed fellow so lightly as the Germans.⁹ Procopius, in his book, *De bello Gothico*, tells us that a demoness, leaving her loved one on the continent, says of him: "My mother is calling me in England" (iv.29). In an "Essay on the Devil," which appeared recently in the English weekly, *The New Statesman* (1919,) the writer maintains that England is still considered nowadays by anti-English papers as "The Devil's Paradise." The enemies of England have perhaps good reason to declare that the very Devil is among the inhabitants of that country.

The English, however, maintain that they have nothing in common with the Devil, not even the language. It was long a favorite jibe with Englishmen that the fiends in hell spoke "Welsh," which means the talk of the stranger. This brings to our minds Hotspur's remark: "Now I perceive the Devil understands Welsh." William Dunbar, the Scottish poet, in his famous *Dance of the Seven Sins* (16th cent.), makes even the Devil rebel against the hideous Gaelic of his followers. Victor Hugo thinks that the Devil speaks a compound of Spanish, Italian and Latin (*le Rhin*, 1842.) The demons, according to Origen, have their own languages and dialects. According to popular belief, the Devil understands all human languages.

Sweden also counts among the Devil's summer resorts. He even has a church in the village Elfdale situated in that country.

⁹ Cf. M. D. Conway, "The Demons of the Shadow," *Scribner's Magazine*, V, 247.

¹⁰ There appeared in America almost a century ago a book in two volumes, which is a biting satire on life in England, under the following title: *Mephistopheles in England; or, Confessions of a Prime Minister*. It is interesting to read Poe's review of this book in the *Southern Literary Messenger* 1835 I, pp. 776-777.

The common place of rendezvous for the demons, when unemployed, is Mount Hecla, the volcano on the southwest point of Iceland. It was erroneously believed for a long time that Mount Pilatus in Switzerland was the Devil's permanent place of residence. The Danube was of old regarded as under the special guardianship of the Prince of Darkness, who used to make extreme efforts to obstruct the crusaders voyaging down that river on their way to rescue the Holy Land from the Saracens.

The Devil's retirement to Lombardy in the medieval French drama refers to the unsavory reputation of the Lombards in the Middle Ages as usurers and poisoners.

In flying about the world, the demons are limited to places which are still chaotic or waste. The desert was the common home of many Semitic devils. A demon might also have his home in the mountains, the sea or the graveyard. The demon that "lurks in graveyards" is universal.¹¹ The Devil is also believed to be seated at the centre of every whirlwind. "The Spirits," says Anatole France, in *Thais* (1890), "dwell in inanimate objects. There are seats which serve as the instruments of devils." The devils reside especially in the waters, the harmfulness of which is thus explained as clearly by doctrine as by science. The water must therefore be boiled or sterilized with the sign of salvation before it can be used; for the demons dread equally well the fire and the cross. Nowadays, the former means proves more efficacious in driving out the demons than the latter. "The Christians," Voltaire has said already a century and a half ago, "have lost the power to expel the Devil by the Sign of the Cross."

¹¹ "The demons inhabit the brooks" (Anatole France, *op. cit.*).