

THE DEVIL, THE WORLD AND THE FLESH

BY MAXIMILIAN RUDWIN

THE Devil, the world and the flesh are linked together in the phraseology of the baptismal formula. The world, as well as the flesh, is thus definitely associated with the Devil in the Christian religion. Although not explicitly stated in the creed of any sect, Protestants as well as Catholics consider the material world, in contrast with the spiritual realm, a diabolical work. The fact is that the Devil is commonly credited with the creation of the cosmos.

There is much significance in this often mentioned saying, which is well worth historical analysis. As a rule, popular phrases have a good deal of meaning for the investigator. Under the guise of a figure of speech there is psychological value, regardless of whether or not serious belief is given to such conceptions, inasmuch as this is a discussion in terminology rather than theology.

THE DEVIL AS MASTER OF MATTER

The belief in the world as a diabolical work can be traced back to Iranian-Persian teachings. In the Zend-Avesta we find that the Devil created the evil part of the world in contradistinction to the good part fashioned by the Deity. The Jews, who obtained their notion of the Devil from the Persians, rejected the theory of a dual creation. In the Old Testament the Lord is represented as the maker of the material as well as of the spiritual world, of darkness as well as of light. In the New Testament, however, the Devil's power over this world is strongly emphasized. He is not named the creator of this world, but is called "the prince of the world" (John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11; cf. Eph. ii. 2; vi. 12) even "the god of this world" (2 Cor. iv. 4). The belief in the temporal world as the work of the Devil, however, soon took root in Chris-

tianity. First appeared the Gnostics with their teachings that the world was created and is ruled by the Devil. In the Valentinian Gnosis, this material world is the work of a fallen æon, and in the writings of the Gnostic Saturninus, dark matter as the domain of the Devil is placed in opposition to the light-realm of the Deity. The Manicheans, who drew the logical conclusions from the syncretic speculations of their Gnostic predecessors, taught that all matter, good as well as evil, had its origin in the kingdom of darkness. The creation of man, as of the material world in general, is, according to Manichean teachings, the work of the Devil, who wished to imprison and finally to destroy the souls emanating from the god of light in the diabolically created bodies, to which they must cling.

Although Manicheism was considered a heresy, the Church nevertheless could not wholly combat its concepts. Manicheism took deep root in Christianity and could not be extirpated.¹ Throughout the history of the Church, the belief in the creation of the world by the Devil appears again and again in various forms and in various parts of Christendom. This belief formed the essential element of the system of the heretical sects and is still held by the Yesidis, a sect of devil-worshippers in Asia Minor.² The Church itself adopted this belief, at least in part. If it did not consider the Devil the creator of the world, it regarded him as the master of all matter, and looked upon all nature as the domain of the Devil. This conception, prevalent in the Church, will account for the idea of the inherent wickedness of all matter and for the belief that evils of every kind spring from our material bodies. Our forebears held that all diseases were caused by demons and that relief from all ailments consisted in the exorcism of the demons—the diabolical ancestors of our modern germs—from the human body.

Many modern writers also share the belief in the creation of the world by the Devil. Goethe, in his youth, looked upon Lucifer as the author of all creation. William Blake stated unequivocally: "Nature is the work of the Devil. The Devil is in us as far as we are Nature." Byron, in *Cain* (1821), represents Lucifer as co-creator of the world. In Immermann's *Merlin* (1832), Satan is

¹ See G. Messina's article, "la dottrina Manichea e le origini del Cristianesimo," *Biblica*, X (1930), No. 3.

² On the various sects who held the belief in the Devil as the creator of the world, see the present writer's essay, "Des Teufels Schöpferrolle bei Goethe und Hebbel," *Ncophilologus*, VI (1918-9), 319-22.

the demiurge, the creator of the earth in Gnostic and Platonic philosophy. The Spanish lyric poet, José de Espronceda, in his fragmentary *El Diablo Mundo* (1841), also identifies the Devil with the world. Leconte de Lisle expresses his belief that the world is the work of the Evil Spirit, and that it will exist only as long as Evil exists on earth. In his poem, "la Tristesse du Diable" (1866), this pessimistic poet affirms that the result of the six days' labor will be abolished on that day when, from the bottom of limitless spaces, the oppressed races of the earth hear a voice crying, "Satan is dead!" Anatole France, in his work, *le Jardin d'Épicure* (1895), speaking of the Devil, affirms that "he has created at least one half of the world . . ." In an earlier work, however, this latter-day diabolist expresses the belief that the Demon has created all the world (*la Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque*, 1893).

Alfred de Vigny also believed in the infernal essence of Nature. This "enigmatical divinity," with its inflexible and inexorable laws, was, in the opinion of this pessimistic poet, silent and indolent, cold and cruel, disdainful and unmerciful to the ephemeral creature, man. Nature, hymned by mortals as the beneficent mother of men, was to Vigny only their living tomb. In Baudelaire's eyes, Nature, though not created by the Devil, was nevertheless inherently defiled and, according to his own expression, Satanical. In the opinion of this Catholic and diabolic poet, original sin had indelibly stained all Nature.

Even if we do not hold the belief that the Devil created the cosmos, we may agree that it is he at least who makes the world go round. Satan is putatively a very potent power for evil on this planet. His kingdom is in the human mind, through which he directs the affairs of this earth. It is not without reason, therefore, that the Demon was popularly regarded in the Middle Ages, and even for many centuries afterwards, as the governor of this globe.

As for the creation of man, even if we do not favor the belief that man is the Devil's handiwork, orthodoxy contends that he was created through the instrumentality of Satan. For his existence on this earth, man is at least indirectly indebted to the Devil. It should be remembered that man was created solely as successor to Satan in the celestial choir-stalls. If the beautiful archangel had not rebelled, no vacancy would have occurred in heaven; and with no vacancy in heaven, there would have been no need for man's crea-

tion. It is thus proved, to the satisfaction of believers, that man's creation is at least indirectly the work of the Devil.³

THE DEVIL AS PRINCE OF THIS WORLD

Furthermore, it is to Diabolus that man is indebted for all human accomplishments and achievements. Inasmuch as the Spirit of Evil was in the eyes of the Church the master of all terrestrial matter, he was considered the incarnation of all human endeavor which was based on mundane interests. The Church was concerned with things spiritual and of the other world, consigning to the Devil the possessions and deeds of this world. This ecclesiastical antithesis between heavenliness and earthliness amounted in the end to this fact that whatever did not directly contribute to the glory of God, in other words, did not profit the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, was denounced as diabolical. In fact, whatever was displeasing to Rome in any field of human thought or activity was regarded as the Devil's work.

SATAN AS SPONSOR OF REASON

It is a matter of historical record that the priests placed all mundane pursuits, professions and pleasures of man under the protection of the Powers of the Pit.⁴ The learned pursuits in particular were believed to be under the inspiration of demons. The priests preached at all times, but especially in the Middle Ages, what André Gide calls "the evangelical depreciation of reason." Satan was regarded by the Church as the incarnation of human reason in contrast to the Saviour, who represented faith. The Spanish reactionary, Cortes Doñoso, less than a century ago, denounced reason as a gift of Gehenna. Heinrich Heine, in *Die Elementargeister* (1834), explains the Catholic condemnation of human reason in the following words:

"The Devil is not only the representative of the supremacy of earthly interests, of sensual delights, and of the flesh; but he is also the exponent of human reason, simply because reason vindicates all the rights of matter. In this respect, Diabolus is the antithesis of Christ, who sets forth

³ On the Devil's partnership with the Deity in the creation of the world, see also the chapter "Diabolus Simia Dei" in the present work.

⁴ Baudelaire's dictum that commerce was in its essence Satanic should certainly meet with the hearty approval of the socialists.

not only the spirit, the ascetic abnegation of the senses, and heavenly salvation, but also faith. The Devil does not *believe*, he does not accept blindly the authority of other persons, he rather relies on independent thought; he uses reason. This method is of course dangerous and terrible; and the Roman Catholic Church has logically condemned independent individual thought as devilish, and declared that the Devil, as the representative of reason, is the Father of Lies."

It is for this reason that, in the eyes of the Church, thinking was equivalent to blaspheming, and that it imprisoned, tortured, hanged or burned every person who dared to think for himself.

*

* *

Modern writers, in conformity with Catholic teaching, regard Satan as a luminous genius of reason. Gæthe conceived the Evil Spirit not only as the subtlest of all the beasts of the field, but also as the subtlest of all the intellects of men. In the opinion of Anatole France, it was thought that led the beautiful archangel to revolt (*le Puits de Sainte-Claire*, 1895). Rapisardi's Lucifer is the exponent of Reason, which will finally conquer dogma and do away with superstition and unsupported tradition.

The Devil has a reputation for wisdom. He appears to possess a great amount of brains between the two horns on his head. Anton Chekhov, in "The Shoemaker and the Devil" (1883), maintains that Old Nick, notwithstanding his hoofs and tail, has more brains than many a (Russian) student. Max Beerbohm, in "Enoch Soames" (1916), affirms that the Devil is well informed in all things.

SATAN AS SCHOLAR

Satan, it is generally agreed among modern writers, is a learned scholar and a profound thinker. He has all philosophy and theology, ancient learning and modern science at the tip of his tongue. Anatole France, in his previously quoted work, *le Jardin d'Épicure*, calls the Devil "a great *savant*." This French writer credits Diabolus with a philosophical mind, and Friedrich Hebbel goes so far as to hail Satan as the first philosopher. Heinrich Heine, in the previously quoted *Elementargeister*, represents the Devil as a master in metaphysics, and Edgar Allan Poe, in "Bon-Bon" (1835),

reveals the Devil as a practised metaphysician. Maxim Gorky, in "The Devil" (1899), maintains that Satan is a master ironist, who will, however, not apply "the scalpel of his irony" to the majestic fact of his own existence. Heinrich Heine, in the work just mentioned again, tells us that Satan is a logician. Anatole France says likewise, "The Devil claims that he is a logician" ("le Scepticisme," 1888). Paul Verlaine calls Satan "the old logician." Heinrich Heine assures us further that Diabolus possesses clear, luminous logic,—in fact the greatest ability in argument. According to this German poet, Satan is famed for sophistry and fine-spun syllogisms. Gœthe, in *Faust*, has, to a great extent, availed himself of this characteristic of sophistry on the part of the Evil Spirit. Satan, it should be remembered, is a good dialectician, an incomparable casuist, and a controversialist. The Demon is very fond of disputing when driving a bargain with men for their souls. "The Devil," says Anatole France, in the essay just mentioned, "definitely remains the only doctor who has not yet been refuted." Huysmans warns us with regard to the Devil, "You must not discuss with him; however good a reasoner you may be, you will be worsted, for he is a most tricky dialectician" (*En route*, 1895). Mrs. Browning, in *A Drama of Exile* (1845), portrays Lucifer as an argumentative, introspective spirit, well read in modern poetry and well versed in modern thought. In Molnar's *The Devil* (1907), the protagonist is a masterful ironist and casuist, who demolishes all the stock arguments for goodness, which have been advanced by mortals throughout the ages.

The Devil is no less a theologian than a philosopher. Anatole France testified that the Tempter is a great theologian, and is thus necessarily well versed in the Sacred Scriptures. Martin Luther affirmed that the Devil can quote Holy Writ as fluently as any minister, and can twist and torture texts to any meaning that will suit his evil ends.

SATAN AS SYMBOL OF SCIENCE

By mediæval man the Devil was believed to hold the key to all knowledge. This belief has scriptural sanction, inasmuch as mastery over the world through the intellect was one of the lures held out to Christ by the Tempter. The Serpent in the Garden of Eden also tempted our ancestors to eat of the forbidden fruit of the Tree

of Knowledge. The reward which the Evil Spirit offered his victim for his soul in the Faust legend was likewise power through knowledge. For this reason, all worldly learning was taboo to the theologians.

To the dominion of the Devil the Church handed over philosophy, science and secular learning in general. Philosophy was regarded by the Church as the forbidden fruit of human reason. Ever since the day when the mob of Nitrian monks, in the month of March of the year 415, murdered Hypatia, the last of the Greek philosophers, Catholicism has considered philosophical speculation the work of Satan.

Especially was the study of science invested by the medieval Church with a diabolical taint. Satan has always been considered the symbol of science. In Flaubert's *la Tentation de Saint-Antoine* (1874), the father of the anchorites sees Satan as the personification of science. The Protestant clergy holds the Catholic view on this point. A speaker at an assembly of Lutheran pastors held at Berlin in the month of September, 1877, identified modern science and culture with Belial. All inquiry into the mysteries of nature was regarded by the Church as black magic. The practical investigation of natural laws was denounced as the work of the Evil One. A certain poet of a generation ago referred very seriously to the laboratory as Satan's smithy.

DIABOLICAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES

Every discovery of science, every invention of material benefit to man, was believed, during the Middle Ages, and in Catholic countries for long centuries afterwards, to have been secured with the Devil's help. The Marquis de Mirville, author of the treatise, *Des esprits et de leurs manifestations fluidiques dans la science moderne* (1858), also refers all scientific discoveries to the demons of hell. Speaking from the Roman Catholic viewpoint, Jules Michelet exclaims: "Name me one science that has not been a rebel! Every new one," continues this French liberal thinker, "has been Satan." Accordingly, the Vicomte Joseph de Bonald, a religious reactionary living in the beginning of the past century, long before our own fundamentalists, perceived the idea of evolution to be born of the Evil Spirit.

According to the contention of the theologians, it was Satan

who in all ages inspired the philosophers and scientists. Every man who was distinguished from the masses by his learning was suspected of having signed the Satanic pact. Any extraordinary power of intellect was sufficient for our credulous forefathers to credit its possessor with a knowledge of the Black Arts or dealings with the Devil. The human mind was not considered capable of accomplishing anything outstanding without the aid of Satan. "In the popular belief," says Professor Ward, "pre-eminent success in any of the paths which human ambition follows, especially if achieved with extraordinary rapidity or in the teeth of unusual difficulties, was associated with the possession of supernatural powers."⁵

Scholars were especially regarded as servants of Satan. "You scholars carry on dealings with the Devil," says a character in Alexandre Dumas' *la Tulipe noire* (1850). It is common knowledge that men of great learning, like Albertus Magnus and Roger Bacon, figured in the eyes of our ancestors as magicians. Giordano Bruno, Servetus and Galileo, it was believed, owed their scientific theories to the inspiration of the demons below.

In all ages the Devil has received the laurels for the labors of the learned. The discovery of the art of printing—the right hand of our civilization—was ascribed to Diabolus. Heinrich Heine, writing of the invention of printing, also said that an art which gave science the victory over faith, an art, moreover, which plunged us into doubts and revolutions, finally delivered us into the hands of the Devil. Johannes Fust or Faust, a promoter of Gutenberg's invention of the art of printing, was considered by his contemporaries a servant of Satan and a magician. The black slave, whom Aldus Manutius, the great Venetian printer, employed in his printing shop toward the end of the fifteenth century, was popularly said to be an imp of hell. This belief accounts for the term "Printer's Devil." The invention of paper money was attributed to the Devil by Gérard de Nerval in *l'Imagier de Harlem ou la Découverte de l'imprimerie* (1851).

Among all scientific pursuits, chemistry was especially considered black magic and identified with alchemy. The chemist's crucible, and the fumes and vapors emanating therefrom, assumed the dimensions of the alchemist's cauldron. Sulphur and phosphorus, in particular, were regarded as articles of purely diabolical equipment. A character in Balzac's *la Peau de chagrin* (1831) also calls

⁵ Cf. A. W. Ward: *Old English Drama*. 4th ed., Oxford, 1901.

chemistry "that science of a devil." This idea survived so long that, in the eighteenth century, Friedrich Hoffmann, a professor at the University of Halle, and a prolific writer on chemical and medical subjects, was believed to have discovered carbonic acid gas with the aid of the Devil.

The German Franciscan monk, Berthold Schwarz, who invented gunpowder about 1350, was believed to be a servant of Satan. A plate in Johannes Brantzius' *les Artifices de feu* (1604) shows the Devil instructing Schwarz in the art of making gunpowder. Chapelain, in *la Pucelle* (1656), represents the Devil as the inventor of gunpowder and owner of a cannon factory. Milton, in *Paradise Lost* (1667-74), also credits the Devil with the invention of the cannon. Tammuz, the Syrian god of vegetation, who, together with all other pagan gods, was converted into a demon by Christianity, is said to be a rival inventor of artillery. P. J. Stahl, in *le Diable à Paris* (1842), similarly attributes the invention of fire-arms to Satan. This writer also terms the silkworm the Devil's worker.

The clergy also counted steam-power among the illusions of the Devil. Pope Gregory XVI called steam an invention of Satan. The priests found no difficulty in spreading this distrust in scientific discoveries among the masses of poor and ignorant country-folk. The peasants of Provence also considered steam an emanation of hell (Alphonse Daudet: "le Secret de Maître Cornille," 1869). The construction of the first steamboat was attributed to the Devil. "Fulton," said one of the characters in Victor Hugo's *les Travailleurs de la Mer* (1866), "was a variation of Lucifer." The locomotive passed originally for Satan's chariot. The school board of the town of Lancaster, Ohio, in 1828, declared the railroad a device of the Devil. In the eyes of the Old Order branch of the Church of the Brethren in America, the automobile is a "devil-machine." The Polish peasants call the radio the "devil-box." The possessor of a radio was recently murdered by Polish peasants in his vicinity, who, in justification, asserted that it killed their crops. Even sanitary appliances were attributed to the Devil. Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, living in the twelfth century, beheld Lucifer lurking in lavatories. The Russians, down to the seventeenth century, regarded purgings and clysters as infernal inventions.⁶

⁶ The telephone is considered by many Europeans, on grounds other than religious, as a diabolic invention, inasmuch as it implies a negation of per-

THE ARTS SPONSORED BY SATAN

But more than anything else, it was art that Catholicism counted among the works of Satan. The Church has at all times affirmed the diabolical origin of all artistic beauty. "Inasmuch as the Evil Spirit," says M. André Thérive, "was the most beautiful of angels, it stands to reason that he will tempt mortals, not by denying art, but through art and under the mask of beauty."⁷ According to the Church fathers, the Devil lurks behind all beauty. St. Cyprian saw the Fiend in a flower. The Protestants were not behind the Catholics in their anathema against all art. The Church of England believed the Muses to be daughters of the Devil. The English poet and preacher, John Donne, in a sermon delivered before Oliver Cromwell at Whitehall, affirmed that the Muses were damned spirits of demons. By the Puritans the seven arts were counted among the works of Satan. Thomas Carlisle reported that his pious friend wished that "the Devil would fly away with the fine arts."

Strangely enough, this belief in the diabolical origin of art is sincerely shared by many moderns. André Gide, the contemporary French diabolist, affirms, "There is no true work of art without the collaboration of the Devil." James Huneker says similarly, "Without the Devil there would be no art." If art has always been diabolical in its essence, it has assuredly become increasingly so in modern times. Charles Baudelaire, a profound and penetrating thinker as well as poet, saw correctly when he said, "Modern art, in particular, has an essentially devilish tendency." This trend results from the fact that, more keenly than their predecessors, the moderns are interested in the demoniac element of human nature.

THE DEVIL AS ARTIST

The popular belief, which credits the Devil with a mastery of all arts, is also shared by many modern thinkers. Anatole France ap-
positional liberty by forcing man's attention at all hours of the day and the night. Read the editorial printed on the occasion of the death of Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, in the Paris daily, *le Temps*, of August 3, 1922. The reader who is interested in the war between the monastery and laboratory is referred to Andrew D. White's classical work on the subject, *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology*. 2 vols., New York, 1898.

⁷ André Thérive: "M. André Gide et le Diable," *l'Opinion*, August 17, 1923.

plies to Diabolus the singular epithets of "great artist" (*le Jardin d'Épiqueure*, 1895) and "wonderful artist" (*Thais*, 1890).

The Devil is credited in the popular mind with great skill in the technical arts: skill which he inherited, be it parenthetically remarked, from the giants of the old North. The Fiend, in fact, is famed as an architect. The many devil-bridges in Germany and other countries speak for his talents, and the cathedrals even show some of his handiwork as a great builder.

The Devil was always ready to aid artisans who found that they could not complete the work they had undertaken. For, in earthly pursuits, the Devil is man's best friend, ready to lend a hand whenever man is at the end of his natural capacities. "I am one," says Old Nick to Steenie Steenson in Walter Scott's "Wandering Willie's Tale" (1824), "that, though I have been sair misca'd in the world, am the only hand for helping my freends." The Devil never shrank from performing the most arduous tasks, and never even recoiled from carving intricate church-pillars for architects who found that unaided they could not carry out their plans. Solomon found no difficulty in recruiting demons to help him build his temple at Jerusalem. They quarried and cut stones for that edifice, which was erected to the glory of their Great Enemy.

*

* *

In Jewish mythology it was the fallen angels who instructed men in all the arts and sciences. Samsaweel taught men the signs of the sun, Seriel, the signs of the moon, and Arakiel, the signs of the earth. Kawkabel was, according to Jewish belief, the demon who taught men astrology, just as Set or Seth, in Egyptian mythology, is the originator of astronomy and many other arts, especially agriculture.⁸ Barakel instructed men in the art of divination from the stars, and Ezekeel taught them augury from the clouds. Armaros showed men how to break spells, and Shemhazai taught them exorcism and how to cut roots. The inventor of the finery and ornaments with which women attract men is Azazel. This demon showed the daughters of Eve "armlets and all sorts of

⁸ Cf. Moncure Daniel Conway: *Demonology and Devil-Lore* (London, 1879; 3rd ed., New York, 1889), II, 279.

trinkets, taught them the use of rouge, and showed them how to beautify their eyelids and how to ornament themselves with the rarest and most precious jewels and with all sorts of paint."⁹ This demon also showed the different metals to men and taught them "how to make slaughtering knives, arms and shields and coats of mail."¹⁰ In European folklore, Bel, a prince of fire, is said to have made possible those technical arts of man which cannot be produced without the aid of fire.

⁹ Cf. Louis Ginzberg: *The Legends of the Jews* (4 vols., Philadelphia, 1909-25), I, 125.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

(To Be Continued)