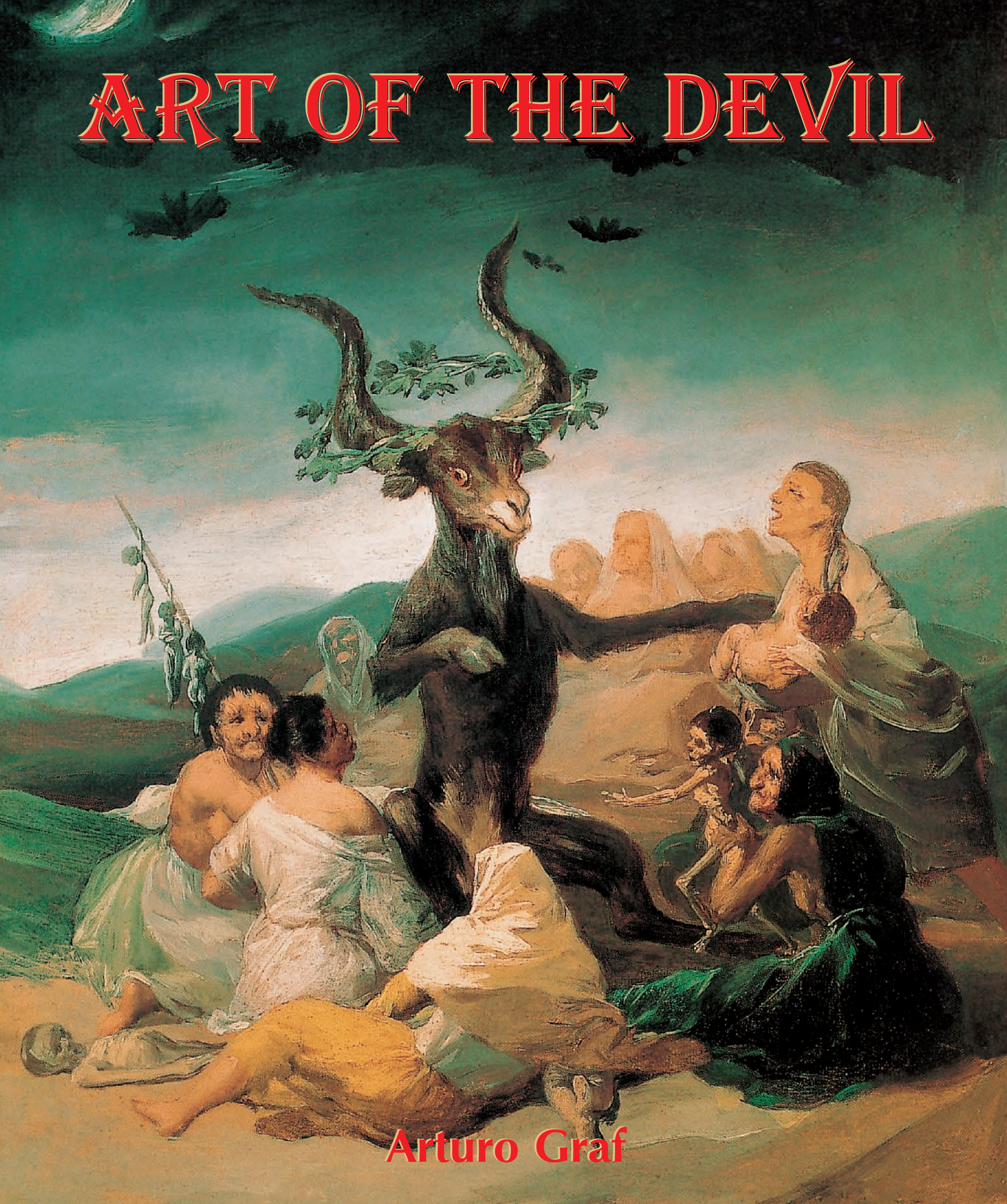
ART OF THE DEVIL



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Introduction

EVERY one is familiar with the poetic myth of the rebellion and fall of the angels. This myth, which inspired in Dante some of the most beautiful lines of the *Inferno* and in Milton an unforgettable episode of *Paradise Lost,* was, by various Fathers and Doctors of the Church, variously fashioned and coloured; but it has no foundation other than the interpretation of a single verse of Isaiah[1] and of certain rather obscure passages in the New Testament.[2] Another myth, of far different but no less poetic character, accepted by both Hebrew and Christian writers, tells of angels of God who, becoming enamoured of the daughters of men, sinned with them, and in punishment for their sin were thrust out of the Kingdom of Heaven and from angels turned into demons.[3] This second myth received lasting consecration in the verses of Moore and of Byron.[4] Each of these myths represents the demons as fallen angels, and connects their fall with a sin: pride or envy in the first case, criminal love in the second. But this is the legend, not the history, of Satan and his companions. The origins of Satan, considered as the universal personification of evil, are far less epic and at the same time far more remote and profound. Satan is anterior, not only to the God of Israel, but to all other gods, powerful and feared, that have left a memory of themselves in the history of mankind; he did not fall headlong down from heaven, but leaped forth from the abysses of the human soul, coeval with those dim deities of earliest ages, of whom not even a stone recalls the names, and whom men outlived and forgot. Coeval with these, and often confused with these, Satan begins as an embryo, like all things that live; and only by slow degrees does he grow and become a person. The law of evolution, which governs all beings, governs him also.

No one possessed of any scientific training any longer believes that the ruder religions have sprung from the corruption and decay of a more perfect religion; but he knows very well that the more perfect ones have developed from the ruder, and that in the latter, therefore, must be sought the origins of that gloomy personage who, under various names, becomes the representative and the principle of evil. If what we call the Tertiary Period in the history of our planet already saw man, perchance it saw him in so far like the brute that no religious feeling, properly speaking, could be discerned in him. The earliest Quaternary man is already acquainted with fire and understands the use of stone weapons; but he abandons his dead—a certain sign that his religious ideas, if he has any at all, are at best scant and rudimentary. We must come down to what is called by geologists the Neolithic Period, to discover the first sure traces of religious sentiment. What was the religion of our forefathers, in that age, we cannot know directly; but we can infer, by observing that of many savage races that still live upon the earth and faithfully reproduce the conditions of prehistoric humanity. Whether fetishism precedes animism or the latter precedes the former in the historic evolution of religions, the religious beliefs of those forefathers of ours must have been altogether similar to those still professed by tribal communities throughout the world. The earth, which, together with the traces of their dwellings, with their weapons and utensils, has also preserved their amulets, offers us proof of this. They conceived of a world crowded with spirits, souls of things and souls of the dead, and to these they attributed all things that befell them, whether good or evil. The thought that some of these spirits were beneficent, others maleficent, some friendly, others hostile, was suggested by the very experience of life, wherein profits and losses are constantly alternating, and alternating in such a fashion that, if not always, at least very often, the causes of profit and of loss are recognised as diverse. The sun that gives light, the sun that in springtime makes the earth once more green and blooming, that ripens the fruits, must have been regarded as a power essentially beneficent; the whirlwind that fills the sky with darkness, uproots the trees, tears apart and sweeps away the flimsy huts, as a power essentially maleficent. The spirits were gathered into two great hosts, according to men's observation of whether they received from them benefit or bane.

But this classification did not constitute a true and absolute dualism. The beneficent spirits were not yet the sworn and irreconcilable foes of the maleficent; neither were the former always beneficent nor the latter always maleficent. The believer was not always sure of the disposition of the spirits that held him in sway; he feared to offend the friendly ones no less than the unfriendly, and with like practices he sought to render all favourable to him, not putting too much trust in any one of them. Between good and evil spirits there was no moral contradiction, properly speaking, but only a contrast in their works. They could not possess a moral character that was as yet lacking in their worshipers, scarcely yet emerged from the state of animalism; and

Page 6: **Francisco de Goya y Lucientes,** *The Bewitched Man*, a scene from *El Hechizado por Fuerza ("The Forcibly Bewitched"),* 1798. Oil on canvas, 42.5 x 30.8 cm. The National Gallery, London, United Kingdom.

Anonymous, *The Monstrous Spirit*, 5000 to 3000 B.C. Tassili-n'Ajjer, Algeria.

Anonymous, *Statuette of the Demon Pazuzu with an Inscription*,
beginning of the first millennium B.C.
Bronze, 15 x 8.6 x 5.6 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Anonymous, *Siva Nataraja,* Tamil Nadu, Late Chola,
12th century. Bronze.
National Museum of India, New Delhi, India.

Anonymous, *Winged Demon.*
Red pottery figure.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

only in so far can they be called good and evil as to primitive man everything seems good that helps him, everything evil that harms. Their savage worshipers conceived them as in all respects like themselves, inconstant, subject to passions, sometimes kindly, sometimes cruel; nor did they regard the good spirits as higher or worthier than the wicked.

True, in the wicked ones there already appears a shadow of Satan, an outline of the spirit of evil, but of evil that is purely physical. Evil is that which harms, and an evil spirit is one that brandishes the thunderbolt, fires the volcanoes, engulfs the lands, sows famine and disease. This spirit does not yet personify moral evil, for the distinction between moral good and moral evil has not yet been made in the minds of men; of the two faces of Satan, the destroyer and the perverter, one only is presented by him. No special ignominy attaches to this spirit; there is no one to stand over him and command him.

But, little by little, moral consciousness begins to be distinguished and determined, and religion takes on an ethical character, which, earlier, it neither had nor could have. The very spectacle of nature, where forces are opposed to forces, where the one destroys what the other produces, suggests the idea of two opposite principles that mutually deny and combat each other; then man is not long in perceiving that beside the physical good and evil there is a moral good and evil, and he thinks that he recognises within himself that same contrast that he sees and experiences in nature. He feels himself good or evil, he conceives himself better or worse; but this goodness or badness of his he does not recognise as his own, as the expression of his own nature. Accustomed to attribute to divine and demonic powers his physical good and evil, he will likewise attribute to divine and demonic powers his moral good and evil. From the good spirit, then, will come not only light, health and all that sustains and increases life, but also holiness, understood as the complexus of all the virtues; from the evil spirit will come not only darkness, disease and death, but also sin. Thus men, dividing nature with merely subjective judgment into good and evil, and kneading into that physical good and evil the moral good and evil that belong to themselves, fashion the gods and the demons. Moral consciousness already awakened, naturally affirming the superiority of good over evil and longing for the triumph of the one over the other, makes the demon appear subordinated to the god and marked with an ignominy that becomes greater the more that consciousness grows active and dominant. The demon, who in his origin was confounded with the god in one order of neutral spirits capable of good as well as evil, now gradually becomes differentiated from the god, and finally is entirely dissociated from him. He will


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become the spirit of darkness, and his adversary the spirit of light; he, the spirit of hate, and his adversary the spirit of love; he, the spirit of death, and his adversary the spirit of life. Satan will dwell in the abyss, God in the kingdom of the heavens.

Thus is dualism established and determined; thus the concept of it develops through the slow travail of the ages from the concept that men have both of nature and of themselves. However, this history that I have hinted at is, so to speak, the schematic and ideal history of dualism, not the concrete and real one. Dualism is found, either fully developed or in embryo, either expressed or implied, in all, or nearly all, religions; but it moves in different planes, takes on various forms, and in varying manners it expresses itself, conforming to the diversity of the world's civilisations.

We have seen that maleficent spirits already appear in the rudest and least differentiated religions; but ill-defined and, as it were, diffused among objects. In the loftier religions, as their organic structure becomes circumscribed and complete, the maleficent spirits show themselves better defined, they begin to acquire attributes and personality. Among the great historic religions, that of ancient Egypt is the one of which we possess earliest and surest knowledge. Over against Ptah, Ra, Ammon, Osiris, Isis and others—beneficent divinities, bestowers of life and prosperity—are set the serpent Apepi, personifying impurity and darkness, and dread Set, the ravager, the troubler, father of deceit and of lies. The Phoenicians opposed to Baal and Asherah, Moloch and Astarte; in India, Indra the begetter and Varuna the preserver had, as their opposites, Vritra and the Asuras, and dualism even forced its way into the Trimurtri itself; in Persia, Ormuzd had to contend with Ahriman for the lordship of the world; in Greece and in Rome, a whole race of maleficent genii and monsters rose against the divinities of Olympus (themselves not always beneficent), and there appeared Typhon, Medusa, Geryon, Python, evil demons of every sort, lemures and larvae. Dualism likewise appears within the Germanic mythology, the Slavic, and, in general, in all the mythologies.

In no other of the ancient or modern religions has dualism the full and conspicuous form that it attained in Mazdaism, the religion of the ancient Persians, as revealed to us through the Avesta; but in all these religions it can be perceived, and in all, to some degree at least, it can be connected with the great natural phenomena, with the alternation of day and night, with the interchange of the seasons. The various concepts, images and events wherein it takes form and reveals itself furnish a picture, not only of the character and civilisation of the people that give it a place in the system of their own beliefs, but also of their climate, of the natural conditions of their soil, of the changes in their history. The dweller of a torrid region recognises the work of the evil spirit in the wind of the desert which scorches the air and blasts the standing corn; the dweller of the northern shores recognises it in the frost that benumbs all life around him and threatens him with death. Where the earth is rocked with frequent earthquakes, where volcanoes belch forth destructive ashes and lava, man easily imagines subterranean demons, wicked giants buried beneath the mountains, the vents of the infernal regions; where frequent tempests convulse the heaven, he imagines demons that fly howling through the air. If an enemy invades the land, subdues and conquers it, the conquered people will not fail to transfer to the evil spirit, or spirits, the most hateful of the characteristics of the oppressor. Thus, religion is the composite result of a multiplicity of causes, which cannot always, it is true, be traced and pointed out. The Greeks really had no Satan, neither had the Romans; and it may appear strange that the latter, who deified a great number of abstract concepts, such as youth, concord, chastity, never imagined a true divinity and power of evil, even though they did imagine a goddess Robigo, a goddess Febris and others of like character.[5] Nevertheless, there are not lacking in the religions of the Greeks and Romans antagonistic powers and figures that present a sort of double aspect; and if one delves a little more deeply into the character of the two peoples, and into their living conditions and their history, he sees that among them dualism could not have assumed a form very different from that which it actually did take. Let it be borne in mind, furthermore, that in Greece and in Rome there was no sacred book of morals, no theocratic code properly so called.

Dualism takes on form and special characteristics, first in Judaism, next in Christianity; and though in other religions, even in the primitive ones, there may be discerned a sort of phantom of Satan, a sort of form which—to borrow a term from chemistry—might be called allotropic, a form variously named, sometimes enlarged, the real Satan, with the qualities that are peculiarly his own and that go to make up his personality, belongs only to these two religions, and more particularly to the second one.

Satan holds, as yet, only a humble position in the Mosaic system; I might say that there he merely reaches his childhood or adolescence, without being able to arrive at maturity.

Abû Ma'shar, *The Book of Nativities (Kitab al-mawalid).*
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

In Genesis, the serpent is merely the most subtle and cunning of the beasts,[6] and only by virtue of a late interpretation is he transformed into a demon. The whole Old Testament recognises Beelzebub only as a divinity of the idolaters;[7] in which connection it is worth noting that the Hebrews, before they came to deny the existence of the gods of the Gentiles—a decision that they were very late in reaching—, believed that these were indeed gods, but less powerful and less holy than Jehovah, their own national god. In fact, the first commandment of the Decalogue does not say, "I am thy God, and thou shalt not believe that there are any other gods beside me," but rather, "I am thy God, and thou shalt not worship any other gods beside me". Now it is well-known that many times the Hebrews did suffer themselves to be drawn away to worship other gods than their own. Azazel,[8] the unclean spirit to whom in the wilderness was turned over the scapegoat, laden with the sins of Israel, very probably belongs to a system of beliefs anterior to Moses; but his figure lacks clarity and outline, and perchance he is nothing more than a pale reflection of the Egyptian Set and a memory of the years of bondage endured in the land of the Pharaohs.

It is a commonly accepted opinion that only after the Babylonian captivity did the Hebrews have any clear and precise ideas regarding demons. Finding themselves, during that period, in continuous if not intimate contact with Mazdaism, the Hebrews had the opportunity to learn certain of its teachings and, in part, to adopt them; and among these doctrines, that concerning the origin of evil must have found easy access to their minds, prepared and predisposed as they were by their recent misfortunes and by forebodings of a gloomy future. Such an opinion leaves room for some doubt, and more than one objection can be raised against it; nevertheless, it is no less certain that, if the idea of maleficent spirits and a belief in their workings were not lacking among the Hebrews before the exile, Satan does not begin to take on the figure and characteristics that are peculiar to him save in writings that are posterior to the exile itself. In the Book of Job, Satan still appears among the angels in Heaven[9] and is not properly a contradicter of God and a hinderer of His works. He doubts the holiness and constancy of Job and provokes the test that is to plunge him from the height of happiness to the lowest depth of misery. Notwithstanding this, he is not a fomenter of sin and worker of woe; yet he does doubt holiness, and some of the ills that befall the innocent patriarch come from him.

Little by little, Satan grows and becomes complete. Zechariah represents him as an enemy and accuser of the chosen people, eager to defraud them of divine grace.[10] In the Book of Wisdom, Satan is a disturber and corrupter of the work of God; he it was who through envy impelled our first parents to sin.[11] He is the poison that wastes and defiles creation. But in the Book of Enoch, and particularly in the older part of it, the demons are merely enamoured of the daughters of men and thus entangled in the snares of matter and sense, as if one sought by a fiction of this sort to avoid acknowledging an order of beings originally diabolic; while in the later portion of the same book the demons are giants born of these unions.

In the teachings of the Rabbis, Satan acquires new features and new characteristics; but in the Old Testament, his figure has as yet but little prominence and may even be called evanescent in comparison with that which he possessed later. There may be several reasons for this; the principal one, however, is doubtless to be sought in the very nature of Jewish monotheism, which is so constituted that only with great difficulty can it find room for any positive dualistic concept. Jehovah is an absolute god, a despotic lord, extremely jealous of his own power and authority. He cannot suffer that there rise up against him beings, less powerful indeed than he, but beings who venture to withstand him, who pose as his adversaries, who dare to thwart his work. His will is the one and only law, which governs the world and holds subject to itself all powers save, perhaps, those divinities of the Gentiles, whose existence is not denied, but who do not enter as living elements into the organism of the religion of Jehovah. Therefore, in the Book of Job, Satan appears, more than aught else, to be a servant of God, an instigator of divine trials and experiments. But there are other reasons. One needs only to examine somewhat the character of Jehovah to perceive at once that, where such a god exists, a demon no longer has much reason for existence. In Jehovah, the opposing powers, the mutually contrasted moral elements, which, when distinct and separate, give rise to dualism, are as yet intermingled after a fashion. Jehovah is jealous, savage, inexorable; the punishments that he inflicts are out of all proportion to the faults committed; his vengeances are frightful and brutal; they strike indiscriminately both the guilty and the innocent, both men and beasts. He torments his worshipers with absurd prescriptions which cause them to live in perpetual dread of sin; he bids them smite the populations of the captured cities with the edge of the

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Anonymous, *Scenes from Hell*, west wall, south portal, 1125-1130.
Église Saint-Pierre, Moissac, France.

Anonymous, *Last Judgment* (detail), tympanum, west portal, 1105-1110.
Église Sainte-Foy, Conques, France.

Gislebertus, *Last Judgment* (detail), tympanum, west portal.
Cathédrale Saint-Lazare, Autun, France.

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sword. He says, through the mouth of Isaiah: "I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things".[12] In him, God and Satan are still united; the separation that slowly takes place between the two, and the definite antagonism resulting from this, are signs of the near approach to Christianity.

Satan is already partly formed, but he attains the fullness of his being only in Christianity, the religion that claims to seek the fulfillment of that Judaism from which it sprang, yet in so large a measure denies it. Here we find ourselves confronted by a maze and tangle of moral causes and historic causes, all of which have the effect of ever exalting, colouring and enhancing the sinister figure of Satan. On the other hand, Jehovah is transformed into a God incomparably milder and kinder, into a God of love, who necessarily rejects, as non-assimilable, every Satanic element; and when Christ also shall have been raised to the godhead—the gentle, radiant figure of the deity who for love of men himself became man, who for their sake shed his blood and suffered ignominious death—, by this very contrast he will bring out in altogether new relief the grim and gloomy figure of the Adversary. The human tragedy, fused with the divine tragedy, will reveal the inner causes of his miraculous progress, awakening in the minds of men new moral concepts, new images of things, a new picture of heaven and of earth. It is true, then, that Satan led our first parents to sin and, by virtue of the offence provoked by him, robbed God of the human family and of the world in which it lives. How great must be his power, how firm his usurped dominion, if in order to ransom the lost it is necessary that the very Son of God shall sacrifice himself, shall give himself up to that death that entered the world precisely through the agency of the Enemy! Before God set his hand to the work of redemption, Satan could rest secure in his possession; but now that this redemption is completed, even before it is completed, will he not be bound to exert his power to the utmost in order to contest with the victor the fruits of victory and to regain, at least in part, what he has lost? Yes, he even dares to tempt the Redeemer himself, and the apostle pictures him as a roaring lion in quest of prey that he may devour.[13]

But if the conditions of the ransom, if the rank of Him who was to bring it about, gave Satan a degree of greatness and importance that he could not have had otherwise, the redemption itself did not rob him of all the prey that he had taken or that he was yet to take, and the victory of Christ did not so completely overthrow his power as the desire of the ransomed would fain have hoped. Saint John said that the world must be judged and the prince of this world be cast out;[14] Saint Paul declares that the victory of Christ had been full and complete and that with his death he had destroyed the king of death;[15] yet the prince of this world was not really deposed, yet the king of death was not slain; but rather he continued, as before, to scatter death broadcast—eternal death no less than temporal. Christ breaks through the gates of Hell, he bursts into the kingdom of darkness, he depopulates the abyss; but behind him the gates close again, the darkness gathers anew, the abyss is repeopled. Strange to tell, never was Satan so much talked of among men, never was Satan so much feared, as after the victory of Christ, after the completion of the work of redemption!

Nor did this come about through any simple error of judgment, through any logical contradiction. Evil has been printed in the book of our life in such characters that no mere religious doctrine, no dream of faith and love, is able to erase it. The discouraging spectacle of a world in dissolution presented itself on every side to the eyes of the new believers; the delicate, fragrant flower of Christ's teachings unfolded in the midst of Satan's midden. Was not the work of the eternal prevaricator to be seen in that multicoloured polytheism that had so charmed and seduced men's spirits? Were not Jove and Minerva, Venus and Mars, and all the gods that peopled Olympus, incarnations of him, or servants of his will, executors of his designs? That lusty, joyous civilisation of paganism, those flourishing arts, that bold philosophy, those riches and honours, those scenes of love and idleness, those boundless debaucheries—were not all these his inventions, his tricks, forms and instruments of his tyranny? Was not Rome's empire the empire of Satan? Yes, in fact: Satan was worshiped in the temples, lauded at the public festivals; Satan sat on the throne with Caesar; Satan ascended the Capitoline with the *Triumphatores.* Who knows how often the devout faithful, gathered in the Catacombs, hearing the roar and turmoil of that life passing over their heads, trembled lest the diabolic tempest should engulf the bark of Christ, and in the very arms of the Cross felt themselves threatened and overwhelmed.

Thus Satan attained gigantic proportions from all the greatness of the pagan world centring in himself. In every aspect of that life which cramped him in on every side, the Christian perceived a

Nicolas de Verdun, *Chapel Ambon* (detail), 1180.
Klosterneuburg Abbey, Klosterneuburg, Austria.

Anonymous, *Missal Used at the Saint-Nicaise Church in Reims (Missale Remense),* between 1285 and 1297.
Parchment, miniature, 23.3 x 16.2 cm (text: 14.7 x 10.5 cm).
Russian National Library, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Pol de Limburg, *The Fall and Judgment of Lucifer*,
from *The Luxurious Hours of the Duke of Berry (Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry)*,
beginning of 15th century. Illuminated manuscript.
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

likeness to the "strong man armed"[16] whom Christ had come to conquer, and who, conquered, had become bolder and more aggressive than before. And his soul was filled with consternation and terror; how was he to guard himself against the wiles, how defend himself from the attacks, of an enemy more venomous than the Hydra, more multiform than Proteus? Tertullian will warn him, others too will warn him, not to seek the company of pagans, not to take part in their festivals and games, to engage in no calling that can, directly or indirectly, serve the worship of idols; but how is he to observe such a prohibition and live? Or how, if he does observe it, is he to make certain of keeping his heart pure, when the very ground he treads, the air he breathes, are formed of impurity and sin?

Nor is Satan content with mere enticements and wiles; with yet other weapons does he endeavour to regain what he has lost. He storms from every side the scarcely yet founded Church, and like a bronze-headed battering ram, day and night he buffets and shatters its walls. He stirs up frightful persecutions and strives to drown the new faith in terror and in blood. He fosters the great heresies and snatches countless lambs from the flock of Christ. Sad times! Life full of danger and of woe! No, Christ's kingdom is not yet come; but those saddened spirits to whom Faith lends her wings believe that they can catch a distant glimpse, in apocalyptic visions, of its radiant glory, and they proclaim the second coming of the Redeemer and the final overthrow of the "old serpent".[17]

Vain dreams! Deluded hopes! The Redeemer comes not, and the old serpent, grown more venomous than ever, multiplies his coils, and ever closer and closer enfolds the world. Proof after proof of this may be had from the teachings of certain sects that plagued the Church, more particularly during the first three centuries, all striving to introduce into Christianity a dualism differing but little from that of the Persians. These teachings, taken collectively, constitute what is called Gnosticism, and the more extreme among them have the common tendency of attributing to Satan an even higher degree of importance than he formerly possessed, of considering Satan as the creator of our bodily nature, of making evil an original and independent principle, not sprung from defection and decadence, but co-eternal with good and at war with good. In this way Satan's power increased, the work of redemption became more difficult, salvation more uncertain. Clement of Alexandria and Origen had maintained that all creatures would return to God, their common beginning; but Saint Augustine thought that God would save only a few elect and that the greater part of the human race would become the prey of the Devil.

It is by no means easy, amid the clash of opposing doctrines and the contrariety of influences, through the speculations of

Master of the Rebel Angels, *St. Martin Sharing his Coat* and *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, c. 1340-1345.
Oil on wood mounted on canvas, 64 x 29 cm (recto).
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

philosophy, especially the Neoplatonic and Cabalistic, the brilliant fantasies of the Gnosis, and the already wavering orthodox dogma—it is not easy to form for one's self a clear and exact concept of the changes and accretions that Satan underwent in the first centuries of the Church. Whoever knows to what a strange and monstrous syncretism the religion of Rome had arrived, can easily imagine that from this indistinguishable hodgepodge of absurd beliefs and crazy practices Satan would naturally derive more than one of the elements of his renewed personality. Truly, the Christian Satan is the result of the meeting and mutual interpenetration of varying civilisations, of opposing philosophies, of hostile religions; and when the Church triumphs, when the dogma is established, he extends over the world a fearful dominion.

The incurable corruption of paganism gives new emphasis to the idea of evil and raises to gigantic proportions the personifier of this idea. The Christians believed that the pagan world was the work of Satan; instead, it is the pagan world that, to a great degree, gives Satan his form in the imagination of the Christians. Without the Roman Empire, Satan would have become far different from what he is or was. All the foulness, all the devilishness, scattered throughout pagan civilisation, is gathered together and condensed in him; on him, naturally, is cast the blame for everything that to the pious and stubborn Christian conscience appears as sin—and that includes an infinite variety of thoughts, customs and deeds. The divinities that had formerly had their own altars and temples, do not die nor disappear, but are transformed into demons, some of them losing their former seductive beauty, but all retaining and increasing their ancient wickedness. Jove, Juno, Diana, Apollo, Mercury, Neptune, Vulcan, Cerberus and fauns and satyrs outlive the worship that was rendered them, reappear amid the darkness of the Christian Hell, crowd the minds of men with strange terrors, give rise to fearful fantasies and legends. Diana, changed to a noonday demon, will assail those imprudent ones who are too heedless of their health; and by night, across the silent tracts of the starry heavens, she will lead the flying squadrons of the witches, her pupils. Venus, ever burning with passion, no less fair as a demon than as a goddess, will still ply her ancient arts on men, will inspire them with unquenchable longings, will usurp the couches of wedded wives, will bear away in her arms, to her subterranean abode, the knight Tannhäuser, drunken with desire, caring no longer for Christ, greedy for damnation. One of the popes, John XII (made pope in 955, deposed in 963 by the Emperor Otto I), guilty, according to his accusers, of having drunk to the health of the Devil, when casting dice will invoke the aid of Jove, of Venus and of the other demons. Satan will oftentimes be represented in the figure of a faun, a satyr or a siren.

When the Church finally triumphs, the history of Satan appears to be known in every detail and his figure to be complete. Men know—or think they know—his origins, the earlier and later vicissitudes of his career, his processes and his works. The Fathers have portrayed and described him. Satan was created good, and made himself wicked; he fell through his own sin, drawing after him in his ruin an innumerable multitude of followers. Later on, it will be told that a tenth part of the heavenly host was cast down and plunged headlong into the abyss; and there will be pictured an array of neutral angels, neither rebels against God nor opposed to Satan, mere spectators of the battle waged between the two; angels whom Saint Brandan[18] will meet in the course of his adventurous wanderings; whom Parsifal will hear recalled in the farthest East, where the holy relic of the Grail is guarded;[19] whom Dante will place in the vestibule of Hell together with those wretched dastards "who never were alive".[20]

But Satan has not yet ceased to grow, his personality is not yet complete; long, indeed, is his history, and when one era of it has closed another is beginning. The ascetics, who had thought to escape him by escaping the world and in the desert had found him again, more malignant and powerful than ever, and who had experienced his countless wiles and suffered his savage insults, did not yet know him under all his aspects.

To the ancient calamities succeeded new ones; on an age of deepest corruption there followed an age of violent dissolution, which seemed to be wrenching the world from its hinges. Already out of the dim North the barbarians are bursting in like a sea that has broken down the opposing dikes, and under the shock the Empire of Rome crumbles in crashing ruin. The wicked and accursed pagan civilisation is quenched, but only to give place to the hopeless darkness of barbarism, wherein it is impossible to descry any gleam of salvation. It seemed as if the human kingdom were about to end, or that a brute kingdom were about to begin on earth. This horrible disaster, described with fiery eloquence by Salvianus (born in the fifth century), made men doubt Providence, and offering a spectacle of evils hitherto unknown, numberless, measureless, set forth in new relief, as was but natural, the figure of him who is the source and the promoter of all evils. Satan grew through the deeds of the barbarians; but at the same time he grew through many of their beliefs, attracting to himself everything in their religion (and that was not a little) that he found consistent and homogeneous with his own character. In contact with Greek and Roman life, he became in a certain measure Hellenised and Romanised; in contact with the northern barbarians, he became Germanised. Numerous figures out of the Germanic mythology, Loki, the wolf Fenris, elves, sylphs and gnomes, are transfused into

Master of the Rebel Angels, *St. Martin Sharing his Coat* and *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, c. 1340-1345.
Oil on wood mounted on canvas, 64 x 29 cm (verso).
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, 1562.
Wood, 117 x 162 cm.
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium.

Satan and confer on him new aspects, new characteristics and new activities. Thus Satan is being built and shaped, with accretions that are sometimes swift, sometimes gradual; by means of successive stratifications and continuous infiltrations, changing unceasingly, passing through all the steps of a long and wearisome evolution. Originally a simple elemental power, he gradually acquires the moral character that belongs to him; and when we behold him in his maturity, when we examine his inner nature, we are astounded at his greatness, perceiving the multiplicity and diversity of the elements of which he is compounded. Not only the forces of nature, not only the gods of different mythologies have become Satan, but so also have human beings. In poems and legends of the Middle Ages, Pilate, Nero and Mohammed are converted into devils.

Satan reaches the highest degree of his development and of his power in the Middle Ages, in that troubled and unhappy period wherein Christianity shows itself most vigorous. He reaches maturity at the same time as the various institutions and peculiar types of that life, and when Gothic art flourishes in lofty-spired temples, the myth of Satan flourishes also, gloomy and stupendous, in the consciousness of the Christian peoples. After the close of the thirteenth century he begins to decline and languish, as do the papacy, scholasticism, the feudal spirit and the spirit of asceticism. Satan is the child of sadness. In a religion like that of the Greeks, all radiant with life and colour, he could not have held any prominent role; in order that he may grow and thrive, there is need of shadows, of the mysteries of sin and of sorrow, which like a funeral shroud enfold the religion of Golgotha. Satan is the child of fear; and terror dominates the Middle Ages. Seized with an unconquerable dread, the souls of men fear nature, pregnant with portents and monsters; they fear the physical world, opposed to the world of the spirit, and its irreconcilable foe; they fear life, the perpetual incentive and tinderbox of sin; they fear death, behind which yawn the uncertainties of eternity. Dreams and visions torment men's minds. The ecstatic hermit, kneeling long hours in prayer before the doorway of his cell, sees flying through the air awe-inspiring armies and riotous hordes of apocalyptic monsters; his nights are lighted up by flaming portents; the stars are distorted and bathed in blood, sad omens of impending evil. In seasons of pestilence that mow men down like ripened stalks of grain are seen darts, hurled by invisible hands, cleaving the air and disappearing with hissing sounds; and ever and anon, across the face of terror-stricken Christendom runs, like a tremor presaging the world's end, the sinister word that Antichrist is already born and is about to open the fearful drama foretold in the Apocalypse.

Satan grows in the melancholy shadows of vast cathedrals, behind the massive pillars, in the recesses of the choir; he grows in the silence of the cloisters, invaded by the stupor of death; he grows in the embattled castle, where a secret remorse is gnawing the heart of the grim baron; in the hidden cell, where the alchemist tests his metals; in the solitary wood, where the sorcerer weaves his nightly spells; in the furrow, wherein the starving serf casts, with a curse, the seed that is destined to nourish his lord. Satan is everywhere; countless are they who have seen him, countless they who have conversed with him.

This belief had taken firm root, nor did the Church fail to favour and strengthen it. The Church made good use of Satan, employed him as a most effective political tool, and gave him all possible credit; since what men would not do through love of God or in a spirit of obedience, they would do through fear of the Devil. Satan was presented under all guises, painted or carved, to the dismayed contemplation of the devout; Satan rounded out each period of the preacher, each admonition of the confessor; Satan became the hero of a legend unending, that offered counterparts and examples for all the vicissitudes of life, for every action, every thought. Not a few of the Visions of the Middle Ages show what sort of application could be made of the Devil to politics in general; certainly, to ecclesiastical politics the Devil rendered far better service than did the Inquisition and the fagot, though both of these rendered service enough. As early as the year 811, Charlemagne, in one of his capitularies, accused the clergy of abusing the Devil and Hell for the sake of filching money and seizing estates.

But great as was the fear that men had of Satan, the hatred that they cherished against him was no less.

Such hatred was not, indeed, unjustified, since in hating him one hated the author of all evil, and the more one loved Christ the more one ought to hate His enemy. But in this case also, fear and hatred produced their customary results, extravagance in opinions and exaggeration in beliefs. The figure of Satan had to suffer the consequences of this; and this excess, being noted by some one of more moderate spirit, gave rise to the proverb, "The Devil is not so black as he is painted".

Luca Giordano, *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, c. 1655.
Oil on canvas, 83 x 60 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.


REDEMPTIO

I. The Devil

The Person of the Devil

ONLY with the utmost difficulty, if at all, do men succeed in forming a concept of an incorporeal substance, essentially different from that which meets their senses. For them, the incorporeal is usually an attenuation, a rarefaction, of the corporeal, a state of minimum density, comparable though inferior to that of air or flame. To all uncivilised men, and to the great majority of those who call themselves civilised, the soul is a breath, or a light vapour, and it can be seen under the appearance of a shadow. The gods of all the mythologies are, to a lesser or a greater degree, corporeal; those of Greek mythology feed on ambrosia and nectar, and in case they meddle (as they are sometimes wont to do) in the brawls of mortals, they run the risk of catching a sound drubbing. It ought not to seem strange, then, that the pneumatological doctrines of both Jews and Christians generally assign bodies to angels and to demons.

Doctors and Fathers of the Church are almost unanimous in holding that demons are provided with bodies, already possessed by them when they lived in the condition of angels but become denser and heavier after their fall. The density of these bodies of theirs, always far lighter than the bodies of men, has not been similarly estimated by all investigators; in the second century Tatianus declared that it was like that of air or fire, and a body formed of air was attributed to the demons by Isidorus of Seville (560-636) at the beginning of the seventh century. Others, like Saint Basil the Great (330-379), were inclined to assign to them an even more rarefied body. But it is easy to understand how, in a matter of this sort, there could not possibly be one single opinion that must be universally accepted; and how Dante, without offending the conscience of any one, could give his Lucifer, down amid the frost and ice of Cocytus, a solid, compact body, to which he and Virgil cling, as to a rock.[21]

Having bodies, the demons must also have certain natural needs, as have all living, corporeal beings; foremost among all these being that of repairing their organism, whose structure is being constantly worn away by the exercise of life. The devils must require to be fed; and in fact, Origen (185-253), Tertullian (150-230), Athenagoras (about 176), Minucius Felix (second century), Firmicus Maternus (about 347), Saint John Chrysostom (347-407) and many others, say that the devils greedily absorb the vapour and smoke of the victims sacrificed by the pagans—a somewhat unsubstantial food, to be sure, but one not unsuited to their constitution. Some Jewish Rabbis, in a little more generous spirit, endeavouring to introduce a somewhat greater variety into the diabolic diet, said that the devils subsist on the odour of fire and the vapour of water, but that they are also very fond of blood when they can get it; and a German proverb adds that when the Devil is famished he eats flies.

The common people frequently speak of old devils and young devils; and many are the proverbs which, in various languages, give evidence of this popular belief. We know that the Devil, grown old, became a hermit;[22] and it would seem reasonable that he too should grow old, since all organic beings do likewise; but Isidorus of Seville, who has already been quoted, declares that the demons do not grow old, nor can we well make any different assertion until diabolic anatomy and physiology have been more thoroughly studied. If they do not grow old, neither ought they to die; and those Rabbis are guilty of a great falsehood who declare that they too die, like men—not all of them, it is true, but yet the great majority. It seems that they could fall ill, however; at any rate the witches, during the days of the Inquisition, sometimes went so far as to say in their depositions—after having suffered two or three turns of the cord—that the Devil did fall ill from time to time, and that it was then their task to nurse and cure him.

Some Fathers and Doctors, like Saint Gregory the Great (Pope 590-604), —not to mention others—would have it that the devils were altogether incorporeal; but this belief was, as I have shown, far from being the generally accredited one. However, one was at liberty to accept one belief or the other, and Saint Thomas (1225-1274), after citing the conflicting opinions on the subject, concludes by saying that it matters but little to faith whether the demons have bodies or not. But if it matters little to faith, it matters much to fancy, and people were not slow in giving the devils as solid a body as possible.

And how was this body formed? Let it suffice here to treat only of the bodies that the devils possess naturally, not of those which they can assume at their pleasure and of which I shall speak later.

In general, and as a rule, the bodies of the demons had a human form. This ought not to excite our wonder, since man,

Page 30: **Hans Memling,** *Triptych of Terrestrial Vanity and Celestial Redemption* (detail), c. 1490. Wood.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg, France.

Enguerrand Quarton, *The Coronation of Mary* (detail), 1454. Oil on panel, 183 x 220 cm.
Musée Pierre de Luxembourg, Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, France.

who has made the gods in his own image, has also made in his own image both angels and devils. However, when we speak of a human form, we must not conceive of a form in all respects like our own. In consequence of his sin and of his fall, Satan ("The creature who fair semblance once possessed," as Dante Alghieri calls him[23]) and with Satan the other rebels, not only beheld their bodies grow denser and coarser, but they also saw changed into ignominious deformity the sovereign beauty wherewith God had first clothed them. The form of the devils is, then, a human form, but disfigured and monstrous, wherein the beastly mingles with the human and not seldom exceeds it; and if, on the basis of this form, we were to assign to the demons (with the consent of the naturalists) a place in the zoological classification, we must needs class the greater portion of them in an appropriate family of anthropoids.

An excessive ugliness, sometimes fearful and awe-inspiring, sometimes ignoble and ridiculous, was, then, the most prominent and apparent among what I may call the physical characteristics of the Devil; nor was this without reason, for even if it be not true that the beautiful is, as Plato was held to teach, the splendour of the good, it is, on the other hand, very true that men are drawn by some kind of instinct, whose origins we will not seek to discover, to associate beauty with goodness and wickedness with ugliness. To give to Satan an excessive degree of ugliness was considered a work of merit, which in itself benefited the soul and in which was found a legitimate outlet for hatred of an enemy never sufficiently feared. Authors of legends, painters, sculptors, expended the best of their inventive talent in depicting Satan; and so well, or to speak more correctly, so ill did they depict him that Satan himself must have resented their efforts—though it is not likely that he sets any great store by his own beauty. There is a well-known story, told by many writers of the Middle Ages, about a painter who, having painted a certain devil uglier than fairness demanded, was by that same demon hurled down headlong from the scaffolding where he was working. Luckily for the painter, a Madonna, whom he had represented as very beautiful, thrust forth her arm from the picture and caught and upheld him in mid-air.

However, it was not necessary to invent anything in this connection. Many persons had seen the Devil with their own eyes and were able to say how he was formed; in the vertiginous fantasies of the visionaries, at every slightest shock he would take shape from the shreds and fragments of images, just as from particles of multicoloured glass are formed the capricious figures of the kaleidoscope.

The Manichaeans, a famous heretical sect that arose about the middle of the third century, attributed to the prince of demons a form which was not only human but gigantic, and they said that men were made in his image. Saint Anthony (251-356), who was destined to behold him under so many other aspects, once saw him in the form of an enormous giant, entirely black, and with his head touching the clouds; but on another occasion, as a little child, likewise black, and naked. Black appears as the native colour of the demons from the very earliest centuries of Christianity, and the reasons for assigning it to them are self-explanatory, so obvious are they, and natural. More than one anchorite of the Thebaid beheld the demon in the form of an Ethiopian—which once more goes to show how the demon conforms himself to the times and places amid which he moves, or has been made to move; but countless other saints of later times continued to see him in this guise, not the least of whom was Saint Thomas Aquinas. Neither is this gigantic stature without a reason, since in all mythologies the giants are usually wicked. In that of Greece, the Titans are the enemies of Zeus, and for this reason Dante places them in Hell. Dante likewise makes his Lucifer of gigantic size;[24] and in the French epopees of the Middle Ages the giants are quite often devils, or sons of devils. In the Vision of Tundal, composed about the middle of the twelfth century, the prince of the demons, who is roasting eternally on a gridiron, is not only of gigantic dimensions but, like Briareus, he has a hundred arms; and like Briareus, with a hundred hands and a hundred feet, he was seen in the fourteenth century by Saint Birgitta (1303-1373). On the other hand, the Devil is occasionally represented as a dwarf, probably through the influence of Germanic myths that need not be discussed in this place.

Dante's Lucifer has three faces, but Dante was not the first to give him these. The Trinity was sometimes represented in the Middle Ages in the guise of a man with three countenances; and since the divine trinity suggested by way of contrast the idea of a diabolic trinity, and since, furthermore, in the spirit of evil there are supposed to be three faculties or attributes opposite and contradictory to those allotted to the three divine persons, it was but natural that in representing the prince of the demons artists would turn to the image of the Triune God in order to form a well fitted counterpart. This Lucifer with the three faces,

Fra Angelico, *The Last Judgment* (detail), 1432-1435.
Tempera and gold on wood.
Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy.

Matthias Grünewald, *St. Antony, Isenheim Altarpiece* (detail),
c. 1512-1515. Oil on wood.
Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, France.

a sort of antithesis or reverse of the Trinity, appears in works of sculpture, in paintings on glass, in manuscript miniatures, his head now girt with a crown, now surrounded by horns, holding in his hands sometimes a sceptre, sometimes a sword, or even a pair of swords. How ancient this image is, it is hard to tell; but certainly it is anterior to Dante, who brought it into his poem, and to Giotto (1276-1337), who, before Dante, introduced it into his famous fresco; it is found already in the eleventh century; and allusion to a three-headed Beelzebub is made in the Gospel of Nicodemus, which, in the form it now presents, is not later than the sixth century.[25]

The more the fear of Satan increases in men's minds and spreads through the world, the more horrible and fantastic becomes his ugliness; but it is easy to understand how differences in occasion, belief and temperament would tend to give him one shape rather than another. The simplest form in which he has been clothed is that of a tall, lank man, of sooty or livid complexion, extraordinarily emaciated, with fiery and protuberant eyes, breathing ghostly horror from all his gloomy person. Thus is he described more than once, in the thirteenth century, by Caesarius von Heisterbach, a Cistercian monk, whose name will reappear frequently in these pages; and thus is he introduced by Theodor Hoffmann (1776-1822) in his weird tale entitled "The Devil's Elixir". Another form, represented time and again in art, is that of a blackened and disfigured angel, with great bat-like wings, an emaciated and hairy body, two or more horns on his head,

Taddeo di Bartolo, *Hell* (detail), between 1393 and 1413. Fresco. Collegiata di Santa Maria Assunta, San Gimignano, Italy.

Giotto di Bondone, *The Last Judgment* (detail), 1302-1305. Fresco. Capella degli Scrovegni (Arena Chapel), Padua, Italy.


Nazi
Wehrmacht

Giovanni da Modena, *The Punishments of the Damned in Hell*, 1410. Fresco.
Basilica di San Petronio, Capella Bolognini, Bologna, Italy.

Anonymous, *Madonna del Soccorso* (detail), c. 1470.
Chiesa dei Sancto Spirito, Florence, Italy.

Anonymous, *The Krampus, Demon Companion of St. Nicholas*, 19th century. Imprint on a cake pan.
Private collection.

Paolo Uccello, *St. George and the Dragon*, c. 1470.
Oil on canvas, 55.6 x 74.2 cm.
The National Gallery, London, United Kingdom.

hook-nosed, with long pointed ears, swine's tusks, and hands and feet armed with claws. Such is the appearance of the demon who, in the Dantean Hell, flings into the viscid pitch-bath of the barrators one of the Ancients of Santa Zita:

> Ah ! what fierce cruelty his look bespake !
> In act how bitter did he seem, with wings
> Buoyant outstretch'd and feet of nimblest tread.
> His shoulder, proudly eminent and sharp,
> Was with a sinner charged ; by either haunch
> He held him, the foot's sinew griping fast.[26]

This form does not preclude a certain elegance; but because of this very fact it must needs find many willing distorters. The horns often became ox-horns; the ears, asses' ears; the tip of the tail was embellished with serpents' jaws; hideous visages, like the carved heads of fountain-spouts, covered the joints and grinned from the breast, the belly and the buttocks; the virile member coiled and twisted in weird fashion, recalling certain bizarre creations of ancient art; the legs were changed into goats' legs, reminiscent of the pagan satyr, or one of them was changed to the leg of a horse; the feet were sometimes the talons of a bird of prey or the webbed claws of the goose.

But with all this, the last word in monstrosity had not yet been reached. One strange belief maintained that the bodies of devils had only a front and were hollow within, like those old tree-trunks that by slow decay have been emptied of all ligneous substance. Saint Fursey (died about 650) once saw a pack of devils with long necks and heads like brazen cauldrons. Certain other devils, seen by Saint Guthlac (673-714), had huge heads, long necks, thin swarthy countenances, squalid beards, bushy ears, lowering brows, savage eyes, teeth like horses', singed locks, wide mouths, bulging breasts, scraggy arms, knock-knees, bow legs, unwieldy heels and splayed feet. Furthermore, they had loud, hoarse voices, and from their mouths they vomited flames—though this act of vomiting flame from the mouth is not an especially striking feature, since, as a rule, they used to spout living flames from every orifice of the body. To Saint Birgitta there once appeared a devil having a head like a pair of bellows furnished with a long pipe, his arms like serpents, his feet like grappling irons.

But who could ever describe this new Chimaera under all its aspects? The belief that each individual demon must have a peculiar form of his own, befitting his peculiar character, his rank and the nature of his infernal office, tended to multiply these strange fancies and increase their confusion. We have seen brute

members joined in the bodies of demons with members of human shape; not seldom the brute predominates over the human, and in such a case we find, for instance, a beast with the head of a man, like Dante's Geryon;[27] sometimes the brute excludes the human altogether, and then we meet a diabolic beast, which also may be composite, made up of portions taken from this creature and from that, a monster that does violence to nature, a living symbol of falsehood and confusion.

All through the Middle Ages, the Devil, as we have seen, is represented as being exceedingly ugly; and to this rule—a moral rather than an aesthetic one—it is very hard to discover exceptions. Nevertheless, some rare exceptions can be found. A Latin Bible of the ninth or tenth century, preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, contains among other pictures a miniature representing Satan and Job. Satan is here depicted in a fashion that cannot be called ugly. Of the former angel, there are still preserved the wings and—stranger still—the nimbus that encircles his head, but the feet are armed with claws, and in his left hand he holds a vessel filled with fire, wherewith he seems to intend to symbolise his own nature. A devil, whom the poet calls handsome, but who nevertheless has a large mouth and a hooked nose, is described in a French epopee of the twelfth century, *La Bataille Aliscans*. Federigo Frezzi, bishop of Foligno and author of the *Quadriregio* (died in 1416), finds in Hell, contrary to his expectation, a Satan of great beauty:

I thought to see a monster foul, uncouth;
I thought to see a realm all waste and sad:
And him I saw triumphant, glorious.
Stately he was, and fair, and so benign
His aspect, and with majesty so filled,
That of all reverence he appeared most worthy.
And three fair crowns he wore upon his head:
Joyous his countenance and blithe his brow,
And in his hand the sceptre of great power.
And though his height might well exceed three miles,
His features and his form such balance showed,
Such harmony, I marvelled much thereat.
Behind his shoulders, too, six wings he had,
Of plumage so adorned, so radiant,
Nor Cupid nor Cyllenius have the like.

But this is merely a deceptive appearance, and the poet, looking through the diamond shield of his guide, Minerva, beholds the prince of the demons as he really is—of most savage aspect, entirely black, with fiery eyes, his head surrounded, not

with a crown but with dragons, all the hairs on his head and trunk changed into serpents, his arms furnished with claws, the rest of his body and his tail like those of a monstrous scorpion. Satan begins to reacquire something of his beauty with the arrival, or rather with the unfolding, of the Renaissance; and it is easy to understand how an age enamoured of beauty, an age that devoted to the cult of beauty all the best of its own elements, could not suffer, even in Satan, too base and horrible a deformity. In the "Last Judgment" of Michelangelo, the figures of the demons do not differ greatly from those of the damned, and they are impressive rather through their awfulness than their horribleness. Milton's demons keep in their fall no small portion of their former beauty and their former majesty; but those of Tasso have strange and horrible forms and even reproduce all the monsters of antiquity. The figure of the cavalier, in velvet doublet and silken mantle, his cap adorned with a long cock's feather and with sword at his side, is a product of modern imagination.

The demons, though they had their own proper forms, could also at their pleasure assume other forms; but so great is the variety, so extensive the development, of both one kind and the other, that it is not always possible to distinguish between them. In general, it may be said that there is no shape which the Devil may not assume on occasion, a faculty which renders him most worthy of the name sometimes bestowed on him of the "Infernal Proteus". Milton was well aware of this faculty. Speaking of the fallen angels, he says:

> "Spirits when they please
> Can either sex assume, or both; so soft
> And uncompounded is their essence pure;
> Nor tied nor manacled with joint or limb,
> Nor founded on the brittle strength of bones,
> Like cumbrous flesh; but in what shape they choose,
> Dilated or condens'd, bright or obscure,
> Can execute their aery purposes,
> And works of love or enmity fulfill."[28]

Let us try, for a moment, to recover our bearings in the midst of this infernal masquerade. The devils, ugly by nature, could by artifice acquire an appearance that was beautiful and seductive; they could also acquire a deformity that was different from their own. According to their plans and needs, they assumed sometimes one aspect, sometimes the other.

That the devils, especially in ancient times, should appear to Christians under the guise of one or another of the pagan divinities, will seem strange to no one. Saint Martin, the famous bishop of Tours, was made to see them disguised as Jupiter, Mercury, Venus and Minerva. But Saint Martin lived in the fourth century, at a time when paganism, if not flourishing, was yet alive; and for that reason his visions are easily accounted for. Not so easily, however, do we account for the fact that devils in the form of Jupiter, Venus, Mercury, Bacchus and Hebe, were still seen by Saint Rainaldo, bishop of Nocera, in the thirteenth century. In this second case, we are forced to recognise the effects of certain readings of classic authors, and the symptoms of the near approach of the Renaissance. The same reasons that led the demons to masquerade as pagan divinities could also lead them to clothe themselves in the likeness of illustrious men of old. In the tenth century, there appeared one night to a grammarian of Ravenna, Vilgardo by name, certain devils in the guise of Virgil, Horace and Juvenal; and thanking him for the diligence with which he was devoting himself to their writings, they promised to make him after his death a sharer in their own glory.

Very often the devils, who generally possessed one human form, would assume another—also human, but better adapted to their need. Countless histories of saintly men tell us of demons appearing in the form of attractive women, while numberless histories of female saints tell us of demons hiding themselves under the semblance of handsome and saucy youths. I shall return to the subject of these perilous apparitions when I come to speak of the Devil as tempter. Not seldom did the devils conceive the idea of presenting themselves before the man or woman they wished to annoy, under the guise of friends, kindred, or persons otherwise well-known and familiar; whence there might result, and ofttimes there did result, great damage and scandal. The venerable Mary of Maille discovered the Devil beneath the garb of a hermit, reputed by all a holy man. To the blessed Gherardesca of Pisa, and to other holy women, the Devil appeared in the guise of their husbands; in the form of a gallant he issued one day from the bedchamber of Saint Kunegund (1002-1024). On another occasion, he was guilty of even grosser conduct. He assumed the appearance of Saint Silvanus, bishop of Nazareth, discovered his passion to a young girl, and suffered himself to be found beneath her bed. Standing

Albrecht Dürer, *Knight, Death and the Devil*, c. 1513.
Engraving, 24.4 x 18.7 cm.
Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe, Germany.


VICTOR CARPATHIUS VENETUS

one day at a window, Thomas Cantipratensis, a Dominican of the thirteenth century, beheld the Devil in the form of a priest, who was exhibiting himself in a most indecent attitude. The monk shouted, and in a trice the demon vanished. This same Thomas tells how, in the year 1258, there was seen near Cologne a great mob of devils in the guise of White Friars, running and dancing across the meadows.

Quite often, the devils let themselves be seen in the forms of various animals. As for the dragon, I am uncertain whether that was the natural form of some devils or one assumed incidentally. As a dragon, it is true, Satan appears in the Apocalypse; and many are the saints to whom diabolic dragons showed themselves. In the eighth century, John of Damascus (700-754) described the demons as dragons flying through the air. Sometimes the dragon seems to be a creature intermediate between demon and beast. But countless were the other animal forms that the demons were wont to don in order to torment, to frighten, or to annoy the righteous souls of the faithful. Saint Anthony, afar in the desert, was made to see them in the forms of roaring, howling beasts of prey, of serpents and scorpions; and more than a thousand years later, Saint Colette still saw them transformed into foxes, serpents, toads, snails, flies and ants. In the thirteenth century, Saint Giles recognised the demon under the shell of an enormous tortoise. In the form of a lion, the demon killed a child, who was restored to life by Saint Eleutherius (456-532), bishop of Tournai; to many persons he showed himself in the form of a raven. In the legend of Saint Vedast (sixth century) it is related that the demons were once seen obscuring the sunlight under the form of a cloud of bats. As a dog, the Devil became the companion of Pope Silvester II (Pope 999-1003), suspected of practicing magic arts; as a dog he appeared to Faust, and as a dog he was seen guarding treasures hidden underground; as a huge he-goat, he showed himself at the revels of the witches; as a cat, he rubbed his back in their kitchens; as a fly, he buzzed persistently about the heads of honest folk. In short, there is no savage creature, no hideous or disgusting one, under whose semblance the demons have not some time hidden themselves.

All this diabolic zoology should occasion us no surprise. Not only was it natural that the demons, in order to gain their particular ends, should take on whatever animal forms best suited them; but between the animals themselves—some of them, at least—and the demons, there was a certain affinity,

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Vittore Carpaccio, *St. George and the Dragon*,
1516. Oil on canvas, 180 x 226 cm.
San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, Italy.

there was sometimes an actual identity of nature. Aside from the fact that in Christian symbolism some creatures, such as the serpent, the lion or the ape, represent the Devil; aside from the fact that the demons themselves are very often called beasts; it is also true that certain animals are rightly transformed into demons, or confused with the demons. In an ancient formula for exorcism, God is asked to preserve the fruits of the earth from caterpillars, mice, moles, serpents and other unclean spirits. On the other hand, I remember having seen in an ancient "Bestiary", or zoological treatise of the Middle Ages, the Devil catalogued along with the other beasts. I have already called attention to the fact that the dragon formed a sort of connecting link between demon and beast; the same can also be said of the basilisk. The toad, which very often appears in company with the witches, turns out, in certain tales, to be far more demon than beast. To prove this, I need only to cite the following frightful story, related by Caesarius von Heisterbach. A child finds a toad in the field and kills it. The dead toad pursues its slayer, giving him no rest either day or night; when it has been killed again and again, it still continues to pursue him, and does not desist even after it has been burned and reduced to ashes. The poor persecuted child, finding no other means of freeing himself, lets himself be bitten by his enemy, and then escapes death by quickly cutting away with a knife the flesh which the venomous jaws have penetrated. Its vengeful fury appeased, the terrible toad was seen no more.

Saint Patrick (396-469), Saint Geffroy (died in 1115), Saint Bernard (1091-1153) and several other saints, excommunicated flies and other noxious insects, or even reptiles, and rid houses, cities and provinces of their presence. The trials of animals, conducted in the Middle Ages and even in the height of the Renaissance, are famous in the annals of superstition; the beasts were arraigned, as were the devils. In 1474 the magistrates of Basel tried and condemned to the flames a diabolic cock which had ventured to lay an egg. If animals transform themselves into demons, it was but just that the demons should transform themselves into animals.

Nor were they satisfied with transforming themselves into animals only; nay, they even turned themselves into inanimate objects. Saint Gregory the Great relates the pitiful case of a nun who, thinking that she was eating a leaf of lettuce, ate the Devil and retained him in her body for a season. A disciple of Saint Hilary, abbot of Galeata, once beheld the Devil in the shape of a tempting cluster of grapes. To others, according to circumstances and conditions, the Devil caused himself to appear in the semblance of a goblet of wine, a gold-piece, a purse full of money, a tree-trunk, a rolling cask and even a cow's tail. It is not without reason, therefore, that the Dutch artist Hieronymus Bosch, and several others among the most famous painters of devils, often animated with diabolic life trees, stones, fabrics, pieces of furniture and kitchen utensils.

But not even here do these diabolic masqueradings reach their limit; and if those that I have related give proof of no small degree of natural versatility and no slight power of imagination, there are yet others which reveal the greatest audacity and a truly diabolical impudence. More than once did Satan venture to assume the venerable features of some famous saint, still living, or already dead, and raised to the honours of the altar. Ofttimes, too, he would reveal himself in the semblance of an angel, resplendent with light and glory. Capping the climax of his audacity, he appeared to some in the likeness of the Virgin Mary, of Christ, crucified, or risen from the dead, of God the Father himself; and, in company with his satellites, he sometimes succeeded in staging the entire Court of Heaven.

The demons were able, by condensing the air about them, or by fashioning at need some other element, to form for themselves the kind of body that best suited them; but they could also introduce themselves into a body already formed, and employ it exactly as if it were their own. I do not intend to speak here of diabolic possession—of which I will treat in its proper place—, a power which the demons exercised by entering bodies that were still alive; but I am speaking of their invasion of dead bodies, which through their agency gave the appearance of life. Dante makes Friar Alberigo de' Manfredi[29] say that the betrayers of their fatherland, undergoing punishment in Ptolemaea, suffer such a fate that, while their souls are languishing in the lowest depths of Hell, their bodies, directed by demons, remain for a certain season in the world, still, in appearance, alive. This has been regarded as an ingenious invention of Dante himself, but such is not the case. Caesarius relates the melancholy history of a dead clerk whose body was animated and sustained by a devil. This counterfeit clerk used to sing with so sweet a voice that all who heard him were entranced; but one fine day a certain holy man, after listening a while to his singing, said without hesitation: "This is not the voice

Raffaello Sanzio, also known as **Raphael,** *St. Margaret*, 1518.
Oil on poplar wood, 192 x 122 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.


OPVS·KAROLI·CRIVELLI·VENETI

of a man; 'tis the voice of a doubly damned devil!" And having performed his efficacious exorcisms, he compelled the devil to come out; and when the devil was out, the corpse dropped to the ground. Thomas Cantipratensis tells how the demon entered the body of a dead man that had been deposited inside a church and endeavoured with his chicaneries to terrify a holy virgin who was praying there; but the holy virgin, perceiving the trick, gave the dead man a sound rap on the head and made him lie quiet. The story of a devil who, in order to tempt a poor recluse, appropriated the body of a dead woman, is told by Giacomo da Voragine (died in 1298) in his *Legenda Aurea*. But this idea is quite ancient. Concerning a devil who, entering the corpse of a felon, used to carry travellers across a river in the hope of drowning them, we read in *The Life of Saint Gildwin*; concerning another, who kept alive the body of a wicked man, we read in *The Life of Saint Odran*. The theologians admitted the truth of what was related in these legends; only, in their wisdom, they affirmed that devils could not invade the corpses of persons of good repute and approved by the Church. The belief, with or without this restriction, is not as harmless as it might appear at first. Closely connected with it are various others concerning the evil that can be wrought by dead bodies; also various horrible practices intended to prevent these bodies from doing harm. If a person believed to be dead made the slightest movement, this was at once thought to be an illusion of the Devil, and burial was given in all haste to the dead who wished to be alive. This belief persisted well into the Renaissance, and even in the eighteenth century it had not entirely disappeared.

The Devil could, at will, assume honourable and pleasing forms, but none the less he did not cease to be a devil; though rendered invisible, his devilishness did not cease to emanate from his whole person, as an evil influence. Even when he concealed himself under the shape of a beautiful girl, or that of an angel, of the Virgin Mary, or of Christ himself, by his approach he perturbed and dismayed human nature, inspired unaccountable aversions, or left behind him profound apprehensions and terrors. This pernicious influence could be greatly strengthened if he also let himself be seen under his own, or any other, monstrous aspect.

The good Caesarius cites various instances to show how great danger is involved in a sight of the Devil. Two youths fell ill after seeing the Devil in the form of a woman; several, after seeing him, died. Thomas Cantipratensis says that the sight of the Devil will strike one with dumbness. Dante, in the presence of Lucifer, became "frozen and faint"; he does not die, and he is not alive. Nor should this surprise us, when we remember that to the White Lady and other spectres was often given the power of slaying with a look or a mere glance.

Numberless were the shapes under which the Devil could hide himself, and numberless the tricks which, by using these shapes, he could play on others; but there were some who, like Saint Martin, knew how to rout him out, even when hidden under the most unusual and most deceptive forms. When discovered, the disguised demon would either incontinently vanish or reassume his ordinary aspect.

Such was the physical nature of the Devil; of his moral nature I will not speak now, for we shall see that nature expounded in the following chapters. I will only say, in passing, that—contrary to the opinion of Thomas Aquinas, who charged him with no other sin than pride and envy—, popular belief attributed to the Devil all of the seven deadly sins.

The Number, Abodes, Qualities, Orders, Hierarchy, Knowledge and Power of Devils

TO SPEAK of the Devil, as if there were but one devil, is inaccurate; the devils were many, and when we use the word "devil" in the singular we refer to the prince of devils, or else to the whole diabolic race taken collectively and represented by the individual.

Not only were the devils many, they were innumerable. It was generally admitted by theologians that a tenth part of the angels rebelled against God; but there were some who were not satisfied with so vague an estimate, and who subjected the infernal population to a regular census. One theologian, more diligent than the rest, after making a thorough examination of the subject, found that the devils must number not less than ten thousand billions.

Carlo Crivelli, *Madonna and Child*, c. 1480.
Tempera and gold on wood, 37.8 x 25.4 cm (painted surface: 36.5 x 23.5 cm).
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

Anonymous, *Mission Table*, also known as a "taolennou": *The State of Sin*, 19th century. Oil on canvas, 76 x 63 cm.
Évêché, Quimper, France.

Anonymous, *Hell and the Seven Deadly Sins,*
published by *La Bonne Presse*, end of 19th century.
Private collection, Paris, France.


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For so great a multitude, room was needed; and the abodes of the devils were accordingly two: the sphere of the air and Hell; the former, that they might have an opportunity to tempt and to torment the living; the latter, for their own proper punishment and that they might inflict merited chastisement upon the dead. The aerial abode was granted to them only until the Judgment Day; when the final doom is pronounced, they must all be thrust into Hell, to come forth no more.

The devils were not all of one class or of one condition. There were aquatic demons, who were called Neptuni; there were some that dwelt in caves and woods, and they were called Dusii; there were also the Incubi, the Succubi and so forth. Furthermore, not all had the same aptitudes; one was more successful in one thing, another in another. Hence, the division of labour and the necessity for a certain social organisation. It has seemed to some that among the demons, who are the very personification of disorder and confusion, an organisation of this sort should not and could not exist; but such is not the opinion of Saint Thomas and the most accredited theologians, who insist that there is a hierarchy among the devils, just as there is a hierarchy among the angels that remained loyal. Indeed, the hierarchy of the devils would seem to be more firmly established and more complete than that of the angels; since the former have one chief who stands above all and commands all, while the latter have none, or have one only in God, who is a universal monarch and not theirs alone. The prince and monarch of the devils is Beelzebub, according to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke[30] and the general belief of theologians, but it must be said that considerable uncertainty prevails in this regard. Sometimes their chief appears to be Satan; at other times, Lucifer; and Dante—perhaps to escape this difficulty—makes of Satan, Lucifer and Beelzebub, one single and identical devil, contrary to the opinion of others, who make of them three distinct devils not possessing equal powers.

Orders of devils are spoken of in the so-called Book of Enoch, which antedates Christianity; and they are spoken of, later, in the New Testament. Saint Thomas makes express mention of higher and of lower devils, and of systematically established ranks among them; without, however, entering into details on the subject. But such reserve, though it might well become theologians in general, did not at all suit those who were especially classed as demonographers or those who gave attention to the study and practice of magic. For all these, it was of the utmost importance to become thoroughly acquainted with the diabolic hierarchy and, at the same time, with the condition and the activities of each rank included therein—nay, as far as might be possible, with those of each individual demon. Furthermore, the principles of their organisation were not understood in the same way by all; and while some of the Fathers thought that their rank was determined according to the various kinds of sins that the demons fostered, others believed that this was done according to their degree of power and method of action.

Dante calls Lucifer the "Emperor of the Doleful Realm";[31] for him, the universe is symmetrically divided into three great monarchies: the celestial, above; the infernal, below; and the human, midway between the two. But this conception of a Satanic kingdom is not peculiar to Dante, or even to the Middle Ages, though in the Middle Ages it attains its greatest degree of fullness and precision. This idea is already found in the Gospels and in the writings of certain Fathers; hence, the custom of attributing to Lucifer, as symbols of his power, the sceptre, the crown and the sword. In more than one ascetic legend, Satan appears seated on a throne, surrounded with royal pomp and accompanied by a great throng of ministers and satellites. And some even went so far in this fantasy as to imagine a Satanic court, similar in all respects to the courts of the great princes of the earth. In the magic book of Johannes Faustus, that Faust whose fearful history furnished the theme for Goethe's masterpiece, we read that the king of Hell is Lucifer, that Belial is viceroy, that Satan, Beelzebub, Ashtoreth and Pluto are governors, that Mephistopheles and six others are princes, and that in Lucifer's court are found five ministers, a secretary and twelve familiar spirits. In other books on magic and demonology, note is made of infernal dukes, marquises and counts; and in connection with each one, we are told very definitely how many legions of devils he has under his orders.

Legions and chiefs constitute an army. The demons were, by their very nature, militant spirits; and their military organisation is opposed to the military organisation of Heaven. What wonder, then, that such an organisation should be imagined as in every respect like to the military organisations of earth? In the legend of the blessed Mary of Antioch, we see, at dead of night, the king of the demons pass by in his chariot, surrounded and followed by a countless host of horsemen. Peter the Venerable (died in 1156) tells of an immense throng of diabolic warriors, armed at all points, that passed one night through a certain forest. And how

William Blake, *Plate 5*, from *Europe: A Prophecy*, 1793.
Relief etching, colour wash.
The British Museum, London, United Kingdom.

Now comes the night of Enitharmons joy
Who shall I call? Who shall I send?
That Woman. lovely Woman! may have dominion?
Arise O Rintrah thee I call! & Palamabron thee.
Go. tell the human race that Womans love is Sin!
That an Eternal life awaits the worms of sixty winters
In an allegorical abode where existence hath never come:
Forbid all Joy. & from her childhood shall the little female
Spread nets in every secret path
My weary eyelids draw towards the evening my bliss is yet but new!

Arise

Mikhail Aleksandrovich Vrubel, *Flying Demon*, c. 1899.
Oil on canvas, 158.5 x 430.5 cm.
Russian Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

many times have the armed legions been seen flying, like storm clouds, across the sky?

If Hell was a kingdom and if Satan, as king, had his court, it will not appear strange that in such a court councils should be held, measures discussed, and judgments and sentences pronounced; or that, from time to time, Satan, desirous of relaxation, should depart with a portion of his followers for some mad chase through the forests of the earth, uprooting in his course the age-old trees, and scattering about him terror and death. With less fury, but not always with less damage, was the chase followed in those days by princes of flesh and blood. As king, Satan claimed the homage of all who acknowledged him.

Concerning the knowledge of the demons, the theologians are not always in agreement; however, it is admitted by all that after the fall their intellects were darkened, so that, even though they greatly surpass the human intellect, they are far inferior to those of the angels. The demons know things past and present, even the most hidden ones; but present things God can always conceal from them, if he so desires. Some of the Fathers declared that Satan was ignorant of many things concerning Christ and the mystery of his incarnation; or, in a word, that he did not recognise in Christ the God become man. Such ignorance cost him dear; for, by furthering the unjust death of Christ, he opened the way for the work of redemption, and thus brought about his own ruin. In fact, in the Gospel of Matthew, Satan says to Christ: "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread"[32] —words which show that he has no clear understanding of him whom he is tempting.

The demons are acquainted with all the secrets of nature; but are they equally well acquainted with those of the human mind? Can they penetrate the inmost recesses of our consciousness and spy upon our thoughts and our affections? On this point, also, opinions are divided. It has seemed to some that if such a faculty had been granted to the demons, man would be altogether at their mercy, and without any possible defence against suggestions and temptations. And in truth, granted that I have full and sure knowledge of a man's mind, then, if my wit aid me a little, I can govern him at my pleasure. Many, therefore, affirmed that the demons cannot see the human mind, but conjecture, from outward signs, what is going on within it; thus doing, though with greater accuracy, what a mere human being can do. Others, in their turn, thought that the demons could read in our minds as in an open book; and of this opinion is that prince of theologians, Saint Thomas Aquinas. Still others adopted a middle course.

Thus, Honorius Augustodunensis (died after 1130) declares that the demons know men's evil thoughts but not their good ones. It is a fact that more than one unfortunate exorcist, while putting forth every effort to drive the devil out of the body of a possessed person, suffered the mortification of hearing the fiend recite *coram populo* the entire list of his own most secret sins, including those of thought.

Do the devils know the future? Another puzzling question! The majority of theologians denied this, and rightly; for if they know the future, as they know the present and the past, in what way does their knowledge differ at all from that of God? And how can God suffer the devils to know beforehand all that He is to do throughout the ages of eternity? Such knowledge as this they could not have possessed, even before their banishment from Heaven; for had they possessed it, knowing what was bound to be the outcome of their rebellion, they would never have rebelled. Indeed, it is said that not even the good angels have direct knowledge of the future, but know it only in so far as they read it in the mind of God, and in so far as God permits them to read it. However, even on this point, there is a way to conciliate conflicting opinions. Origen would have it that the demons conjectured the future from the aspects and movements of the heavenly bodies; an opinion, to my mind, not altogether consistent with that of Lactantius (about 300), who made astrology itself an invention of the demons. Saint Augustine believed that the devils did not know the future through direct vision, but that by virtue of a faculty that they possess of moving from place to place with lightning speed, and because of the acuteness of their senses and their intellect, they were able to surmise it, imagine it or divine it. Saint Bonaventure (1221-1274) affirmed that they did not know those future things that are contingent, but that they did know those that follow fixed laws; for the demons had a very complete knowledge of the course of nature.

The devils, then, knew by heart all the sciences: and it is probably for this reason that, whenever a man of science has revealed some great truth to his fellows, the Church has never failed to cry: "To the Devil with him!" and to burn him alive if it could. Dante denies that the devils can philosophise; "for love, in

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Anonymous, *Man with Seven Devils*, extract from the *Book of the Seven Deadly Sins*, 15th century.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

them, is altogether extinguished; and to philosophise, love is necessary".[33] This does not prevent Dante, however, from representing as arguing in perfectly good form the devil who is carrying off the soul of Guido da Montefeltro, who had received undeserved absolution from Pope Boniface VIII; or from permitting the demon to style himself a "logician", just as if he were a Doctor of the Sorbonne.[34] It is said (and the famous Jean Bodin[35] so writes in his *Daemonomania)* that the renowned Ermolao Barbaro, patriarch of Aquileja (died in 1493), once called up a devil in order to find out from him what Aristotle had meant by his "entelechy". At any rate, though ignorant of sound philosophy, the demon must have been well versed in sophistry, even master of it; and in this connection I recall the fearful tale of that scholar of Paris, who (having died and gone to perdition) appeared to his terrified teacher, arrayed in a gown that was completely embroidered with sophisms; a tale that the good Passavanti (1297-1357) relates, for the admonition and confusion of all those who do not make good use of the syllogism.

But if the devils were not supposed to have any knowledge of philosophy, it will appear strange to some that they could have a knowledge of theology, could know the Scriptures by heart, and could argue concerning the mysteries with that same precision and clarity of ideas that we so admire in professional theologians. Yet such was the case. On countless occasions, through the mouths of possessed persons of whose bodies they had made themselves masters, the demons would quote passages from both the Old and the New Testaments; they would cite the opinions and judgments of Fathers and Doctors of the Church; they would propound embarrassing questions; to the no slight humiliation of those who, listening to them or striving to exorcise them, found that they themselves knew far less of these matters than did the demons. In one of the Visions of Saint Fursey, the demons argue very learnedly with the angels concerning sins and penances, quote the Scriptures, and show themselves no less able dialecticians than are the greatest theologians. Nor is there any lack of other cases of like nature. We know how the Devil used to engage in very bitter theological disputes with Luther.

However, we need not believe that all the devils possessed the same knowledge, or that they were all of the same mental capacity. There were among them, indeed, some who were more, some less, learned than the rest; just as some were more, some less, intelligent. In due season, we shall meet the stupid and ignorant devil, a conception that is not so unreasonable as it might seem at first glance. If a certain branch of knowledge appealed to any devil, he could, it seems, devote himself to that particular branch. Caesarius tells of a devil lawyer, Oliver by name, who proved himself an able pleader. Other devils took greater delight in material pursuits; and these helped in the brewing of philtres, the transmuting of metals and in performing other tasks of that nature.

Knowledge implies power; therefore it is no wonder that the devils were able to perform great things. True, their power also had its limits, but what were these limits? It is hard to say with any accuracy. Matthew calls Satan a powerful spirit,[36] and, indeed, not without reason. His power is not comparable with the omnipotence of God; yet he is great and formidable. He rebels and is conquered, and victory will never smile on him again; but, though conquered, he rises again and avenges himself. He enters the happy abode of our first parents and brings in sin; he disturbs the harmony of God's work and brings in death. He poisons the world and makes it apostatise from God; he becomes the lord and arbiter of this perverted world, *princeps hujus saeculi*.[37] It is said, forsooth, that he can do only so much as God permits him to do; but we must admit that God permits much to him, and that, whatever he performs, he performs by virtue of a force that resides within himself and is connatural to him. Whatever there is of evil in the world comes, in the beginning, from him; and the preponderance of evil renders gigantic our own conception of his power. And this power of his, which was to have been weakened by the work of redemption, has not been weakened. We are told how the Devil once appeared to Saint Anthony and told him that the curses men were incessantly hurling at him were undeserved, since, now that Christ reigned, he himself could no longer do anything. But the devil who said this lied. Along with paganism, perhaps his unlimited sway over the earth also ceased; but his power did not cease. Christ has conquered him, but he has not disarmed him; and straightway he begins the strife anew and ranges the earth at will, disputing with his victorious adversary this wretched human race, soul by soul. He peoples his kingdom with slaves; and when century after century has passed since the Redeemer's death, who, looking on this poor troubled world of ours, would say that he found himself in a world redeemed ?

The power of the demons is great, over the affairs of nature, as well as over those of mankind; and the exercise of such a power is

Gustave Doré, illustration from *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais, 1873.
Private collection.

Dieric Bouts the Elder, *Last Judgment, Hell Panel* (detail), c. 1468.
Oil on wood, 115 x 69.5 cm.
Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille, France.

facilitated for them by the possession of miraculous faculties. They can fly, in a flash of lightning, from end to end of the world; they can plunge to the lowest depths of the water and the earth; they can permeate all elements.

Our bodily nature is, in a peculiar manner, subject to them. It must not be forgotten that several sects of heretics regarded matter as the creation of Satan; and that, the more lively the contrast became, in religious conceptions, between matter and spirit, and the more matter came to be looked upon as vile and corrupt, so much the more inclined must be the imaginations of men to see in nature the great laboratory, the peculiar kingdom, of Satan himself. The reasons why, in the Middle Ages, the indications of what we now call the sentiment of nature appear so rare and so inconsiderable, are certainly many; but among them there cannot be lacking the suspicion and fear that men had of nature, as of a thing which, if not produced by Satan, was at least contaminated by him. The sin that corrupted our first parents, perverted nature at the same time; and if mankind was redeemed by Christ, nature was not.

Fire, which had its worshipers in most ancient times in India, which the Hellenic myth imagined as stolen from Zeus through the daring of Prometheus—fire is the peculiar element of the demons. But we have seen that the demons have one of their abodes in the air; therefore, reason demands that over the air also they shall exercise their fearful dominion. Theologians are generally agreed that they can, at their pleasure (save always for the Divine will), raise tempestuous winds, gather the storm clouds, brandish the lightnings, pour down the waters in torrents from the heaven to the earth. The howling of the hurricane is but the cries of infuriate demons. Saint Thomas says, it is true, that such convulsions are produced by them only *artificialiter,* and not *naturali cursu*; but, practically, this comes to the same thing. In the Ante-purgatory, Dante makes Buonconte da Montefeltro, who fell at Campaldino, relate how his body, which was not found after the battle, had been swept away by the waters of a furious tempest produced by the Devil. To the demons was attributed the ability to evoke all atmospheric phenomena in general, and Thomas Cantipratensis believed that he saw their work in the illusions of Morgan le Fay.

No less was the power possessed by the demons over the earth; and this seems reasonable, if we but remember that it was in the exact center of the earth that Hell was located. Earthquakes were, or might be, their work; and so, too, were volcanic eruptions; and volcanoes were generally believed to be the vents and outlets of Hell. When an impatient devil wished to take the most direct way back to his gloomy habitation, he would bid the earth open, and would vanish into the yawning abyss, as through the trapdoor of a stage.

But not all things in nature were equally subject to the power of the demons; there were some that obeyed them implicitly and suffered themselves to become unresisting instruments and receptacles of their evil power; there were others that showed themselves firmly opposed to the demons. Fancy and superstition found abundant food in beliefs of this sort. The demons were especially fond of solitary and dismal places—rugged mountains, thick, gloomy woods, caves and precipices; and this was because, in such places, their power was more complete and irresistible. Of old, the Hebrews had looked on the desert as the particular abode of evil spirits; and every one knows how great and how many were the torments and vexations that beset the anchorites in the desert. Certain plants—the walnut and the mandrake, for example—, can be said to have belonged to the Devil; while others, like garlic, were altogether hostile to him. Charcoal, or ashes, imparted strength to him; but salt took away all his vigour; and the same may be said of certain gems. Animals, too, did not all behave toward him in the same manner; the toad was a good servant of his, but the cock a great adversary.

I have said that Satan had great power over the affairs of mankind; and to convince ourselves of this, we need only to remember that the perdition of the human race was his work. But on this point, also, we need to make a distinction. His power over human nature, depraved as the result of sin, was great enough, but it was not unlimited, not absolute. There is a physical man, and there is a moral man; there exists a body, and a soul; and Satan's power did not extend over both in equal measure. The body—otherwise, the brute—, is, in a certain sense, the friend, the vassal, of Satan; and there were heretics who declared, roundly and unequivocally, that the body was his handiwork, and not that of God. The body, the prison of the soul, is a perpetual fomenter of sins; it yields in docile fashion to the desires of him whose one purpose is to corrupt the soul. If, then, there exists between soul and body that discord that we all recognise, it follows that the body is the natural ally of the Devil.

Master of the Beatitude of the Virgin Mary, *The Last Judgment* (detail),
c. 1460-1480 or 1493. Oil on wood, 57 x 40.5 cm.
Stiftung Rau, Cologne, Germany.

Enguerrand Quarton, *The Coronation of Mary* (detail),
1454. Oil on panel, 183 x 220 cm.
Musée Pierre de Luxembourg,
Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, France.

Anonymous, *Devilry*, end of 15th century.
Miniature from a French manuscript.

Anonymous, *The Last Judgment*, end of 14th century.
Oil on wood mounted on canvas.
Musée des arts décoratifs, Paris, France.

And the Devil makes good use of this alliance. The Devil flatters the body, and makes it prosper, so that with ever increasing arrogance it may cow and crush that insignificant wretch, the soul; he whets its appetites; he incites its stimuli; he increases its energies; he multiplies its insolent demands; till at last the soul loses its reckonings, and suffers itself to be taken in tow by the body. But he may, also, follow an opposite course. In order to make the soul forswear all patience, to poison it and drive it to despair, Satan may plague the body with diseases, may harrow it with a thousand accidents, even as he did to that poor man, Job. Epidemics were believed by many to be the work of Satan, as were also epizootic visitations.

The soul was, as a rule, less exposed, but by no means immune, to the power and influences of the Devil. Theologians are agreed in saying that he cannot force the will, that freedom of choice cannot be violated by him. But if this was the rule, the rule suffered exceptions. In fact, possessed persons are completely under the sway of Satan, who makes them say and do what he pleases; and according to an opinion that has widely prevailed since the earliest ages of the Church, excommunicated persons were likewise in the power of Satan, as were all those who had not been ransomed by means of baptism. In the case of possessed persons, the matter is easy to understand; for the demon insinuated himself, not merely into their bodies, but into their souls as well. A more difficult thing to understand is how this species of hypostasis or diabolic endosmosis took place.

But the Devil could do much even with the souls of those who were not, like possessed persons, under his control; in which connection it must be kept in mind that every sin committed is like a gate thrown open to the enemy. The demon awakens in men's souls riotous thoughts, lawless imaginings, disordered affections, a thousand phantom notions of sin; he assails them in sleep when the judgment is clouded and the will torpid; he lies in wait for them and assaults them with visions and dreams that leave behind them dangerous agitations and perturbations. Even the souls of the saints were not exempt from his influence; he breathed upon them and he made them waver like torch flames in the wind.

The life of every individual man was, in no small part, governed by Satan; but so also was that of nations and of the whole human race. Granting that history is the work of Providence, we must admit that it is also the work of Satan; and, seeing what history has been in the course of the centuries, we are forced to recognise that Satan's part in it is important and prominent. And in truth, the Fathers and the Doctors all unite in saying that false religions have been invented by him, the occult

Attributed to **Coppo di Marcovaldo,**
The Infernal Chaos around Satan, c. 1270.
Baptistery of Saint John, Florence, Italy.

sciences (and those that are not occult?) discovered by him, heresies instigated by him; he sows the seeds of all discords, incites conspiracies, ripens rebellions, prepares famines, promotes wars, sets evil princes on the throne, consecrates antipopes, dictates wicked books; and in the intervals between greater calamities he scatters abroad conflagrations, desolations, shipwrecks, murders, robberies and ruins. Let it be noted, also, that he knows and keeps in his own hands all the treasures hidden in the bowels of the earth; and it is expressly said that Antichrist, his son and vicar general, will make use of these, when his time is come, to render himself lord and master of the world. Now every one knows that gold is a sinew, not only of war but of history in general; and it is probably for the sake of wresting it out of the enemy's hand that the popes have always sought to snatch as much of it as possible for themselves.

But this does not exhaust the subject of Satan's power; as yet, I have said nothing about what might be called his technical ability. The Devil is master of all the crafts; but, naturally, he disdains the humbler ones, and only in tasks of greater importance does it suit him to display his force and skill. He has one passion—that of building. Ancient Europe is full of bridges, towers, walls, aqueducts, of structures of every sort, which have been built by him. The famous wall erected by command of Hadrian between England and Scotland was believed to be his work; and the same is true of other walls and fortifications. The bridge of Schellenen in Switzerland, the bridge across the Danube at Regensburg, the bridge over the Rhone at Avignon and a hundred other bridges, were believed to have been built by him; and many of them still bear his name, and are called "The Devil's Bridge". In times of barbarism and poverty, the mighty works built by the ancient Romans—their roads included—seemed to surpass the powers of men, and thus they were easily attributed to the accursed architect. It may seem more strange, however, that the Devil should set himself to building, with his own hands, both churches and convents; but he could do this, either for secret ends of his own or compelled by a higher power. The plans and other drawings for the churches of Cologne and Aix-la-Chapelle were, it is said, prepared by him; the latter church was also, at least in part, built by him. The abbey of Crowland, in England, is his work. And to such a degree did he excel in this art that he once dared to challenge the archangel Michael, his ancient conqueror, to prove which one of them could build the more beautiful church on a height in Normandy, which still bears the name Mont-Saint-Michel. The archangel won the wager, as was to be expected; but the Devil did himself no small honour. Nor, in such cases, did the miracle consist so much in the completed work itself as in the length of time allowed him for completing it. Often, a single night had to suffice, and did suffice, in fact, unless there intervened some trick; a trick played, not by him, but on him. In the space of a single night, if, for example, a church was to be built, the Devil would bring from the most distant regions all the materials required for its construction—great blocks of granite, slabs and cubes of multicoloured marble, not to mention enormous columns plundered from some pagan temple, or beams of massive oak or towering pine; he would fetch the needed tools, and, not stopping to take a breath, he would hew, chisel, polish, plane, square, level, join, paint and carve until, with break of day, the sun's first rays kindled upon the spires the globes of burnished gold and flashed from the painted glasses of the great windows. Nor was there any danger that, after a year or two, the walls would crumble or the vaulted roof crash down.

All this demanded not only the greatest genius, skill and speed, it also demanded a degree of muscular strength—if I may use that term—that was truly prodigious. Of this sort of strength I have said nothing; but the evidences of it are numberless, scattered through history and through all the world. There is not a region in Europe where one may not see some enormous boulder that has been carried in the Devil's arms into the midst of a plain from some distant mountain; and the good folk of the countryside, when questioned concerning the matter, can tell you in full detail exactly how the thing happened. Here stood in olden times a hermitage, inhabited by a man of most holy life, who spent all his days and all his nights in prayer; the Devil, vexed at this, tried to smash both cell and hermit beneath that rocky mass you see yonder; but he did not aim it carefully enough, and the good man got off with a bit of a scare. Over yonder, that great hole in the mountainside was made one day by the Devil, who, mad with rage, hurled through the air the huge sledge from his smithy. Everywhere, the great erratic masses that the glaciers of prehistoric ages dragged mile after mile far away from their native mountains, were believed to have been tossed or rolled there by the Devil; such a belief also prevailed in regard to the origin of the druidic circles.

Eugène Delacroix, *Mephistopheles in Flight.*
Lithography, 27 x 23 cm.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

But excessive strength does not preclude, in Satan, either nimbleness or dexterity; both these faculties exist in him to a marvellous degree. He possesses the arts of the juggler and the ropedancer, and there is no performance so delicate that he is not able to undertake it successfully. Tertullian declares that the Devil has been seen carrying water in a sieve.

The structures reared by the Devil were, I have said, solid, and worthy of so great an architect; but it goes without saying that they must, after a fashion, have resented their origin and must have had about them something of the supernatural. Generally speaking, if the Devil left them unfinished, it was not possible for anyone else to finish them. Similar and analogous to this belief was the idea that, if the Devil wrought any damage to a building, this damage could never be repaired.

In one of the poems which make up *La Légende des Siècles,* Victor Hugo tells of a contest that the Devil had with God to see which of the two should make the more beautiful thing. The Devil demanded of his adversary a great quantity of ingredients that he needed, and having received them set to work.

Et grondant et râlant comme un bœuf qu'on égorge,
Le démon se remit à battre dans sa forge;
II frappait du ciseau, du pilon, du maillet,
Et toute la caverne horrible tressaillait;
Les éclairs des marteaux faisaient une tempête;
Ses yeux ardents semblaient deux braises dans sa tête;
II rugissait; le feu lui sortait des naseaux,
Avec un bruit pareil au bruit des grandes eaux
Dans la saison livide où la cigogne émigre.[38]

But all this expenditure of effort succeeds in producing nothing more than a grasshopper; while God, by merely looking upon it, makes of a spider's web the sun. But the poet is wrong. Far greater things than this could the Devil do without overtasking himself in the least; and his power was indeed both great and terrible.

Nevertheless, even that power had its limits, limits often far more constrictive than they appear at first. As we shall see later on, not only did there exist safeguards and defences against that power, but—what was more important—there was a means of overcoming and directing it. A fact to which I would call immediate attention is this: the Devil can exercise his power only at night; or, if he does exercise it during the daytime, he does not exercise it with the same effectiveness. The first streaks of dawn impearling the sky, the clarion call of the cock, put the Devil to flight; or, at least, they cut his powers in half. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable that the King of Darkness should derive vigour from the darkness, and that in the midst of darkness his power should show itself more complete and more to be dreaded.

But let us not think that, though Satan is very willing to make bad use of his power, he is always and invariably the champion of violence, the chief exponent of that maxim which has so many other followers: "Might makes right". If he does what he does; if in the guise of a despot he goes up and down the whole earth; if he treats men as his enemies or as his slaves; he has the right to do this; or, if he has it no longer, he once had it. Irenaeus (130-202), the sainted bishop of Lyons, was the first—as early as the second century of the Church—clearly to establish such a right. Sin gave men, legitimately, into Satan's hands; and it was for the purpose of legitimately ransoming them, without the use of violence, that Christ shed his own blood. Satan, by unjustly bringing about the death of a just person, forfeited all the right that he had previously acquired. This doctrine met with much favour; and until the beginning of the Middle Ages, all ecclesiastical writers admitted, more or less fully, this original right of Satan, now cancelled by Christ. Satan, on his side, would not recognise any cancellation whatsoever, and he continued to exercise his right as far and as fully as he could; and we must confess that, if he exercised it illegally, he did not exercise it unsuccessfully. In order the better to bring about the triumph of his right—legitimate, or usurped—, Satan took pains to organise his kingdom and his armies and to imitate, in so far as was permitted him, the divine institutions and organisations—an imitation that earned for him the disparaging nickname of God's Ape. Against the Church of Christ he opposed his own Church; he had his own priests, his own form of worship, and—so Tertullian declared—his own sacraments.

We have seen what the Devil was, what were his power and industry; let us now see how he fought, against men and against God, a daily battle; let us see him in his most important work.

Ligny (after **Gustave Doré**), *Lucifer on a Rock*, 1882. Engraving.
Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London, United Kingdom.

II. Acts of the Devil

The Devil as Tempter

SATAN no longer hopes to regain in Heaven the post that he has lost. He regrets his ancient happiness; but, regretting, he does not repine; rather, he strives to increase his own greatness and power. He is a king; vast and populous is his kingdom, and he can make it greater and people it yet more abundantly. If mankind is no longer to be altogether his, yet his will be the greater part of it. To blight, to render scant as possible, the fruits of redemption; to multiply error on the face of the earth; to make of that earth, bathed in vain in the blood of Christ, another hell, and of human history a ruinous sequence of evils wherein sin and sorrow ever interlink—such will be his constant purpose, such his perpetual endeavour. Each sin committed, each soul stolen from Heaven and gained for Hell, will make one more triumph for him. What though the Church be strong and firm as a rock in the midst of the breakers; he will know full well how to encompass it and smite it from every side, making it tremble to its very foundations and ever and anon loosening some cornerstone. What though the shepherd and his dogs keep watch over the fold; he, like a ravening wolf, rather, like the roaring lion of which the apostle speaks, will not cease to snatch away nine out of every ten of the flock.

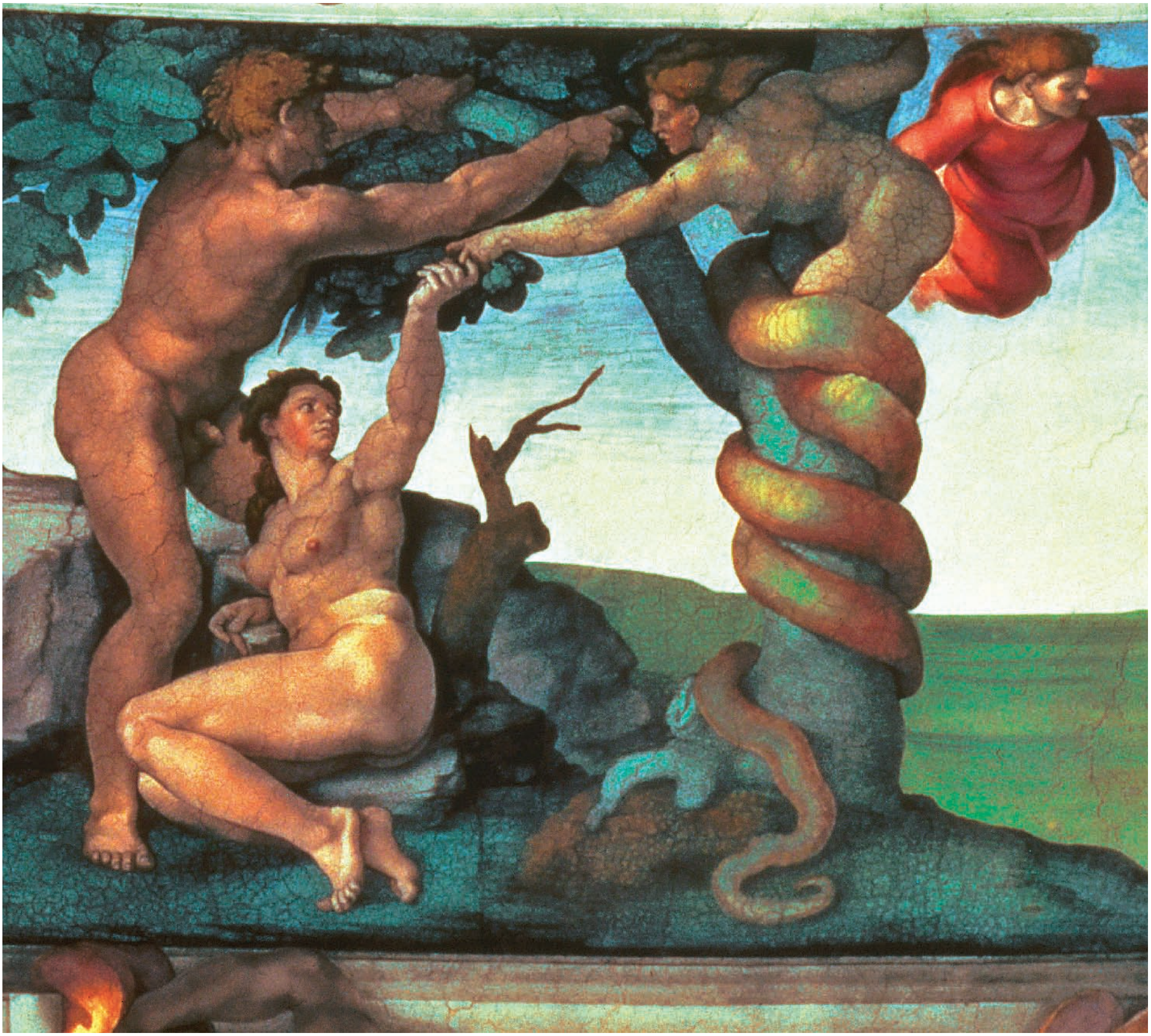
Satan cannot make men's souls his own unless he first taint and corrupt them with sin; but human nature, though redeemed, is ever ready and prone to sin. Satan cannot do violence to the free will; but he can so confound it through his numberless wiles that it must almost inevitably succumb. Satan is the great, the tireless tempter. He tempts Eve and he dares tempt even Christ himself; what wonder, then, if he tempts men, even the most holy ones? Indeed, it is against the most holy ones that he exerts his fullest efforts; for those that are not holy become, with no great struggle, his followers and his servants.

This matter of temptation was a manifold process; variable, irregular; it took shape from circumstances and conditions; it changed and adapted itself to persons, times and places; it demanded keen understanding and, not seldom, great perseverance. Temptation was an art in which Satan displayed all his genius and all his skill.

The occasions of tempting were innumerable. Saint Paul had said: "Give not place to the Devil";[39] but the Devil knew how to make a place for himself. He had also said: "Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you";[40] but very often he who resisted most strenuously was most persistently assailed. To withdraw one's self entirely from Satan's influence was impossible; neither was it possible to avoid altogether his pernicious contact. The timid soul might imitate the tortoise and shrink wholly within its shell; but, do what it would, it always left some opening through which the demon could thrust his sharp and greedy talon. Whoever lived in the world and lived the life of the world, not only encountered Satan at every turn, but it might be said that he lived in the midst of Satan; for worldliness, the sum total of its deceptive appearances, its allurements, its lusts, is nought else than Satan. To live in the world and not to sin, is like hoping to plunge into the sea and not wet one's self. He who lived in the world, then, was exposed to continuous temptation; but he who withdrew himself from the world did not cease to be tempted. The good Christians who, scandalised and nauseated by the corruption of the cities and by all that was aptly called the Devil's pomp and show, began as early as the time of Constantine the Great to abandon the cities, to flee from the society of their fellow men, and to seek the deserts—these found again in the solitudes of Egypt and of Asia that same Satan whom with such eagerness they had sought to escape. And no different was the case of those other fugitives from the world who, without abandoning the inhabited regions or the cities themselves, sought within the walls of the cloisters a safe refuge from their dreaded adversary. Both found themselves again face to face with that same Satan, but a Satan much more crafty and unrelenting. His attacks did not cease, but their character was somewhat changed. In the world, temptation was continuous, minute; in a certain sense, diffused through those things that were a perpetual incentive to sin, and ordinarily, therefore, not violent. In solitude, it became acute, sudden, intermittent; it was of the nature of a paroxysm. In the world, temptation seemed to proceed from external things; in solitude, it found its source in the imperfectly subdued energies of the physical organism, in every movement of the mind that could in any way become an inception of sin. No occasion of temptation, however fleeting, however doubtful it might be, was ever overlooked by Satan. Just as it was thought that every soul had, during its earthly pilgrimage, an angelic companion who endeavoured to guide it along the way of salvation, so it was also thought that it had a diabolic companion who unceasingly strove to bring it to perdition. On the right hand, the guardian angel; on the left, the devil, the tempter.

Page 78: **Michael Pacher,** *St. Augustine and the Devil*, 1483.
Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany.

Hans Baldung Grien, *Adam and Eve.*
Oil on wood, 212 x 85 cm (each panel).
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.



Tiziano Vecellio, also known as **Titian,** *Adam and Eve*,
c. 1550. Oil on canvas, 176 x 191 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, also known as **Michelangelo,** *Original Sin*,
detail of the central panel of the vault, 1508-1512. Fresco.
Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

Hieronymus Bosch, *Haywain*, triptych, 1500-1502.
Oil on panel, 140 x 100 cm.
San Lorenzo de El Escorial, El Escorial, Spain.


Iheronimus bosch

All men could be tempted; but the temptation varied, according to the sex, the age, the peculiar condition of each person; sometimes simple and but slightly disguised or wholly undisguised; sometimes subtle and fraudulent. Sure means for preserving one's self from temptation there were none; for those very means that had the greatest reputation and that were most universally extolled, time and again proved ineffectual when brought to the test. The saints, as I have said, were assailed and persecuted with the greatest fury, because, it was thought, Satan was far more concerned in triumphing over one of them than over a thousand other men. We, looking at the matter from a different point of view, may say that because of the very fact that their souls were continually and painfully obsessed by the thought of sin and disturbed by the senseless mortifications to which they subjected their bodies, thinking thus to purge them of every itch of carnal appetite, the saints exposed themselves more than did others to fierce battles with temptation. It is true, furthermore, that such battles were ofttimes sought and demanded by them, as combats wherein their virtue shone with livelier brilliance and gained from victory new vigour. But be this as it may, Satan knew on most occasions how to adapt to the nature and condition of each individual the degree and the form of the temptation, and in so doing he showed himself to be no less able as a psychologist than as a logician.

Not all times, and also not all places, were equally suitable and propitious for the work of temptation. Night-time provided the most favourable conditions, not only because with the increasing darkness the Devil's power is likewise increased, but also because in the darkness the phantoms evoked by Satan are not so easily seen to be illusions. And the hour most propitious of all was that in which sleep begins to lay hold on the weary members; when the senses grow dull, but are not yet closed to impressions from the outer world; when, in the soul, the vigilance of will and judgment is relaxed. Therefore, it was not without good reason that Saint Pachomius prayed God for sleeplessness that he might be better able to strive against the enemy.

The methods and the forms of temptation were innumerable; innumerable as the acts of the mind and the facts of life. There was no thought so insignificant, no event so trivial, that Satan could not draw from it a cause of temptation; and when the occasion was lacking, he himself would produce an occasion. Those strange documents of Christian belief, the legends of the saints, overflow with accounts which prove this, and which not seldom furnish valuable evidence and data for the study of human nature.

Sometimes, the temptation was quite simple, and presented itself with little or no preparation, taking shape in a single instant. Saint Anthony, whose temptations have become famous and proverbial, once journeying through the desert found lying on the ground a disk of silver; it was a snare of the Devil who sought to reawaken in his heart a sinful longing for the riches he had left behind him. Saint Hilarion (291-371), born near the old Philistine city of Gaza, faint with fasting, on a sudden saw before him an abundance of the choicest meats. To Saint Pelagia, who had once been an actress at Antioch and had afterward retired to a life of contemplation in a cave on Mount Olivet, the Devil used to offer the objects of her former desires—rings, bracelets, necklaces, jewels of every sort. These deceptive images would vanish as suddenly as they had appeared.

At other times the preparation and display were greater; the alluring or terrifying phantoms were multiplied and varied; temptation was made theatrical. Saint Hilarion, while engaged in

Anonymous, *Devil and Man in the Capital O of a Latin Bible*, 13th century.
Bibliothèque Mazarine, Paris, France.

Erhard Schön, *The Devil Blowing Bagpipes in the Form of a Monk's Head*, c. 1530-1535.
Private collection.


Vorzeytten pfiff ich hin vnd her
Aus solchen Pfeiffen dicht vnd mer
Vil Fabel Trewm vnd Fenthafey
Ist yetzundt auß vnd gar entzwey
Das ist mir leyd auch schwer vnd b
Doch hoff ich es wer auch nit lang
Die weyl die welt so fürwitz ist
Sündtlich dückisch vol arger list.


Le diables fay los aymadors fur couuts e bolyans per amor delurs donas.
Le diables fay biorar los aymadors p amor delur donas.
Le diables fay los aymadors seguyr tanlas sodonas rimame per amor delur donas.
Lo diables fay dansar los aymadors ab lur donas. lo qual diables mena lur dansa.
Le diables fay ajo par sodona ab laymador.
mor laymador el diable porta larma.

prayer, used to see racing before his vision packs of howling wolves and yelping foxes; he witnessed improvised combats of gladiators and saw the dying drag themselves to his feet and heard them beseech him for burial. One night, while keeping vigil as was his custom, he began to hear the crying of infants, the bleating of sheep, the bellowing of cattle, the roaring of lions, the wailing of women; a vast murmur, like that of a leaguered host. Recognising the wiles of the Devil, he threw himself on his knees, made the sign of the cross on his forehead, and looked about him, awaiting some new portent. And lo, suddenly, by the light of the moon, he saw a chariot drawn by fiery steeds bearing down upon him. But when the saint invoked the divine name of Christ, the earth immediately opened and swallowed up the apparition. The whole was but the work of Satan who sought to draw away the good servant of God from meditation and prayer, and, peopling the solitude with terrors, to render it intolerable to him. The histories of the saints abound in similar examples.

These temptations which Satan brought about with the aid of deceptive spectres or, as sometimes happened, with that of real and corporeal objects were powerful enough, for they took possession of the senses, and, through the senses, of the soul—so ready always to become the servant of the senses; but among all these, the most to be dreaded was that one which found its source in the stubborn instincts of generation and sexual passion. This was the temptation that brought Satan his greatest triumphs.

Christianity has anathematised the flesh, has degraded passion. The act—varied and complex in its methods, but one in principle—whereby all creatures reproduce their kind; the act to which the ancients had assigned one of the greatest and surely the most glorious among the divinities of Olympus, is, in the eyes of the Christian, essentially wicked and impure; and its wickedness and impurity can, in Adam's breed, scarcely be corrected by the sacrament of marriage. Celibacy is for the Christian, at least in theory, a state far nobler and worthier than marriage; and continence is counted among the greatest virtues. Lactantius affirms that virginity is, as it were, the peak of all the virtues; and Origen, surnamed "The Adamantine", had not waited for this affirmation of Lactantius, to put himself, with his own hands, beyond all risk of losing it.

We need not be amazed, then, if the ascetics often expended the best of their energies in a desperate struggle to quench within themselves every spark of concupiscence, to quell every mutiny of the flesh, however trivial and involuntary; but neither should we be amazed, if in such a work of rebellion against nature, they more than once were overpowered and beaten. To flee the wiles of Venus, they betook themselves to the deserts, they immured themselves in cloisters; and Venus was reborn within them—from the exuberance of their humours,[41] as of old from the froth of the sea—, and she made herself mistress of their imaginations. To withdraw themselves from the dreaded contagion, they refused after years and years of separation to see their mothers and their sisters; but woman none the less invaded their cells, an image at once desired and detested. At some chance hint, some fleeting thought, their virility—repressed but not subdued—would spring up with brutish violence, would gnaw and tear those bodies wasted with long mortifications. Those were fearful battles which left the athlete of Christ exhausted, even if victorious. "Oh, how often", wrote Saint Jerome to the virgin Eustochium (368-419/420), "when I was in the desert, in that vast, sun-burned solitude that furnishes a fearsome dwelling place to the hermits, did I imagine that I was living amid the delights of Rome! I used to sit alone, my soul full of bitterness, clothed in foul sackcloth, my skin become like an Ethiopian's. I passed not a day without tears, without groanings; and when, against my will, sleep overcame me, my couch was the bare ground. I say nothing of my food or my drink; for the hermits, even in sickness, drink nothing but water, and all cooked food they esteem a sinful luxury. And I, who through fear of hell had condemned myself to live such a life, to have no other companionship than that of scorpions and wild beasts, ofttimes imagined myself in the midst of troops of dancing girls. My face was wan with fasting; but within my chill body my soul was burning with desires; and in a man already dead as to the flesh, were blazing the fires of lust. Then, bereft of all other succour, I would cast myself down at the feet of Jesus, I would bathe them with my tears, I would wipe them with my hair; and I would subjugate my rebellious flesh with a full week's fasting. I do not blush to confess my misery; rather, I regret that I am no longer as I was. And I remember how oftentimes, crying aloud and praying, I saw day follow night, and how I ceased not to beat my breast until, at the voice of God, calm returned to me."[42]

Countless are the saints to whom the Devil appeared in the form of a charming girl, or of a noble matron, richly arrayed; nor

Matfre Ermengaud of Béziers, *The Breviary of Love: Love's Danger*, first half of 14th century.
Parchment. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

Anonymous, *St. Eligius and the Woman-Demon*, 15th century.
Miniature. Bibliothèque municipale, Lille, France.

Anonymous, *The Hours of Luxemburg,* used in Rome in connection with St. Anthony, second quarter of 15th century.
Parchment, 15.7 x 12 cm (text: 9 x 6 cm).

few were they who were unable to overcome so fearful a temptation. Usually, the counterfeit, diabolic woman pretended that she had lost her way, had been overtaken by storm or darkness, or even, like Boccaccio's Alibech,[43] that she had abandoned home and household to devote herself to the service of God; and with modest countenance, with great humility and fairness of speech, she would beg the holy man for shelter and protection. And if the holy man, moved by untimely pity or overconfident of his own virtue, received the fair suppliant in his cell—scarce large enough for two—, there was danger, great danger, that the affair would end badly. Rufinus of Aquileja (345-410) relates in this connection a tale worthy to be chosen among a hundred. There once lived, in a cave in the desert, a monk, a man of the greatest abstinence, adorned with all the virtues, and accustomed to spend his days and his nights in prayer. This monk, observing the progress that he was making in holiness, began to be puffed up and to attribute entirely to himself the merit which belonged to God alone. The demon, perceiving this, was not slow in preparing and laying his snares. And lo, one evening there appeared before the cave of the holy man a very beautiful woman, who, entering within and feigning to be utterly wearied and spent, cast herself at his feet and besought him most earnestly to grant her shelter; night had overtaken her in the desert; let him, in charity, not leave her a prey to the wild beasts. He, moved to pity, receives her kindly, and begins to question her regarding the reason for her journey; she tells a story that she has ingeniously concocted and spices the tale with flatteries and blandishments; showing herself now worthy of commiseration, now deserving of protection; and with the elegance and charm of her discourse she beguiles and vanquishes the soul of the good man. Little by little, the conversation waxes more intimate; with words are mingled laughter and jesting; until, grown bolder, she ventures to lay hold on his beard and gently to caress his neck and throat. And lo, already the soldier of Christ is conquered! Devoured by the flames of lust, oblivious of his past, heedless of the fruit of so many struggles steadfastly endured, become (says Rufinus) like a mere beast, already he is making ready for the lewd embrace. But at that very instant, the false apparition, uttering a fearful screech, fled from his arms, leaving him in a most indecorous and ridiculous attitude (Rufinus gives fuller details). Then the demons, who had gathered in great numbers in the air as spectators of the foul deed, began to mock him, crying in a loud voice: "O thou that didst extol thyself even to heaven, how art thou now thrust down into hell! Know now that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased."[44] After this adventure, the ill-

De sancto Anthonio antiphona.

Ecce accelo ad beatum antho
nium facta est quoma similiter
dimicastis. Ecce ego tecum sum


accoglie Sfreco di Cavallo stimolato dal
di à uolo

advised monk despairing of salvation returned to the world and, wholly abandoning himself to debauchery and wickedness, yielded himself irrevocably a prey to Satan.

Rufinus bids us heed the fact that the monk could, with the tears of repentance, have purged himself of the sin he committed and, by fastings and prayers, have returned to his former state of grace. Indeed, Saint Victorinus,[45] bishop of Amiternum, fell into the same sin; but he was able by fearful penances to ransom himself from the hands of the victorious enemy. And so did many others.

It is hardly necessary to say that when it was a case of tempting female saints rather than male ones, the Devil assumed the guise of a handsome youth, no less bold than tender. In that very form he appeared to Saint Francesca Romana (1384-1440), who was forced to endure much from his importunities.

Not always would the Devil consent to play the part described in these tales, nor did he always deem it necessary to do so. He might sometimes content himself with awakening certain desires; for these desires are sinful in themselves, and his

Anonymous, *Florentine Painting in Nine Panels* (detail), 1501.
Museo Stibbert, Florence, Italy.

Anonymous, *Florentine Painting in Nine Panels*, 1501.
Museo Stibbert, Florence, Italy.

natural maliciousness could find peculiar satisfaction in arousing such desires and then granting them no means of gratification. Saint Gregory the Great tells how the Devil once kindled in the body of Saint Benedict (480-547) so furious and convulsive a flame of concupiscence that, in order to quell it, the poor saint found no other recourse than to strip himself naked and roll, over and over in a bramble bush. When he could do nothing else, the Devil would provoke nocturnal pollutions, which, though involuntary, could be counted as sin if accompanied by lascivious images and pleasurable sensations, and which, in any case, sufficed to keep alive certain energies and to perturb the imagination.

At his own pleasure, the Devil would assume this form or that, either to render his tempting more effective or to lead men into one particular sin rather than another. To holy men he would often make himself appear in the figure of an angel, clothed in light,[46] or of a saint, or of Christ himself, the marks of godhead on his brow; and this he did in order that they might become puffed up with pride, provoking within them an exaggerated idea of their own holiness, or in order to suggest to them false and wicked doctrines and baneful purposes. By means of this artifice he more than once urged on to suicide men of sinless life, who had hitherto triumphantly resisted his every attack. It is related of the monk Hero (died in 128), that for fifty years he had led in the desert a life of such extreme austerity that even at Eastertide he would not relax the rigor of his abstinences. One day the Devil appears to him in the form of an angel and bids him cast himself headlong into a well; which he does, without a moment's hesitation, firm in the belief that he will come forth unharmed and that this will be a great and irrefutable proof of his own sanctity and of divine grace. The other monks succeed, with great difficulty, in drawing him out of the well, and within three days he dies.

Another example: Guibert of Nogent (died in 1124) recounts the tale of a youth who had sinned with a woman and, repenting, had gone on a pilgrimage to Saint James of Galicia. One fine day the Devil appeared to him in the guise of that saint and imposed this penance upon him: he was first to cut off what the discreet reader will guess without my mentioning it; next, to cut his throat. The heedless youth obeyed and would have gone straight to hell, had not the blessed Virgin revived him at the critical instant. He came back to life, but nevermore did he possess that which he had removed with his own hands.

On the other hand there were certain saints whom the Devil, disguise himself as he would, never succeeded in deceiving. Saint Martin has already been mentioned by me. One day the Devil presented himself to him, robed in purple, a crown upon his head, and wearing gilded shoes, and said to him: "Dost thou not know me? I am Christ." But the saint made answer: "Thou, Christ? Christ had neither purple robe nor crown, and I know him only naked, as he was upon the cross. Thou art the Devil!" Oh had the popes but meditated on this answer!

Rarer were the cases where the demon came to tempt in his own proper form; but even such cases did occur. Satan did not transform or disguise himself in order to tempt Christ. Saint Pachomius once saw a pack of devils dragging along a bundle of leaves and pretending that this was costing them great effort, for no other reason than to move the saint to laughter. Now laughter, if not itself a sin, could well become the seed of sin. The best monks never laughed; rather, they wept often, like that Saint Abraham of Syria (died about 390) who passed not a single day without weeping.

I have said nothing of the myriad light and petty temptations that were almost continually intruding themselves with no other end than to distract one from meditation and prayer or to cause the sufferer to lose his patience: such acts as, for instance, mimicking, echo-like, the words of the readers; causing the preacher to sneeze repeatedly in the midst of the finest passage in his sermon; making a persistent fly alight ten times in succession on the face of one who is just yielding himself up to sleep; and so forth. But it must be kept in mind that there is no temptation so small, so trivial, that it cannot become the beginning of an irreparable fall. Put a seed in the ground, and if the elements and the conditions necessary to vegetation do not fail, the seed becomes a plant. Thus the Devil, who fully understands such matters, succeeds, with a single temptation and oftentimes a most trivial one, in placing in the mind the first germ of sin; and this germ, aided by him, straightway takes root, grows, becomes a plant, and in a short time bears its pernicious fruits. There was a hermit who lived a most austere life and had great reputation for holiness. One day the Devil appeared before him in the semblance of an honest wight and said to him: "You live such a lonely life; why don't you get a cock to bear you company and to rouse you betimes in the morning?" The poor hermit at first refused, then hesitated, and finally followed this

Jacopo Robusti, also known as **Tintoretto,** *Temptation of Christ*, 1579-1581.
Oil on canvas, 539 x 330 cm.
Scuola Grande di San Rocco, Venice, Italy.

Sandro Botticelli, *Three Temptations of Christ*, 1481-1482.
Fresco, 345 x 555 cm.
Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

advice and procured the cock. What harm in that? A cock cannot possibly be the Devil. But the cock becomes weary of living by himself and grows thinner from day to day. Then the hermit, through a sentiment of charity, provides a hen for the cock. Oh that he had never done so! The sight of certain spectacles awakens within his mind old ardours which he thought forever quenched. He becomes enamoured of the daughter of a neighbouring nobleman, a young and very beautiful girl; he sins with her; then, to escape the vengeance of her parents, he kills the girl and conceals her body beneath his couch. But the crime is discovered and the criminal is sentenced to pay the supreme penalty. While mounting the scaffold, he exclaims: "Behold, to what an end a cock has brought me!"

Temptations like these gave the Devil but little trouble, and they attained their end almost of themselves; but there were others for which the Devil made preparation long beforehand and which he supervised with tireless diligence and marvellous patience. A certain tale, which was in vogue in the Middle Ages and which, along with others, was recorded by Bernardo Giambullari (1450-1525), relates how the Devil once assumed the shape of a small boy and, as such, succeeded in being admitted to a monastery that was in the highest odour of sanctity. The abbot, honest man, caused him to be taught, and seeing that the child learned everything with the utmost ease, he felt that the convent had made a great acquisition and he thanked God repeatedly for it. When the lad was grown and become of age, he donned the cowl, to the great joy of the brethren; and the old abbot dying a few years later, the youth succeeded to his office by their unanimous vote. But it was not long till the rule of the convent began to be relaxed and its customs to be corrupted. The new abbot greatly improved the daily fare, freely granted dispensations, and facilitated in every way the relations of his monks with the sisters of a neighbouring nunnery. Great was the scandal and daily it grew greater. The Pope, informed of this, straightway sent two monks of holy life, in whom he had full confidence, to look into the matter and take necessary measures. They began their investigations, and when these had reached a certain stage, the Devil, realising that he was discovered, cast off the insignia of his usurped office and vanished into the depths of the earth. The erring monks did penance, and the old order was restored. A story widely known at one time in Denmark, Germany and England is that of Friar Ruus, Rush, or Rausch, a devil who set himself up as a scullion in a convent, acted as intermediary between the abbot and the other monks, was after several years received into the order, and would have brought the whole convent to perdition had he not been discovered by a mere chance.

It is clear that the demon, old fox that he is, did not always take the most direct way to arrive at his goal, well knowing that the most direct way is not always the shortest or the safest. Instead, he not seldom chose a course that seemed as if it would lead him to a goal absolutely the opposite of that which he had set for himself, but a course that was the safer for him the less it was suspected by others. Thus, if he saw a man entirely given up to the practices of devotion, deaf to all flattery, inaccessible to error, he wasted no time in irritating him with temptations of a more or less worldly character; on the contrary, he exhorted him to perseverance, he urged him to intensify his self-mortifications, to redouble his prayers, to exaggerate all the practices of asceticism, and he even succeeded in inspiring within him a profound understanding of the Scriptures, as may be seen in the case of Saint Norbert, Bishop of Magdeburg (1080-1134).

Of Saint Simeon of Treves (tenth century) we are told that the devils, wishing to force him to say mass, dragged him from his bed, led him before the altar and laid his priestly robes upon him. The not unnatural result of this was that the holy man, marvelling at his own holiness, began to be puffed up with pride and to lose, through this one sin, the fruits of all his virtue. Thus, through desiring to be too holy, holy men sometimes came in the end to hell.

In employing this kind of temptation, the Devil rarely availed himself of external means, which might make an impression on the senses; but he had recourse to that dangerous faculty which he possesses of exciting men's minds and influencing them in various ways. Nor were these, as we might imagine, the only temptations that he could employ by virtue of that faculty. Granted that the will suffers no violence from him, all the other powers of the human mind submit readily to his influence, and this influence resolves itself into a work of continuous temptation.

Martin Schongauer, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, c. 1470-1475.
Engraving, 29.1 x 22 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

David Teniers the Younger, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, c. 1640-1650.
Wood, 63 x 50 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Master of 1445, *The Temptation of St. Anthony,* vers 1450.
Oil on wood, 47,5 x 41,5 cm. Rosgarten-Museum, Konstanz, Germany.

Here, too, the Lives of the Saints abound in examples and proofs. Across the mirror of the soul he caused to pass those images that best suited him, and over her living substance he scattered with lavish hand the most varied ferments. He raised seductive spectres, evoked pungent memories, quickened desires, stirred up doubts, fostered fears, inspired deep and painful anxieties, encouraged that secret but complete perturbation of spirit wherein sin takes on shape and substance as does the cloud amid the gyrations of the whirlwind.

Thus the Devil was ever lurking about men's souls to seduce them and snatch them; for this reason he is called the hunter, the fisher, the ravisher, the robber, the murderer, of souls. Saint Jerome went so far as to call him a pirate; for this world is in truth like a stormy sea, painfully navigated by us, triumphantly skimmed by him. I say, by him; but I ought to say, by them; for all the devils made a business of temptation, and it was also a commonly accepted opinion that each vice had its own particular demons who taught and encouraged it. These received from their prince the necessary orders and suitable instructions; then, their tasks completed, they returned to give account of themselves, and those who had done themselves but little honour met with a harsh reception. Saint Gregory the Great tells of a diabolic assembly or council of this sort that was held in the temple of Apollo. In the Lives of the Saints and the Fathers there is found a curious tale which proves that the devils had hard work to satisfy their prince. The son of an idolatrous priest, entering the temple one day, sees Satan seated on his throne, surrounded by his soldiery and acting as inquisitor and judge. A demon appears and makes his reverence, and Satan asks him: "Where hast thou been, and what hast thou done?" The demon makes answer: "I have been in such and such a province, and I have stirred up wars and great commotions and caused much bloodshed." "And how much time," asks Satan, "didst thou spend at this task ?" "Thirty days." "Didst thou require so many!" says Satan, and straightway orders him to be soundly flogged. Up comes another devil. "Whence comest thou? What hast thou done?" "I have been upon the sea; I have raised great tempests and sunk many ships; I have caused the deaths of multitudes of men." "In how much time?" "In twenty days." "Too many!" cries Satan, and immediately orders him to be flogged. Then comes a third devil, and the interrogatory begins anew: "Thou, now! What hast thou done?" "I have been in such and such a city and, while a certain wedding feast was in progress, I inflamed the passions of the guests, I stirred up quarrels and broils, I brought about many slayings, and I killed the bridegroom himself." "In how many days?" "In ten." "Fiddlesticks!" quoth Satan, and he turned him over to the floggers. And lo, at last a fourth devil appears. "Whence comest thou? What hast thou done?" "I have been in the desert where I have tempted a monk for the space of forty years, and only last night did I succeed in overcoming him and causing him to commit fornication." On hearing this, Satan arises from his seat and kisses the demon; then he lays his own crown on his head and makes him sit down beside him, saying: "'Tis a great thing thou hast done, and thou hast acquitted thyself right valiantly!"

This tale teaches us, among other things, that temptation could be at times a very difficult task; but how difficult was the resistance to the temptation, it does not say. The Doctors declare, it is true, that the temptation never exceeds the forces of the tempted one, since this is demanded by God's kindness and justice; but the countless tempted ones who fell might generally be of another opinion. Be this as it may, the fact remains that resistance to temptation was, sometimes at least, not devoid of great danger. Caesarius relates the pitiful case of an honest man who refused to make love to a devil and whom the demon then seized by the hair, carried up into the air, and then dashed down to the earth in such a violent manner that a year later the poor man died.

All men, as we have seen, were exposed to temptation, and the temptation endured their whole life through. The saint, instead of being immune from it, experienced it in more violent and persistent form than did anyone else; nevertheless, he had a means of freeing himself which could not be employed by poor sinners. When he had subdued within himself all instincts and all energies; when, by dint of fastings, flagellations, vigils and prayers, he had slain the flesh, deranged the memory, quenched the imagination, benumbed the intellect; when he had created within himself the silence and the immobility of death; then temptation ceased, as the flame ceases when it finds nothing left to kindle. He who, like Saint Simeon Stylites, has passed half a century on the top of a pillar, can laugh at all the tempter's arts. The saint, turned to a stone, has attained perfection.

Hieronymus Bosch, *The Ship of Fools,* or *The Satire of the Debauched Reveler*, c. 1510-1515. Oil on canvas, 58 x 33 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Hieronymus Bosch, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, triptych, 1505-1506. Oil on wood, 131.5 x 119 cm (central panel), 131.5 x 53 cm (side panels). Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal.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The Loves and the Offspring of the Devil

TEMPTING, tormenting, invading souls like fortresses taken by storm, Satan and his spirits were in perpetual intercourse with men and formed with them various and manifold bonds of union. Possession was the most intimate of these bonds, and (however the matter may be explained) it resulted always in a species of wedlock, a sort of cohabitation, which might be followed by a malignant fecundation and the propagation of sin. But possession was a simple spiritual union; and the devils, always intent on seeking their own gain by every means and in every way, must needs desire a different union, must strive to join themselves carnally with human beings, to fuse in one monstrous progeny the human and the diabolic, and to beget children who should be, from the hour of their conception, consecrated to hell. And they did beget such children, and the world knew these, and more than once it felt the full weight of their evil power.

This matter, however, is not altogether clear. How did the devils proceed to procreate? That they had power to do so seemed to be indicated by a passage in Genesis,[47] which apparently declares that the angels had commerce with the daughters of men and begot the giants; and by many it was believed that the demons were actually those sinful angels who had soiled their heavenly nature in the mire of sensuality. Nevertheless, many doubts were expressed and many difficulties raised concerning this subject by theologians of high and low degree, nor are their opinions altogether in harmony among themselves. According to the Cabalists, the demons regularly copulate with one another and propagate their kind after the same fashion as do men. In Germany, mention is often made of the Devil's grandmother, a woman not altogether bad, provided with nine hundred heads; and among the South Italians, his mother is known and frequently spoken of. The Rabbis give the names of the four wives of Sammael, mothers of countless demons. The Greek, Michael Psellus, secretary to the Emperor of Constantinople, monk of Mount Olympus in Bithynia, philosopher, mathematician, physician, orator, alchemist and theologian, who lived toward the close of the eleventh century, declares in a certain treatise of his on the works of demons, that these beings are certainly able to procreate, provided as they are with all that is necessary for that purpose. But just on this point, opinions are divided. Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Saint Bonaventure and numerous other theologians, stoutly affirm that the devils have no seed of their own and therefore do not procreate, in the true sense of the term; but, becoming succubi, they receive the seed of a man, and then transforming themselves into incubi, they impregnate with this seed the woman to whom they join themselves; and thus they procreate. Theirs would be, indeed, a peculiar form of putative paternity; a form, however, which does not always preclude the transmission of certain diabolic traits to the offspring begotten in this manner. Ludovico Dolce (1508-1568) was wrong, then, when he made a certain Era Girolamo (in his comedy entitled *The Husband)* declare with excessive self-confidence:

> "The demons are not able to conceive —
> Or, rather, to cause women to conceive —
> Because they have no seed; nor the Most High
> Would suffer baptised woman to become
> With child by any demon. Therefore let
> The others babble; for in full accord
> With what I say are theologians all."

But the Most High did suffer the Devil to do so many things: why should he have forbidden him this? And what of the women who were not baptised? The common people, who understand but little and care less about the fine distinctions, the subtleties and the fantasies of the learned theologians, frankly believed—without troubling themselves about the method employed—that the devils could beget children; and they believe it to this day, wherever they have not shaken off their ancient superstitions and their ancient ignorance.

And why should not the devils have been able to procreate, if the phantoms of dead women were able to conceive and bring forth children? The Englishman, Walter Mapes (died about 1220), tells in his book *De Nugis Curialium,* "Concerning the Triflings of the Courtiers", the marvellous tale of a knight of Britain who, riding one night through a lonely valley, discovered in the midst of a band of women sporting in the quiet moonlight, his own wife who had died some time before; he bore her off, like a bride, lived happily with her for many years, and had by her several sons, who were commonly known as "the sons of the dead woman", *filii mortuae.*

André-Jacques-Victor Orsel, *Good and Evil: The Devil Tempting a Young Woman* (detail), 1832.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lyon, France.

Jacques le Grand, *Book of Good Morals: Bethseba in the Bath*.
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

The devils acted sometimes as incubi, sometimes as succubi; that is, as males or females, according to their pleasure or according to the occasion; but I make haste to say (without assuming to give the reasons for it) that they much preferred being males rather than females. Thomas Cantipratensis assures us that he had many times received the confessions of women who complained of having been violated by incubi; and in the Life of Saint Bernard is related the scandalous story of a brazen devil who, for several years in succession, lay daily with a certain woman, without the slightest check or restraint, so that he would even thrust himself into the bed where the poor husband also was sleeping.

That human nature could be profoundly disturbed and disordered by such fearful contacts; that the diabolic embraces could at times prove deadly, will seem strange to no one; and whoever seeks proofs of these facts can find them in abundance in the works of medieval writers. Thomas Walsingham, (1340-1420) who was a monk of Saint Albans, in England, about 1440, relates the terrible tale of a girl who was polluted by a devil and died at the end of three days, her whole body being bloated and emitting a fearful stench. Caesarius goes even further, and tells of a woman who, being embraced (and merely embraced) by a devil clothed in white, suddenly went mad and died shortly afterward; also, of a woman whose hand was touched by a devil disguised as a servant, and who suffered the same fate.

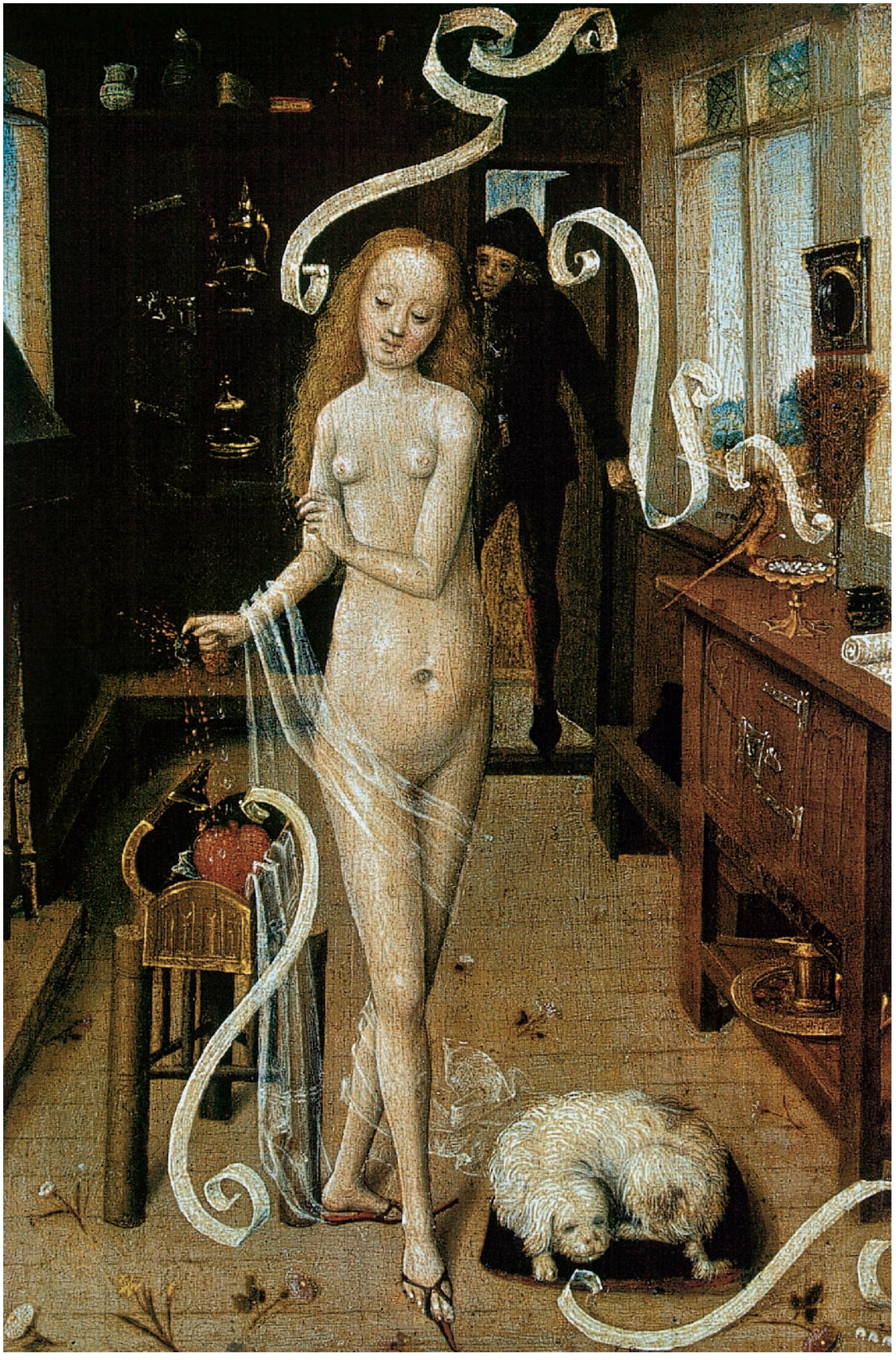
But far stranger than these cases is, I think, the fact that women of flesh and blood would, year after year, suffer such connubial relations with no great reluctance or revolt; of this fact there exist abundant proofs and examples. Famous among such cases is that of a devil and a woman whose amours lasted for a quarter of a century. And it seems that, at times, the devils actually fell in love, despite the theologians, who claim that in their depraved natures love cannot take root. Gervaise of Tilbury, who was thoroughly versed in such mystic matters, boldly affirms that certain demons love women with so genuine a passion that, to possess them, they will resort to every artifice and every form of deceit.

Abominable yearnings, reciprocating those of the demons, sprang up in the hearts of certain women, in whom the thought of supernatural embraces had awakened strange fancies and monstrous desires. To how many must it have seemed a fearful yet enviable lot to have as a lover an angel of fire! Alvaro Pelagio, bishop of Silva, who about the year 1332 composed in Latin a book entitled "The Lament of the Church", says that he knew many nuns who voluntarily offered themselves to the fiend. Witches were the usual and willing mistresses of the devils, who, in their assemblies and revels (of which I shall have occasion to speak later) had commerce with them openly. Countless are the cases of witches who, at their trials, freely and shamelessly confessed such intimacies, and who paid the penalty for them at the stake; and more than one added the astounding statement that the seed of the devils is cold as ice.

Michael Lermontov (1814-1841), one of the greatest poets that Russia has produced in the nineteenth century (he perished, at the age of twenty-six, in a duel), ennobled the theme of so many gloomy legends in one of his finest poems, entitled "The Demon". Satan, far off mid the wild and marvellous solitudes of the Caucasus, falls hopelessly in love with a very beautiful girl named Tamara. This girl, on the death of her betrothed, buries herself in a convent; but the enamoured demon pursues her even there and succeeds in winning her love; and he swears that in return for this love he is willing to renounce his past and yield himself to God. The embraces of the proud but fallen angel destroy the frail creature, who, pardoned and sanctified, is taken up to heaven by the angels; while her lover, unrepentant, sinks back into the eternal darkness.

The succubi were no less daring and dangerous than the incubi. Caesarius tells of a neophyte who, embraced in his bed and kissed by a devil disguised as a nun, fell ill and died within three days; he also records the case of a worthy man who, refusing to succumb to the lustful advances of a succubus, was carried through the air by the fiend and then dashed to the ground; his injuries were so severe that, after languishing for a year, he passed to the other world. But of all the succubi known to the Middle Ages, the most seductive was Venus; that Venus who, changed at the bidding of a newer faith from a deity to a demon, inflamed with love for herself the gentle knight and poet Tannhäuser, and many others beside, on whom she freely lavished her favours. She was loved by many; and some of these, perchance, she herself loved, as in the olden time; certain it is that she was jealous of the rights that she had justly or unjustly acquired, and sturdily did she strive to make these rights prevail. This is evidenced by the following case, which has been recorded by several writers, and which I will relate once

Hans Memling, *Vanity*, central panel of the *Triptych of Terrestrial Vanity and Celestial Redemption*, c. 1490. Oil on wood, 22 x 14 cm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Strasbourg, France.



more, turning into modern speech the highly coloured Latin of a certain English chronicler, William of Malmsbury, who was the first to tell the tale, in the twelfth century.

A youthful citizen of Rome, blessed with great wealth and sprung from an illustrious family of senatorial rank, having taken a wife, invited his friends to the bridal feast. When the meal was over and the general gaiety had been stimulated by the most generous wines, the company went out into a meadow, seeking by means of dancing, archery contests and other sports, to ease their stomachs, overburdened with food. The bridegroom, master of the feast, called for a ball; and taking off his wedding ring, he placed it on the finger of a bronze statue that stood near by. But as his companions continued to tease him with their jests, hot and angry, he withdrew from the field, and, attempting to retrieve his ring, he found the finger of the statue bent down on the palm of its hand, though before it had been extended. After struggling for a season, without being able either to pull off the ring or to break the finger, he decided to say nothing about the matter to his companions, lest in his presence they should laugh at him, or in his absence steal the ring; and so he quietly departed. But when he returned, after nightfall, with some of his intimate friends, he was dumfounded to find the finger straightened again and the ring gone. Nevertheless, concealing his loss, he suffered himself to be consoled by the caresses of his bride, and when the hour for retiring arrived he lay down beside her. But scarcely had he done so, when he felt some sort of a nebulous but tangible body moving between himself and her. When the conjugal embrace had been prevented by this impediment, he heard a voice saying: "Lie down beside me; for this day thou didst espouse me. I am Venus, on whose finger thou didst place the wedding ring; the ring is in my keeping, nor will I give it back again." Terrified at this prodigy, the youth neither dared nor was able to make any answer, and he spent the whole night in sleeplessness, secretly turning over the matter in his mind. A long time passed; and at whatever hour he sought to approach his wife, he always felt the same obstacle and heard the same words; in all else, he was unhampered and unmolested. At last, moved by the reproaches of his wife, he discovered the whole matter to their parents; and they, after taking counsel together, laid the case before a suburban priest, Palumbus by name. This man possessed the power of producing magic figures by necromantic arts and of inspiring fear in demons, making them act according to his pleasure. When the fee had been arranged—and it was to be a generous one, which would fill his purse with gold as soon as he should bring the pair together—he made use of the most potent of his arts and, composing a letter, he gave it to the youth, saying: "Go, at such and such an hour of the night, to the crossroads,

School of the Low Rhine, *Love's Spell*, c. 1489.
Museum der Bildenden Kunste, Leipzig, Germany.

Anonymous, *Aphrodite*, or *Venus Genetrix*, Roman copy after a Greek original created by Callimaque at the end of the 5th century B.C., c. 1st-2nd century A.D. Marble, height: 164 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

where the highway divides into four branches; and pay strict heed to what thou seest there. There will pass by thee many human shapes, of both sexes and of all ages, of every degree and every condition, some on horseback, others on foot, certain ones with their faces bent earthward, others with brows haughtily lifted; and, many as will be the forms and semblances of joy and of sorrow, all these thou canst read in their countenances and in their gestures. Speak to none of them, even though they speak to thee. After all this train, there will come one of greater stature than the rest and of greater bulk, sitting in a chariot; to him thou shalt, in silence, give this letter; and straightway thy desire will be fulfilled, if only thou be of a stout heart."

The youth betook him to the spot, as he had been commanded; and, standing there, in the night, under the clear sky, he perceived the truth of all that the priest had told him, for there was nothing lacking of all that had been promised. Among the others that were passing by, he beheld a woman, riding on a mule and dressed like a harlot, her hair falling loosely over her shoulders but clasped about her head with a band of gold. In her hand she held a golden wand, with which she guided her mount; while, the transparency of her robe making her appear almost naked, she indulged in shameless attitudes and gestures. And now the last one in the procession, who seemed to be the master of the rest, fastening his terrible eyes on the youth from his proud chariot, all gleaming with emeralds and pearls, demanded the reason for his coming; but the youth, making no answer, stretched forth his hand and gave him the letter. The demon, not daring to ignore the familiar seal, read the writing; and straightway raising his arms toward the sky, he cried: "Almighty God! How long wilt thou suffer the wickedness of this Palumbus?" And without a moment's delay, he bade two of his attendants take the ring from Venus, who, after long demurring, at last surrendered it. And so the youth, his desire attained, was able to enjoy the love that he had so long sighed for; but when Palumbus heard of the complaint that the demon had made to God concerning him, he perceived that his end was at hand. Accordingly, voluntarily causing his limbs to be cut off, he died from this fearful act of penance, after having confessed to the pope and to the people all his incredible crimes.

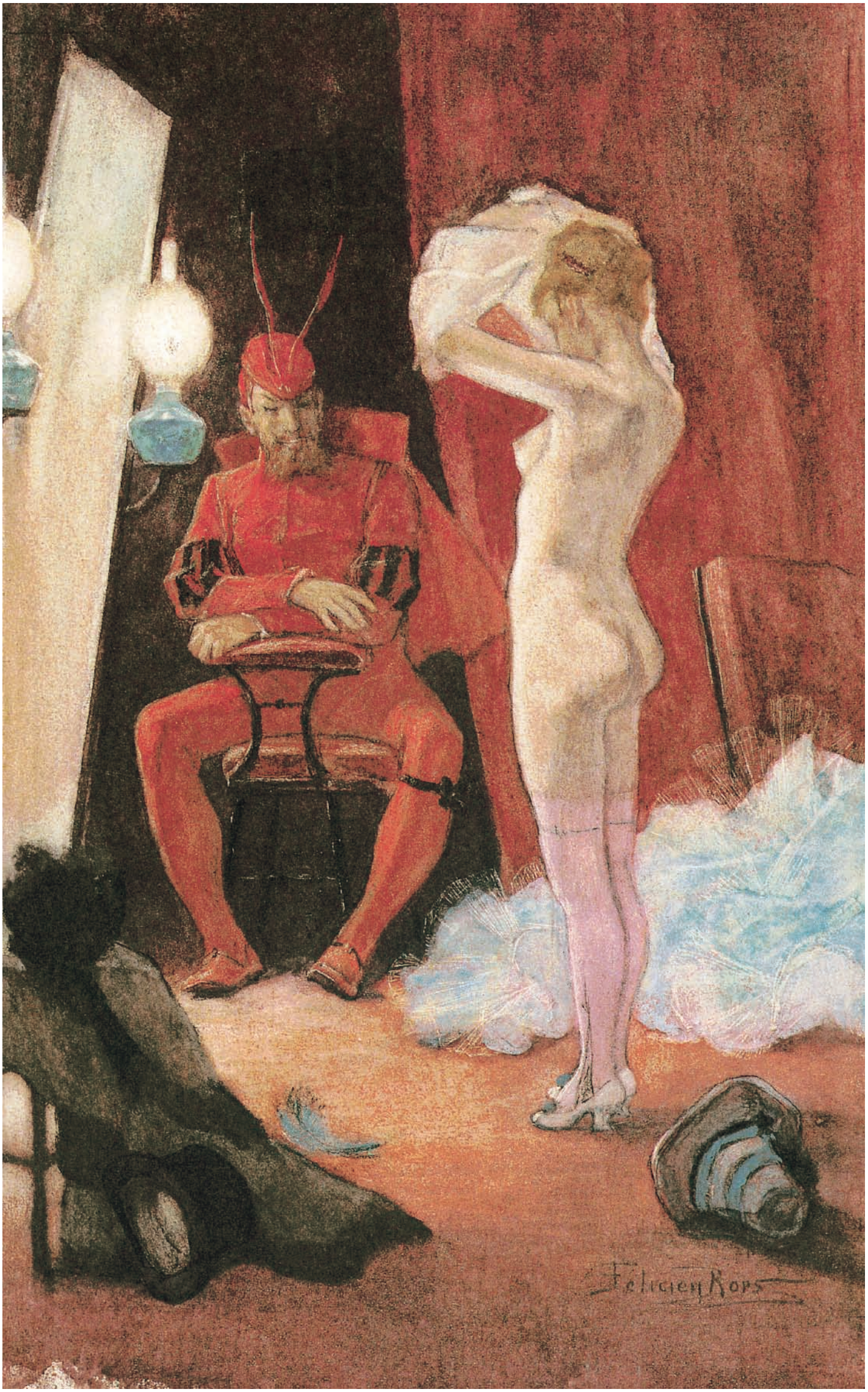
Thus says William; and he adds, in closing, that even in his day, at Rome and in the surrounding countryside, mothers still used to tell this story to their children, that they in turn might impart the tradition to their descendants.

I will not leave the subject of the succubi without saying that the beautiful Helen, famed in legend as the mistress of Simon Magus, was a devil, according to the best authorities; also, that from love affairs with succubi Cazotte (1719-1792) drew the theme of his grotesque tale, *Le Diable Amoureux*, and Balzac that of one of his *Contes Drôlatiques*.

To force the devils to abandon the pursuit of their pleasures was no easy task, neither was it devoid of danger. In one of the countless legends of the Virgin, we are told of a woman who had, to no avail, made use of the sign of the cross, holy water, prayer and relics, in order to escape from a great devil who kept her as his wife; but at last, finding herself one day again at his mercy, she raised her arms to heaven, calling on the holy name of Mary, and the importunate fiend was henceforth powerless. Caesarius of Heisterbach tells a different story. In the city of Bonn, a devil seduces and debauches the daughter of a priest. The girl confesses the affair to her father, who, to put an end to the scandal, sends his daughter away from home to the other side of the Rhine. The devil appears, and not finding his sweetheart, he rushes to her father, crying: "Thou wicked priest, what has thou done with my wife?" Then he gives him such a thump in the chest, that, after two days, the poor man gives up the ghost.

We have seen that the devils, in either a natural or an unnatural manner, were capable of procreation; and since they were numberless, it is not to be wondered at if the number of their children was immense. Jordanes, the historian of the Goths, in the fourth century, declares that the Huns were born of the union of horrible witches with incubi; and during the whole period of the Middle Ages, there was a decided tendency to regard all deformed and misshapen children as the offspring of the Devil; for that reason, they were destroyed without any scruple. In 1265, a woman already past fifty, Angelle de Labarthe, confessed at Toulouse that she had borne the Devil a son, with a wolf's head and a serpent's tail, whom she was obliged to feed with the flesh of infants. According to another opinion, confirmed by notable examples, the Devil's children were robust, high-spirited, full of intelligence and energy. The historian Matthew Paris (died in 1259) records the case of a child who, at the age of six months, was as large as a youth of eighteen years. The Church characterised, and still characterises, as a child of Satan any one who deviates a hair's breadth from the teachings of the catechism; but this is a figure of speech and nothing more.

Félicien Rops, *Backstage*, c. 1890.
Coloured pencil, pastel and watercolour, 22 x 14.5 cm.
Private collection, Brussels, Belgium.


Felicien Rops

Anonymous, *The Conception of Merlin*, in the *Story of Merlin*, c. 1450-1455.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

Langlumé, *The Nightmare*, in *L'Album comique*, c. 1825.
Private collection, Paris, France.

The same lot befalls the sons of Satan that befalls the sons of men: the majority pass on unknown and undeserving of renown; a few thrust themselves forth from the vulgar herd and fill the world with their names and with the fame of their exploits; and there are even some who, overcoming the doom of their origin and the inborn curse of their own nature, redeem themselves eternally from hell and at last gain heaven. I will mention only the most eminent of these.

The most ancient example is Cain, the first murderer. The Rabbis declare that Adam had commerce with succubi, and Eve with incubi (a fine way, it would seem, of accounting for the genesis of the human race); Cain was the son of one of these incubi, clearly proving his origin by his acts. This belief, moreover, was not that of the Rabbis alone; it was recorded in the Suda Lexicon (tenth century).

Attila, the Scourge of God, was a son of the Devil, according to some; according to others, the son of a mastiff: and a son of the Devil was also Theodoric, king of the Goths, as is proved by the fact that he breathed fire from his mouth and, living, went to join his father in hell.

The story of the magician and prophet Merlin is, in this respect, more detailed and better known. Hell, invaded and despoiled by Christ,[48] felt the need of repairing the loss thus suffered. Satan, the one most intimately concerned in the matter, resolves to beget a son who shall champion his cause among men and undo Jesus' work of redemption. Accordingly, through the combined efforts of all Hell, an honourable and illustrious family is dragged down to ruin, becoming a prey to dishonour and to death. Of two surviving daughters, the one gives herself up to the most shameless debauchery; the other, beautiful and chaste, long resists every temptation, until, finding herself one night deprived of the protection of Heaven through having neglected to cross herself, she gives the Devil a chance to overcome her and carry out his meditated design. Conscience-stricken and appalled at her misfortune, the girl strives by the austerity of the severest penances to atone for a sin that is not her own; and when the period set by nature has run its course, she brings into the world a son, who by his hairy body betrays his true origin. The babe is baptised (naturally without the father's consent) and receives the name of Merlin: then, in Heaven springs up the thought that it would be no small triumph to snatch from Hell the son of Satan himself; and the good God provides for this. Satan had imparted to his son the knowledge of the past and of the present; God adds to these the knowledge of the future. What better weapon against the deceits of the world and the wiles of the Devil? And Merlin, growing up, wrought many marvellous works, as one may read in the writings of the Venerable Bede, in ancient chronicles and in the tales of the Round Table; and he uttered many fair prophecies, of which several have already been fulfilled and the rest will be fulfilled, some time, with the aid of Heaven. To his father he gave not a thought in the world, but renounced him utterly. He died, we do not know precisely how or when; but we have every reason to believe that he passed to the abode of salvation.

However, to find salvation when God wishes us to be saved is not, after all, such a great work of merit; and far more worthy of admiration than was Merlin, is to my mind, that Robert the Devil whose history has given birth to poems, dramas, legends, moral tales and even an opera.[49] A terrible history, in truth; but full of noble lessons.

There was once a duchess of Normandy who was tormented with a desire to have children and yet could have none. Weary of recommending herself to God, who will not listen to her, she betakes herself to the Devil, and her wish is speedily satisfied. A son is born to her, a veritable firebrand. As an infant, he bites his nurse and tears out her hair; as a lad, he knifes his teachers; at the age of twenty, he becomes a bandit chief. He is dubbed knight, in the belief that thus the wicked instincts raging within him may be overcome; but thereafter he is worse than he was before. No one surpasses him in strength or in courage. In a tourney he overthrows and slays thirty opponents; then he goes roaming about the world; then he returns to his native land, and begins once more to play the bandit, robbing, burning, murdering, ravishing. One day, after cutting the throats of all the nuns of a certain abbey, he remembers his mother and goes in search of her. Soon as they spy him, the servants take to their heels, scattering in all directions; not one tarries to ask him whence he comes or what he desires. Then, for the first time in his life, Robert is astounded at the horror which he inspires in his fellow beings; for the first time, he becomes conscious of his own monstrous wickedness, and he feels how his heart is pierced by the sharp tooth of remorse. But why is he wickeder than other men? Why was he born thus? Who made him what he is? An ardent longing seizes him to unravel this mystery. He hastens to his mother, and with drawn sword he adjures her to unveil to him the secret of his birth. Learning this, he becomes frantic with terror, shame and grief. But his sturdy nature is not weakened; he does not yield to despair; instead, the hope of a laborious redemption, of a marvellous victory, urges and spurs on his proud spirit. He will learn to conquer Hell, to subdue himself, to thwart the designs of that accursed fiend who created him to serve his own ends, who has made of him a docile


LE VAU PIRE

instrument of destruction and of sin. And he makes no delay. He goes to Rome, casts himself at the feet of the pope, makes confession to a holy hermit, submits himself to the harshest kind of penance, and swears that henceforth he will taste no food that he has not first wrested from the jaws of a dog. On two separate occasions, when Rome was besieged by the Saracens, he fights incognito for the Emperor and gains the victory for the Christians. Recognised at last, he refuses all rewards and honours, the imperial crown, even the monarch's own daughter, goes away to dwell with his hermit in the wilderness, and dies a saint, blessed by both God and men. In other accounts, he finally weds the beautiful princess who is deeply in love with him.

But not always did the Devil's sons come to a good end; and Ezzelino da Romano, tyrant of Padua, like many others is a proof of this—

> That Ezzelino, fellest tyrant he!
> Whom men believed the Devil's son to be.

Such he was believed to be; and such, indeed, he was, if the stories concerning him do not lie. In his tragedy entitled *Eccerinis,* Albertino Mussato (1261-1330) lays bare the horrible secret of this monster's mother, Adelaide. Ezzelino and his brother Alberico were both begotten by the Devil, who assumed on that occasion the form of a bull. Zeus in his time, had not disdained to do likewise. Learning his own origin, Ezzelino rejoices and glories in it, and promises to act in such a manner that the world will acknowledge him to be a worthy son of so great a sire. And he kept his promise. This time, the Devil will not see himself repudiated by those very ones to whom he himself gave life, nor defrauded of his own most legitimate hopes. Ezzelino becomes Lord of Padua, and with the help of his brother he carries out his accursed purpose; and he rages like a fury, impervious to any feeling of humanity, deaf to the warnings that Heaven does not fail to give him. But the punishment so richly deserved is not long delayed. Defeated at the Bridge of Cassano, the wicked man dies in despair, and his brother is not long in following him.

I will note, in passing, that even Luther was held by his adversaries to be a son of the demon, who had masqueraded in the garb of a jeweller. And now I come to the greatest of all those begotten of Satan, to him who is not yet born but to be born, to that formidable champion of Hell who shall be Antichrist. His very name reveals his nature and declares his works.

Once in the past, if an Anglo-Saxon poem of the ninth century is to be believed, Satan tried to oppose a son of his own to Jesus and even endeavoured to set him in the Saviour's place. This effort having failed, he awaits a more propitious occasion, and he will renew his attempt when the time is ripe and the end of the world draws near. His final hopes all hang on this his dearest offspring.

Opinions regarding this personage have been many and various. In the Apocalypse, Antichrist is Nero, whom later, in certain fearful legends of the Middle Ages, we see become a devil. In the eighth century, Antichrist was recognised in Mohammed; in the thirteenth, in Frederick II. Concerning the manner of his birth many things have been told. Saint Ephraem, bishop of Edessa, who is believed to have lived in the fourth century, affirmed that he would be born of a woman of evil life; others, however, said that he would be born of a virgin, an opinion which was opposed in the tenth century by Adso in his treatise *De Antichristo.* Some were content to believe that he would have a man for his father, but would be possessed of the Devil from the very hour of his conception; others declared that his father would be the Prince of Hell himself. And this was the opinion most generally accepted.

The innumerable treatises on Christ's last adversary and his doings which the Middle Ages have left to us, many of them lying unedited and forgotten in the libraries, give us a clear idea of the anxiety and terror that were kept alive in men's minds by the ever imminent and inevitable danger of his coming. In these are found recorded the awful signs which were to presage to a fear-stricken world his speedy appearance, and the question was often raised whether some of these were not already to be seen. In imagination, the horrors of "the last times"[50] were multiplied and exaggerated, and from time to time there spread through Christendom the dread tidings that the man of doom was now born, or about to be born. About the year 380, Martin, bishop of Tours, believed him already born; and so did Bishop Ranieri of Florence about 1080, and Norbert, Archbishop of Magdeburg, some decades later. In the time of Innocent VI (Pope (at Avignon) 1352-1362), a Minorite friar announced his birth to take place in the year 1365, while the year 1376 was set by Arnaldus Villanovanus (1238-1312). In 1412 Vincentius Ferrer (1350-1419) knew of a certainty, and so informed the antipope Benedict XIII, that the great enemy was already nine years old. Before the sacred tribunal of the Inquisition not a few witches confessed that they had known him and consorted with him.

But the years passed, discrediting newsmongers and prophets, against whom not a few arguments of no little weight were employed by men of less credulity and more curbed imagination. Not yet had the infallible signs appeared. Corruption and apostasy had not yet totally depraved the human race. The Holy

Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*, 1781.
Oil on canvas, 101.6 x 126.7 cm.
The Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, Michigan, USA.

Antoine Wiertz, *The Reader of Novels*, 1853.
Oil on canvas, 125 x 157 cm.
Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium.

Luca Signorelli, *Sermon and Deeds of the Antichrist*, 1499-1502.
Fresco. Duomo, Capella San Brizio, Orvieto, Italy.

Roman Empire still stood, which must utterly crumble at the appearance of the dread adversary. Antichrist was not yet come, though perchance he would tarry but a little longer. Not only were the acts of his entire life well-known, but his history was related as if it belonged to the past rather than to the future. He will gather into his own hands all the wealth of the world, a mighty instrument of corruption and of domination. He will break down the famous wall of Alexander the Great and the mighty iron gates, and the monstrous tribes of Gog and Magog will burst in like a resistless ocean. Never has there been knight or captain who could match him in valour or in knowledge of warfare. His arms none can withstand: in flames and blood will he lay waste cities and kingdoms; with his own hand will he slay the prophets Enoch and Elias, who have in vain come down to defend the Church; and setting all crowns on his own head, he will sit as sole monarch of the conquered earth. But thereafter will come the inevitable and richly deserved punishment; the wicked usurper, the son and champion of Satan, will be slain by Christ in person, or by the chieftain of the heavenly hosts, the sturdy, warlike archangel Michael; and together with him will the power of Hell be overcome and broken forever. Then the gates of the abyss will be closed and sealed forever: Satan's kingdom will be ended, and once more will the Kingdom of God begin, to end nevermore.

As the incubi could procreate, so could the succubi conceive and bring forth. In England it was at one time believed (nor are the chroniclers silent on this point) that one of the ancestors of Geoffrey Plantagenet had married a demon and begotten several children by this fiend. Concerning Baldwin, Count of Flanders and hero of an old French romance, is told a story of similar nature but richer in details. Swollen with pride, the count disdains to wed the daughter of the King of France and marries a lady of great beauty and charm whom he met one day in a forest, and who told him that she was the daughter of a very powerful king of Asia. At the end of a year twin children are born to them, two beautiful daughters. The count awaits word of that kingdom in the East, but no word comes; and in the meantime a hermit, who has an inkling of the fraud that has been practiced, begins to fill his mind with certain doubts and suspicions. One day the holy man arrives at the court while a banquet is in progress; he enters the hall and unceremoniously orders the countess, daughter of the King of the East, to betake herself instantly back to that Hell from whence she came. The countess (that is, the demon) does not wait for a second bidding, but darts off like an arrow, uttering a horrible and truly devilish shriek. The count, to expiate his sin, becomes a crusader and slays multitudes of the enemy. As for the two daughters, they failed to come to that bad end that might have been expected of them, born as they were of such a mother. Besides their natural children, begotten by themselves, the devils might have adoptive and adventitious children, either stolen by them, or bestowed on them by wicked or indifferent parents. Many edifying tales might be told in this connection, but I will content myself with relating a very few of them.

A girl, having become pregnant (thus writes the English annalist Roger of Hoveden, about 1200), and not wishing her error to become public, flees from her father's house when already very near the time of her delivery. She wanders alone through the fields, while a furious tempest is raging; and, weary of vainly invoking God for help, she calls the Devil to her aid. And lo, the demon appears to her in the form of a youth, and says to her: "Follow me". The maiden obeys, and he leads her to a sheepfold; and making for her there a bed of straw and kindling a brisk fire, he goes off in search of food. Two men who were passing by, seeing the fire, enter the fold, question the girl who is lying there, and learning the true state of affairs, hasten off to inform the curate and parishioners of a village near by. Back comes the Devil, bringing bread and water; and when the girl is somewhat revived, acting as midwife he assists the infant into the world. At this moment the curate arrives, armed with the cross and with holy water and followed by a great throng; he begins his exorcisms, and the Devil, unable to resist him, flees away with the newborn babe in his arms and is seen no more. The good mother, not in the least concerned for her child, thanks God for having saved her from the enemy and returns to her home.

Another story, no less marvellous than this but of happier outcome, is related by the Benedictine Walter de Coincy (died 1236) in his collected accounts of the miracles of the Virgin. There once lived a wedded pair, of high rank and of great virtue, who, after having had several children, made a vow of chastity to God and to the Virgin. But the flesh is weak, and the demon is never weary of beguiling. One night, at Eastertide, he kindles such a fire of concupiscence in the husband's heart that, forgetful of his high resolve, the man is willing at any cost to break his vow. The wife begs, warns and threatens; but at last, no longer able to resist, she cries: "If from our sin a son is born, I make free gift of him to the Devil." After nine months, there comes into the world a babe so fair and sweet that all who see him marvel at him. Several years go by, and the babe grows into a lad of the keenest intellect and the kindest nature and gifted with all noble qualities. His mother, who loves him tenderly, wastes herself with weeping, remembering her impious promise and the results

that are sure to follow. When the boy has completed his twelfth year, there appears to her a terrible demon, who informs her that three years thereafter he will come again and take away the one who by right belongs to him and whom he will not give up for anything in the world. The poor woman is in despair; and one day, yielding to the entreaties of her son, she reveals to him her secret. The son gives way to tears and sobs:

> And if he grieveth sorely, marvel not;
> For bitter, very bitter, is his lot.

At midnight he leaves his parents' house and sets out alone on his wanderings. He reaches Rome; and, like the knight Tannhäuser, he presents himself to the pope and tells his sad story. The pope, confronted with so strange a case, knows not what to say, but sends him to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the wisest man on the face of the earth. And now our pilgrim arrives at Jerusalem, after many hardships and many perils. The patriarch, like the pope, can see no remedy for him; but in the nick of time he bethinks him of a hermit, who dwells in a vast and dangerous forest and is a man of so holy life that the angels come down from heaven to converse with him; through him, perchance, the lad may receive counsel and aid. Weeping bitterly, the boy sets out once more on his journey; but in the meantime the three years have passed, and but a single day is lacking for the completion of the fatal term. On the Saturday before Easter he finds the hermit, who, hearing his story, is himself likewise dumfounded at first; but presently he takes heart, comforts the boy, bids him be of good cheer, and undertakes to render him the needed aid. Together they pass the night in prayer, and when morning comes the hermit, placing the boy before the altar, begins to celebrate mass. But behold, the Devil, with a troop of his followers behind him, bursts into the church and lays hands on the poor lad. The hermit cries in a loud voice to the Virgin to hasten to their help; and the glorious Virgin comes down from heaven, and in a flash she has put the foe to flight. The boy is saved. Full of gratitude, he takes leave of his benefactor and returns to his own land, where he is welcomed with unspeakable joy by his mother, and where he henceforth devotes himself wholly to the service of the blessed Virgin.

In another story, the Devil snatches away at the moment of its birth the child that has been consecrated to him, has it raised, and takes it with him in his journeyings about the world, treating it with every consideration, up to the age of fifteen. Then Saint James takes the lad away from the Devil and restores him to his parents. In other tales, the children are not given, but sold, to the Devil; though a robber, when he cannot steal he buys. Nor did such transactions involve children only. In one story, to which I shall have occasion to refer later, a knight makes a pact with the Devil whereby he pledges himself to give him his own wife after the lapse of seven years (how many a husband, in his place, would have given her up at once!). In still another tale we see how total strangers could be given to the Devil, and how the Devil (at least, occasionally) insisted that such donations be made from the heart and not merely with the lips. Thus runs the tale: A very wicked tax gatherer, rapacious and cruel, was on his way one day to a certain village, intending to carry out there one of his customary exactions. On the road he fell in with an individual whom he speedily recognised as the Devil; it is unnecessary to add that, on recognising him, he was anxious, for the best of reasons, to get rid of his company. They meet a man driving a pig which has given its owner so much trouble that, losing all patience, he cries out: "The Devil take you!" Says the tax gatherer to the Devil: "Don't you hear him? The man is giving you his pig; go and take it." "No", replied the Devil, "he isn't giving it from his heart." A little further on they find a mother who, exasperated at her crying child, shouts: "May the Devil have you!" "And why don't you take it?" exclaims the tax gatherer. "She isn't giving it to me from her heart", answers the Devil, "that's a mere figure of speech." Meanwhile they arrive at the village, and the poor villagers, seeing their tormenter coming, cry out in chorus : "The Devil take you! May you serve the Devil!" Quoth the Devil: "These people are giving you to me from their hearts, therefore you are mine." And saying no more, he seized him by the hair and carried him off.

Pacts with the Devil

WHEN the Devil cannot employ violence in order to obtain his ends, he employs cunning; and he cheerfully makes use of lawful means, if lawful means give promise of gain. Where it is not permitted him to steal, he bargains and barters; he purchases, at a higher or lower

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Gautier de Coincy, *The Life and Miracles of Our Lady: The Usurer and the Beggar* (four compartments), c. 1260-1270.
Parchment, 27.5 x 19 cm (text: 20.5 x 13.5 mm).
Russian National Library, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Nr ient el puis denfer puure

Lamors del ulurier t de la poure fame. Capitlin. x.

Tut li miracle nře dame
Sont li pireiz t douz p mame
Il est nul q̄ bié les vedrast.
Tui touz liaiers nen apiraſt


Ego sũ homo tuus

price, whatever would not otherwise be donated to him; he draws up contracts, he assumes obligations, and he meets them.

The idea of a possible pact with the Devil was, in times of livelier and more ingenuous faith, an idea that presented itself spontaneously to men's minds, and one that must have tempted many men with strange and keen allurements. If the most ardent desire of the Prince of Darkness was that of seducing souls; and if, to see the desire satisfied, he made use of all his power and all his art, why should one not believe that one could sell one's own soul in exchange for riches, or honours, or any other earthly boon, whereof he, as lord of the world, was so generous a disposer? And why should one not believe this, when we see Satan offering to Christ all the kingdoms of the world,[51] on condition that he be recognised as Christ's master and be worshiped by him? Naturally, also, the contract would need to be clothed in the forms, and accompanied by the securities, which among men are proof of its legality and validity, and which assure a mutual observance of obligations. Hence the writing, duly drawn up and signed, which the Devil demands of everyone who, in exchange for such and such a thing, pledges himself after a stated time to give him his own soul; and it is a curious fact that, while the Devil realises the need of assuring himself of the good faith of the other party to the contract by means of a document in due form and clearly worded, the other party usually feels no need of assuring himself in similar manner of the good faith of the Devil. It is a fact that the fiend almost always abides by his agreements, or at least by the letter if not the spirit of these agreements; while men very often do not abide by them, but strive to get back the documents, and when they have recovered them, laugh in their sleeves at him who so trusted them. Perhaps it was to give greater validity to the contracts that, beginning with the thirteenth century, the Devil insisted on having these documents written in blood, which, says Mephistopheles, is a juice of altogether a special sort.[52] To such writings the demon was wont to affix some kind of a mark. On one, mentioned by Gilbert Voss (seventeenth century) in one of his theological treatises, the Devil left the scorched imprint of his hand extended over a cross.

Numberless are the stories that tell of pacts made with the Devil, and some of these are quite ancient; the reader will not take it amiss, I trust, if I refer to a few of them.

In *The Life of Saint Basil* (329-379), Archbishop of Caesarea, attributed to Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium (fourth century), we read the following account. A Christian senator, Proterius by name, has an only daughter, whom, after having visited the Holy Land, he resolves to dedicate to God. The girl is happy at this decision; but the fiend, who never sleeps, straightway girds himself to combat this holy purpose. He kindles in the mind of a young slave a violent passion for the noble damsel. Knowing that he can realise his desire by no other means, the slave resorts to a necromancer and promises him an immense sum of money if he will aid him in gaining her love. The necromancer agrees, and making him first of all deny his Redeemer, he says to him: "Go at such and such an hour of the night and lay thyself down upon the tomb of some pagan, holding in thine uplifted hand this letter which I now give thee; presently thou wilt see one appear who will lead thee to the presence of the demon my master, from whom thou canst receive the help thou cravest." The slave conscientiously performs all that has been commanded, and when the appointed hour arrives he is led by certain spirits into the presence of the Prince of the Demons, who is sitting on a lofty throne with his soldiery drawn up about him. After reading the magician's letter, the prince says to the slave: "Dost thou believe in me?" And he answers: "I do". But the demon continues: "Ye Christians are great evaders of your obligations and your word is but little worth. When ye have need of me, ye come and seek me; when your end is gained, ye go back to your Christ, who, kind and merciful as he is, receives you once more as his own. But if thou desirest my protection, thou must, in writing, renounce both him and thy baptism, binding thyself to abide with me on the Day of Judgment and to endure with me the everlasting pains of Hell." The slave promises and writes it all down with his own hand. Then the prince sends forth certain of his attendants, who arouse in the damsel's mind an uncontrollable passion and make her detest the holy life to which she was about to consecrate herself. She throws herself at her father's feet and so besieges him with prayers and tears that, full of grief and bitterness, he at last consents to the marriage; and the marriage takes place. But after some little time has passed, several persons notice that the husband no longer enters the church, nor does he participate in the sacraments; and they inform the young

Anonymous, *The Miracle of St. Theophilus*, beginning of 13th century.
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

Martino di Bartolomeo,
The Devil kidnaps the Newborn St. Stephen, early 15th century.
Panel from *Seven Scenes from the Legend of St. Stephen*. Mixed technique on poplar, 74.3 x 58.8 cm. Städel Museum, Frankfurt/Main, Germany.

Martino di Bartolomeo,
The Finding of St. Stephen, early 15th century.
Panel from the *Seven Scenes from the Legend of St. Stephen*. Mixed technique on poplar, 75.1 x 58.4 cm. Städel Museum, Frankfurt/Main, Germany.

woman of this fact. In desperation, she questions her husband, becomes acquainted with his fearful secret, and horror-stricken she flies to Archbishop Basil to beg for counsel and help. The holy man loses no time, but hastens to the rescue. He questions the youth in his turn, asks him if he is penitent, if he believes in God and in His infinite mercy; then, perceiving him to be in a most propitious state of mind, he shuts him up in a room where the sacred vestments are kept, and passes three days in prayer. Meanwhile the demons, roused to fury, are besieging the defaulter, berating him, dangling before his eyes the document written in his own hand, taunting him with his bad faith. Several days go by; and, gradually, the diabolic assault begins to abate its fierceness; the youth still hears their threatening cries, but he no longer sees his enemies. When the fortieth day is past, the man of God leads the sinner forth from his prison, calls together the clergy and the people, explains the case, and urges all to pray that the demon may be vanquished. While the church is re-echoing with pious prayers, lo, the demon leaps forth upon the youth, endeavouring to drag him away and displaying, as proof of his claim, the fatal writing. But the holy man does not lose heart at this; he boldly faces the enemy and bids the faithful cry without ceasing: "Kyrie eleison!" with their arms stretched toward heaven, until the victory be won. After a long time, the document is seen flying through the air and falling into the holy man's hands, whereupon he hastens to tear it up. The youth is saved; and receiving the archbishop's blessing and participating once more in the sacraments, he goes back and lives happily with his wife, cheating the Devil and enjoying his good fortune in tranquillity.

In this story (retold, with some slight variations, by Giacomo da Voragine and others), the one who cuts the sorriest figure is, to my mind, not the Devil, who, having faithfully kept his promise, rightly demands that the other party to the contract do the same. His claim is unassailable, and Saint Basil is able to dispossess him of it only by filching the document which establishes it.

In another story, which I will now relate, the repentant sinner does not succeed in recovering the contract, and there remains some doubt concerning his final salvation. The period in which the incidents here described occurred is not definitely known; but both the incidents and the anonymous Greek chronicle which contains them are, without any doubt, very ancient.

In the city of Antioch there lived a worthy widow, with an only daughter named Mary. Both mother and daughter led an exemplary life, entirely consecrated to the service of God; and the pious maiden had resolved to preserve her virginity unsullied and give herself wholly to the heavenly bridegroom. A certain Anthemius, a man of great wealth and one of the chief personages of the city, falls hopelessly in love with her and begins to tempt her with gifts, to lure her with favours, and to offer himself as her husband when he sees that he cannot possess her in any other way. But all to no avail. Spurned by the maiden and her mother, and burning still more fiercely with base desires, he swears that he will accomplish his design, whatever it may cost him. He forms the acquaintance of a very powerful necromancer called Megas, that is, "The Great One"; and telling him his story, he obtains from him the promise that the girl will come to seek him, by night, in his own house and in his own bed. And so it comes to pass. Through a ruse, the girl is brought by a demon into Anthemius' chamber; but she succeeds in escaping from him by promising to return soon, with or without her mother's consent. Perceiving the efficacy of the magic art, Anthemius would fain become a magician himself, and he begs Megas to make him one. Megas, first ascertaining that he is ready to deny Christ and his baptism, gives him a letter, saying: "Go forth from the city, without waiting to sup, and in the darkest hour of the night go up on yonder bridge, holding this billet in thine upraised hand; but, whatever thing thou seest, beware of taking fright thereat and making the sign of the cross." Anthemius does what has been told him, and standing at midnight on the bridge, he sees a great cavalcade approaching and a prince seated in a chariot. He proffers the letter, but the prince will not at once enrol him among his followers; he demands a written abjuration. This scene is twice repeated, and in the intervals between Anthemius takes counsel of the magician. The third time, the prince receives the writing, and raising his arms to heaven, he cries: "O Jesus Christ, this man who was thine denieth thee in writing. I have not caused him to do this, but he himself hath repeatedly besought me that he might be mine. Henceforth, therefore, do thou take no more thought for him." On hearing these words, Anthemius is seized with sudden fright and great consternation, and he demands that his writing be given back to him. But in vain; the prince, giving no further heed to him, passes on, leaving him prostrate on the ground, bathed in tears of grief and repentance. On the

Eugène Delacroix, *Mephistopheles Offering His Help to Faust*, 1827-1828.
Oil on canvas, 45.5 x 37.7 cm.
The Wallace Collection, London, United Kingdom.

following day Anthemius, cutting off his hair and clothing himself in sackcloth, goes to seek the bishop of a neighbouring city, casts himself at his feet, tells him all his tale, and entreats him to rebaptise and thus save him. The bishop says that he cannot give him new baptism, exhorts him to place all his hope in God, and prays and weeps with him. Returning home, Anthemius frees all his slaves, distributes all his goods among the churches and the poor, gives three gold pounds to Mary's mother; and while Mary enters a convent, he gives himself wholly to God, to whose mercy none appeals in vain. Concerning the writing, which the demon had refused to give back, saying that he would produce it before the eternal judge on the Judgment Day, no further mention is made.

In both the preceding legends, the motive that drives the reckless ones to seek the aid of the demon, and to draw up a contract which will cost them their soul's salvation, is love; in others, it is desire of riches and honours, or a thirst for forbidden knowledge.

The legend of Theophilus, whom someone has called (not very appropriately) the Faust of the Middle Ages, goes back to the sixth century and is told for the first time by a certain Eutychianus, who gives himself out to be a disciple of this same Theophilus and declares that he has seen with his own eyes the things that he relates. In Adana, a city of Cilicia, there was a vice-dominus, or steward, of the local church, a man adorned with many rare virtues, called Theophilus. The bishop having died, the clergy and the people by common consent designate Theophilus to succeed him; the metropolitan is greatly pleased with this choice; but Theophilus, alleging his own insufficiency and unworthiness, refuses this new dignity, nor by exhortations or entreaties will he suffer himself to be moved from his purpose. Another bishop is chosen, who, against all right and reason, removes Theophilus from his stewardship. Straightway the Devil begins to use his wiles; and into the meek heart of that worthy man he pours the ferment of evil passions; he awakens within him a yearning after dignities and honours. Theophilus seeks out a villainous Jew, who has great fame as a wizard; he tells him of the injustice he has suffered, opens up his soul to him, and asks him for his help. At midnight the sorcerer leads him to a circus near the city, and gives him the customary warning: "Whatever thou hearest or seest, be not afraid; and on no account make the sign of the cross." And lo, there comes a great horde of demons, wrapped in white robes, with a profusion of lights, and in the midst of these the prince upon his throne. Theophilus kisses the prince's feet and hands him a letter, wherein he declares that he renounces Christ and His mother, and whereto he has appended his seal. Immediately, the results are evident. The bishop revokes his former decree, restores Theophilus to his ancient office, and loads him with honours. But no great time has elapsed ere Theophilus, meditating on the enormity of his misdeed, feels himself torn with remorse. Despairing of any other aid, he betakes himself to the advocate of sinners, the most blessed Virgin, wastes himself with fastings, bathes himself in tears, and spends forty days and forty nights in the most fervent prayers, imploring forgiveness and mercy. On the fortieth night the indignant Virgin appears to him and bitterly reproves him for the sin he has committed, yet not

Eugène Delacroix, *Faust Trying to Seduce Margarete.*
Lithography, 26.2 x 20.8 cm.
Musée Delacroix, Paris, France.

without pouring into his ulcerated heart the balm of hope. Theophilus passes three days more in prayer within the church; and the Virgin appears to him a second time, bringing him the joyful news that his pardon has been obtained. Yet three days more go by; and the Virgin, on her third appearance, restores to him the accursed contract. On the following day, which is a Sunday, Theophilus announces this memorable happening to the bishop and to all the faithful gathered in the church; he falls ill; and a little later, having distributed all his wealth among the poor, he makes a most edifying end and goes to enjoy the eternal glories of Paradise. In the case of Saint Giles, the matter was not settled so easily. Abandoning magic and becoming a Dominican, he strove for seven years before he was able, with the Virgin's help, to recover his bond.

The story of Theophilus, translated from Greek into Latin in the seventh century by Paulus, a deacon of Naples, and put into Leonine verse in the eleventh (or possibly the twelfth) century by Marbod, bishop of Rennes, enjoyed throughout the Middle Ages an extraordinary popularity and furnished in many regions of Europe a subject for religious dramas. In one of these dramas, composed by a French troubadour, Ruteboeuf, who died toward the close of the thirteenth century, Theophilus, losing his office and reduced to beggary, rails against God and bemoans his inability to reach him and punish him as he would gladly do:

Ha! Could I now but hold him fast,
And beat him o'er and o'er again,
A good day's work I'd finish then!
But he hath set himself so high
To 'scape his foes, that one would try
In vain with spear or dart to reach him.
Could I but challenge and impeach him,
Cross blades with him, thrust and deliver,
I'd quickly make his flesh to quiver!

And finally, when the Devil still refuses to give up the contract, the Virgin threatens to trample his paunch with her feet.

No less famous, even better known, is the story of that Gerbert who astounded the tenth century with his teachings and became pope under the name of Silvester II (Pope 999-1003). The belief that he was indebted to the Devil, not only for the miraculous knowledge of which he gave manifold proofs, but also for his elevation to the highest ecclesiastical office; the belief that he had drawn up in due form a contract with the Devil, began little by little to take form and to spread abroad; and in the twelfth century it blossomed into a marvellous legend which numerous historians vied with one another in perpetuating. The English Benedictine, William of Malmsbury (1095-1142), says in the second book of his "*History of the Kings of England*" that the things which he relates concerning Gerbert were of common report in his day. Gerbert was born in Gaul, and when still a mere child, he dedicated himself to the monastic life; but soon wearying of the cloister or possessed by a reprehensible longing for fame, he escaped by night and fled into Spain; and living there among the Saracens, he applied himself to the study of astrology and of magic. In a brief time he became exceedingly learned in every kind of knowledge, both

Eugène Delacroix, *Mephistopheles at the Students' Inn.*
Lithography, 27 x 22 cm.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, District of Columbia, USA.

that which is lawful and that which is forbidden. From a Saracen philosopher, who had taken him into his own home, he steals a book of magic and decamps with it. He summons the Devil, enters into a contract with him, and causes himself to be carried across the sea. Returning to France, he opens a school, gains a great name for himself, and has many pupils; among these is a certain Robert (971-1031), who, becoming king of France (probably Robert II surnamed "The Pious"), makes him bishop of Rheims. Here he constructs, with marvellous skill, a clock and an organ. Visiting Rome, he enters an enchanted underground vault wherein are stored and jealously guarded the treasures of the Emperor Octavian. Later, he becomes pope. He fashions a magic head which answers him when he questions it, and which assures him that he will not die before he has celebrated mass in Jerusalem. Exulting thereat, the pontiff resolves never to visit the land that was bathed in the blood of Christ; but after a season he goes to celebrate mass in one of the basilicas of Rome which is known as the Church of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem. Immediately he falls ill; and consulting the loquacious head, he discovers the fraud that has been practiced on him and realises that his end is at hand. Thereupon, summoning the cardinals into his presence, he confesses his very grievous sins and, still living, causes his body to be cut in pieces and cast like offal outside the house of God.

Others tell the story in somewhat different form, or add certain details to it. The Devil, in the shape of a dog, always accompanied Gerbert; and it was from him directly, not from an artificial head, that the latter received the equivocal response. His imminent death is announced to the pontiff by a great throng of demons who have come to carry away his soul. He orders the fragments of his sinful body to be placed in a cart drawn by oxen and to be buried in that spot where the beasts shall have stopped of their own accord. His bones rattle in their marble tomb, which exudes water in abundance whenever any pontiff is about to die. Some authorities, like the chronicler Sigebert who died in 1113, know nothing of his repentance and record a rumour according to which the evil vicar was instantly slain by the Devil.

Silvester II, however, was not the only pontiff whose culpable dealings with the demon have been perpetuated in legend: John XII (Pope 955-963), Benedict IX (Pope in 1033, but resigned in 1044), Gregory VII (Pope 1073-1085) and Alexander VI (Pope 1492-1503), were also accused of having sold themselves to that very being against whose wiles they should have defended the flock entrusted to their care.

The legend of Gerbert offers us an example of the sort of frauds which the Devil employs in order to hoodwink those who trust themselves to him, but without formally breaking his promises, nay, even holding strictly to the letter of them; another example worthy of mention is offered us by a legend which grew up about one of the victims of the Holy Inquisition, Cecco d'Ascoli (1257-1327), the author of *L'Acerba* and the rival of Dante.

This is not the place to retell his sad history: how he was first condemned at Bologna by the inquisitor Fra Lamberto del Cingolo, who bade him lecture no more on astrology either there or elsewhere; how, coming to Florence, he was again arraigned by Fra Accursio on the charge of teaching judicial astrology, of having interpreted all of Christ's life by means of astrology, of having asserted that with the help of astrology one can attain knowledge of all things, and of having denied the freedom of the will; and how, finally, having continually replied to all these charges, "Thus I said, thus I taught, and thus I believe", he was turned over to the secular arm and publicly burned to death in the year of salvation 1327. The legend to which I have referred, taking form somewhat later, declares that Cecco had made an agreement with the Devil, who had explicitly promised him that he would die only between Africa and the Field of Flowers. While being led to the place of execution, Cecco displayed an intrepid spirit and cherished not the least anxiety in regard to his death, firmly convinced that his friend would come and set him free; but learning, after he had already been placed on the pile, that there was near at hand a little stream called Africo, and realising that the Field of Flowers must mean that city which derives its name from the flowers (that is, Florence), he perceived the diabolic fraud and died in despair.

The Devil, like the oracles of olden times, liked to make use of ambiguous words the better to further his own interests; but whenever, on drawing up a contract, he had promised to let such and such a number of year pass by before presenting his claim, he kept the promise loyally and did not anticipate the set term by a single hour. Such scrupulousness, however (as we have seen from several examples), was not shown by those who had recourse to his help; and it is hardly needful to say that he was not altogether unjustified in employing some precautions and snares against

Giovanni Canavesio, *Judas Hanged*,
1492. Fresco.
Chapelle de Notre-Dame-des-Fontaines, La Brigue, France.

these defaulters. Nevertheless, the greater number escaped from his hands by means of confession; but some failed to do so, and these paid not only for themselves but also for the others. A monk whose story is related by Peter Damianus (1007-1072) had bargained that the Devil should announce his death to him three days before it took place, thinking that he could thus provide in time for the salvation of his soul. The Devil keeps his bargain; but the monk, the moment he attempts to make confession, falls into a state of coma; this occurs several times in succession, and he dies without having confessed. During several nights his tomb is guarded by black dogs.

In Goethe's immortal drama, Faust is finally saved; but not so in the popular version of the tale which was first issued from the press in the year 1587; and for our purpose the tale is of more importance than the drama. Faust is driven to making the pact by a thirst for knowledge and a hankering after pleasure. He tresses with his own blood the writing in which are set down the mutual pledges and the conditions of their observance: "I, Johannes Faustus, Doctor, make the following declaration in this letter, written by my own hand. Having set myself to explore the elements, and perceiving that the faculties graciously bestowed upon me by Heaven are not sufficient to penetrate the nature of things, and that from other men I cannot receive satisfaction of my desire, I have given myself to this spirit here present, who is called Mephostophiles and who is a servant of the Prince of Hell, that he may teach me that which I desire to know and may be, as he promises, submissive and obedient unto me. For my own part, I promise that, after the passage of twenty-four years from the date of the present writing, I will suffer him to do with me, with my spirit and with my flesh, whatsoever shall seem good to him; and this for all eternity. To this end, I deny all beings that live, whether in heaven or on the earth. In token whereof, I write and subscribe this with mine own hand and in mine own blood."

Faust richly enjoys the benefits secured to him by this contract. In company with Mephostophiles (soon to be rechristened Mephistopheles), or aided by him, he journeys over all the earth, travels through the heavens, has at his beck and call the most beautiful of all women that exist, rolls in wealth, and performs all kinds of miracles. At Erfurt, he gives public readings from Homer's *Iliad*, and causes to appear before his dumfounded auditors the heroes of ancient times, clad in their armour, and in the attitudes that befit them; and he offers to place in the hands of the doctors of the local university all the lost comedies of Plautus and of Terence, an offer which they reject through fear of some diabolic trickery. When the seventeenth year has passed, Faust, who has already shown some symptoms of repentance and a desire to reform, traces with his own blood a second document similar to the first, being forced to this by the demon, who threatens to tear him in pieces if he does not obey. Time flies, and the terrible day of the maturing of the bond draws near. During the last year, in order to tranquillise and console him, the fiend gives him the Grecian Helen as mistress. At last the fatal day arrives. Faust invites all his friends to a banquet, tells them his story, begs them not to depart but retire to rest while he himself awaits his inevitable end. A little after midnight, the friends feel a mighty blast of wind filling the house and shaking it as if it would lift it from its foundations; they hear fearsome whisperings and then Faust's despairing shrieks as he calls for help. Horror-stricken, frozen with fear, none dares to move. When morning comes, they enter his chamber and find it all smeared with blood; the brains of the unfortunate man are seen spattered over the walls; his eyes, torn from their sockets, and a few teeth, are lying on the floor. The corpse, trampled and mangled, is later found outside the house, tossed on a muckheap. Christopher Marlowe, the precursor of Shakespeare, exhibited on the stage the fearful agonies of Faust, awaiting death and damnation.[53]

Of a little later date than Faust is the Pole, Twardowsky, who likewise wrought many miracles and came to as evil an end as the other. He had written the fateful contract with his own blood on an ox hide. One day, as he was astounding the loafers about a village inn with his marvellous performances, suddenly the Devil appeared, reminding him that the appointed hour had arrived. Thereupon the poor man saves himself by approaching an infant that is sleeping in its cradle; but after the demon has reproached him with his bad faith and told him that a gentleman's word cannot be broken, he recovers his courage and surrenders himself to the fiend. It must be admitted that such a sentiment of honour was very rare amongst those who had bound themselves to the Devil and had generously availed themselves of his assistance.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *St. Francis Borgia at the Deathbed of an Impenitent*, 1787-1788. Oil on canvas, 350 x 300 cm. Cathedral, Valencia, Spain.

III. Magic


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The History of Magic and Magical Practices

THOSE who made pacts with the Devil very often did so in order to be able to practice the forbidden arts of magic; but the pact did not always imply this power and the power might be exercised without a pact. Let me make this clearer. There were cases where the Devil voluntarily obligated himself to do whatever the magician should demand of him, on condition that the latter give him his soul in exchange; there were also cases where the magician by virtue of his own art forced the Devil to do what the fiend, of himself, would have been neither obliged nor willing to do. There were then, as we see, two kinds of magic, which have not been sufficiently distinguished by writers on the subject, but which in their origins, if not in their effects, were entirely distinct; the one produced by a voluntary subjection of the diabolic power to the will of a human being, the other springing from an actual mastery acquired over that power by the human being, and acquired (mark this well) not through divine permission, but through a science and an art which had their own canons, which were learned through a sort of apprenticeship, and which could be more or less fully possessed—the science and the art of magic. The theologians and the doctors declare, it is true, that the inventor of this wicked and deceptive science, of this pernicious art, was none other than Satan himself, who was wont to make use of them for the attainment of his own ends; but we begin to suspect that there is some error in this opinion of theirs, when we see this science and this art employed against their supposed inventor in such fashion that he cannot keep from obeying any one who commands him through them. A great part of magic presupposes the existence in nature, and the knowledge on the part of man, of hidden forces which have power to move the demons and to bind them. But in whatever way the magician had acquired his formidable power, the exercise of it was sinful and unlawful and brought the transgressors in the end to Hell. Speaking generally, and observing the results they produced, we may consider magicians and witches as allies and coadjutors of Satan.

The sources of magic are to be found in passion and ignorance—which make up the greater part of man. Desire, ever reborn, never capable of being sated in the ordinary conditions of life, inspires in the mind the dream of an irresistible power whereby every appetite may be satisfied; and ignorance of the inflexible laws which govern nature suffers one to believe that she can be mastered and modified in conformity with that dream, which, when it has reached a certain degree of intensity, tends spontaneously to transform itself into action. Love, hatred, the desire for health, for riches, for power, for knowledge itself, are the causes which produce magic, and they are its perpetual incentives; whence it comes that we see magic practised wherever men are found; in the most remote antiquity, during the Middle Ages, and at the present time; not only among barbarian or savage peoples, but also among those races which call themselves civilised. Caesarius tells us of a certain scholar who, unable to learn anything through study, procured a stone which gave all knowledge to its possessor; this is the whole history of magic in a nutshell.

With the growth and strengthening of the belief in Satan, magic was destined to acquire new credit and new vigour. Everything that was known or thought to be known about the Devil, about his habits and his purposes, naturally tended to produce this result. He was the ever-living, ever-restless force that surrounded and penetrated all things; the prince of this world; the dominator of perverted nature; he was in every place; he had under his orders an innumerable host, always ready for any undertaking. With the help of his power, there was no task so hard that it could not be accomplished, no miracle that could not be performed; and this help he rendered without excessive solicitation. It was a well-known fact that he would cheerfully join forces with a human being in order to reach more easily the fulfillment of his own designs. The Church herself, by dint of constantly proclaiming Satan's might and cunning, of pointing out by numberless examples the effects of his dominion over the world, by declaring that Hell was more densely populated than was Paradise—the Church had succeeded where she had neither expected nor desired to succeed; she had caused a sort of vague belief to germinate in men's minds that Satan, not God, was the real Lord; and, now and again she had suffered the fear and horror of Satan to be replaced by a species of worship. In the

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Page 140: **Francisco de Goya y Lucientes,**
El Aquelarre (The Witches' Sabbath), 1797-1798. Oil on canvas, 44 x 31 cm.
Fundación Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid, Spain.

Anonymous, frontispiece to the French translation of Johannes Tinctor's
Treatise Against the Vaudois, middle of 15th century. Miniature.

David Teniers the Younger, *Sabbath Scene*,
1633. Oil on wood, 32 x 54 cm.
Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai, France.

thirteenth century the Luciferians were accused of worshiping the Devil; and the same accusation was launched against the Templars, the Albigenses, the Cathari and several other sects. Many times, no doubt, the accusation was a calumnious one, dictated by sectarian bitterness or ecclesiastical perfidy; but sometimes it must have hit the right mark. The horrible history of the trials for witchcraft offers an incontestable proof of this, and the diabolic assemblies, known in France as *sabbats* and in Italy as "Our Lady's Games", presuppose a real and genuine Satanic cult; of this I shall have something to say later. Finally, it must not be forgotten that the conditions of life in the Middle Ages were so hard and insupportable under the twofold oppression of the Church and the baronage, as to drive entire classes of men, robbed, starving and desperate, to seek in magic either a solace for their measureless misfortunes or the weapons of vengeance. For these, to give themselves to the Devil was the supreme way of salvation; it was finding a friend and a helper, no matter of what sort he might be. Satan was less cruel than the baron and the priest.

The majority became wizards or witches merely by entering his flock and enjoying those benefits and powers in which he was willing to make them sharers; but, as I have already said, beside this lower magic, the result of a kind of delegation of power, there was a higher magic, the fruit of study and determination, a magic which was based on the knowledge of forces which the demons themselves obeyed, but which had within it no element of the divine.

In the latter, the Saracens and the Jews were held to be past masters; and there were famous schools wherein it was taught, such as those of Salamanca and Toledo in Spain, and Krakow in Poland. The most celebrated one of the Middle Ages was that of Toledo, among whose students legend has enrolled Virgil, transformed from a poet into a magician, Gerbert, the blessed Aegydius of Valladares (1185) before his conversion, and many others.

The first of the magical operations, which opened the way for all the others, was evocation, whereby Satan or one of his subordinate devils was compelled to appear—not a difficult operation if one understood the method, but dangerous to any who undertook it carelessly and without having observed all due precautions. This operation was more commonly performed at night, at the exact hour of midnight; but it could also be performed at high noon, this being the hour at which the noonday demon possesses the greatest vigour. It took place where two, three, or four roads met; in the depths of gloomy forests; on deserted heaths; amid ancient ruins. The evocator set himself inside a circle (or, for greater safety, three circles) traced on the ground with the point of a sword; and he had to exercise the greatest care not to let the slightest portion of himself project beyond this limit and not to agree to any bargain the Devil might seek to make with him. This would be as much as his life was worth. Our old friend Caesarius tells of a priest who, lured outside the circle, was so mishandled by the fiend that at the end of three days he died; he also tells of a scholar of Toledo who thrust his finger outside the circle toward a demon who, in the form of a handsome dancing girl, was offering him a golden ring; straightway he was seized and dragged away to Hell, whence he was allowed to depart only on the insistent plea of the necromancer who had invited him to the exhibition.

Many and strange were the formulas of evocation, some very lengthy; some more, some less efficacious; nor were all of them addressed to all the devils. The slightest omission might suffice to render them entirely ineffective if the demon happened to be tired or in a bad humour. An observation is not out of place here. We have seen from numerous examples, that the Devil presents himself willingly and without much importuning, even to one who summons him informally and in everyday language, and that he often presents himself when one has not even thought of calling him. Gregory the Great recounts the case of a priest who, having said to his servant, "Come, devil, fetch me my boots", suddenly saw appear before him the Devil in person, of whom he was not thinking at all at that moment. At other times, the Devil shows himself lazy or stubborn, and then it is necessary to multiply and reiterate the spells, to which he must needs yield at last, provided there be no flaw in them. The last of the Carraresi called him in vain in 1402, when Padua, plague-stricken and besieged by the Venetians, had no men left to defend her.

When evoked, the Devil might appear to the accompaniment of various prodigies and under various forms, unless the magician had first constrained him to take on some definite shape. A German knight, whose story is related by Caesarius, standing inside a circle together with a sorcerer friend of his, first saw a body of water billowing all about him; then he heard the roaring of

Antoine François Saint-Aubert, *The Arrival at the Sabbath and the Homage to the Devil.* Oil on canvas, 62.5 x 48 cm.
Musée municipal, Cambrai, France.


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a storm and the grunting of swine; then, after other portents, he beheld, loftier than the trees of the forest, the fiend himself, of so fearful an aspect that the knight remained pallid from the sight for the rest of his life.

In the formulas of evocation there were many words strange in sound and unintelligible; and the stranger and more unintelligible they were, the greater was the virtue imputed to them. In this fact is revealed a well-known tendency of human nature and one on which we might discourse at great length. The word *Abracadabra* used to be written by the Greeks upon their amulets, and throughout the Middle Ages it retained its ancient reputation. The same may be said of the word *Abraxas.* To the uneducated man, the word is inseparable from the thing; it is identical with the thing. In his consciousness, the former immediately brings up the image of the latter; hence the belief in a mysterious bond between the two and in a sort of creative power existent in the former. "Sound is Brahma", says one of the sacred books of India: "God said, Let there be light; and there was light"; and "In the beginning was the Word". According to a superstition scattered over all the face of the earth, certain things must not be named, because the names bring the things after them. Those who became converts to Christianity changed their names in order to cast away with them all their past; and a similar change of name was made by everyone who, renouncing the world, entered a cloister. Magical virtue was attributed, not only to words, but also to numbers, characters, figures; and the majority of such beliefs are of very ancient origin.

Of words, of ciphers, and of figures was composed the magic book, otherwise called *The Book of Command*, which gave to its possessor power to call up the devils, to command them, and through them to perform all manner of marvels. There was no magician of any repute who did not have his own book. Gerbert, as we have seen, stole his from his own master, and Faust possessed one of the greatest virtue. According to a legend that has already been cited, near Norcia was the Cave of the Sibyl and a lake peopled by devils, whither enchanters used to come in crowds to consecrate their magic books. It is by means of his book that Malagigi[54] works his miracles, in the poems of chivalry. The ordinary companion of the book was the famous wand.

But besides wand and book there were also other things by means of which the demons could be bound and mastered, such as certain gems and certain herbs which are described in the medieval *lapidaria* and *herbaria*. More than one magician succeeded in imprisoning a demon in a ring or a bottle, so that he was able to order him about like a slave, in imitation of Solomon, who, as we learn from Hebrew and Arabic accounts,

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes,
The Old Women or *Time and the Old Women*, c. 1808-1812.
Oil on canvas, 181 x 125 cm.
Palais des Beaux-Arts, Lille, France.

Jan van Grevembroch II, *The Witch's Punishment.*
Museo Correr, Venice, Italy.

David Ryckaert the Younger, *Dulle Griet (Mad Meg) Raiding Hell*,
1651-1659. Oil on wood, 47.5 x 63 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

reduced great numbers of demons to slavery. Of the famous physician and astrologer, Pietro d'Abano, who died in 1316 in the dungeons of the Inquisition, it is said that he had seven devils shut up in a vial, not to mention a purse which faithfully restored to him all the money that he spent; and the famous Paracelsus (died 1541) had one or more devils imprisoned in the pommel of his sword. With the aid of the magic art and with that of astrology, there could be constructed cunning devices which, in part at least, rendered superfluous the cooperation of the demons; such were those artificial heads which answered all questions, one of which, as we have already seen, was constructed by Gerbert, another by Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) a third by Roger Bacon, and others by other sorcerers.

Magicians and Witches

Magicians and witches were not all of equal cleverness or equal might; as in every other condition of men, in theirs also there existed disparities of power and of rank. Notwithstanding this, there was no sorceress so insignificant, no wizard so discredited, that with the aid of their art they could not accomplish marvellous things, of a sort far beyond all human power and all human knowledge. Should one care to make a list of all the varied operations of the magic art, he would need to produce a volume; and even then he would not succeed in telling everything, for by this art could almost anything be done that might suggest itself to the imagination or become an object of desire. With potent philtres or by employing the aid of clever demons, the magician could awaken love, transform love into hatred, snatch the loved one from her lover, or cause her to fly by night through the air to her lover's arms. He avenged himself on his enemies, or on such as betook themselves to him for help, causing fire to consume their houses, bringing down the storm wind on their fields, sinking their ships in the sea; or he brought about their death, by thrusting into waxen figures made to resemble them a needle or a dagger; or, dispensing with other instrumentalities, he slew them with a simple curse or with a glance of the evil eye. For him there existed no distances, no toilsome, dangerous journeys. Mounted on his demons, he would fly from one end of the earth to the other, spending a few hours where others consumed months or years; and in like manner he caused those to travel whom he favoured with his help. He wrought amulets and talismans adapted to every purpose and charmed armour which defied both steel and fire; and in a single night he erected sumptuous palaces, impregnable castles, mighty wall-girt cities. With but a word, he would darken the air, cause horrible tempests to rage, open upon the earth the reservoirs of heaven; with but a word, he would make the clear sky reappear and the sun shine forth again, more resplendent than ever. Raising a finger, he would scatter a whole army; or he would turn loose upon it another army, all made up of demons summoned straight from Hell. Wherever he intruded himself, nature lost her own customs and her own character. He changed one thing into another; he made gold of mire and mire of gold; and in like fashion he transformed living and sentient creatures one into another, males into females, females into males, men into brutes. He had knowledge of the most deeply hidden things; he saw in a basin of water whatever it was needful to see, he foretold the future without an error, and—miracle more welcome than all the rest—he himself could regain, and cause others to regain, departed youth.

The greatest magicians delighted in astonishing the most illustrious assemblies with the spectacle of the prodigies that they could perform. One day in the dead of winter, Albertus Magnus invited the Emperor William (1227-1256), to come and dine at his house, together with all his court. The Emperor came, and the good magician conducted him with all his suite into a garden, where, under the leafless trees and amid the snow and ice that covered all things, the feast stood ready before them. The courtiers began to murmur at this strange pleasantry of their host; but when the king had seated himself at the table and the rest had done likewise, each according to his rank, lo, there shone in the sky a midsummer sun; in a twinkling, snow and ice were gone, the earth and the trees put forth buds and covered themselves with verdure and with blossoms; amongst the leaves gleamed ripening fruits; the air about them resounded with the sweet notes of countless songsters. In short, so excessive did the heat become that the guests cast off their outer garments and, half-clothed, sought the cooling shade of the trees. The banquet over, the numerous handsome attendants vanished like a mist; suddenly the sky grew black again, the trees shed their leaves,

Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Ride to the Witches' Sabbath*, detail from *An Allegory of Melancholy*, 1532. Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, France.

and all things were once more enwrapped in an icy cold, so intense that the guests fled shivering to the house to warm themselves about the fire.

Many other stories are told, of similar nature. Michael Scot, who, according to Dante:

> Verily
> The game of magic frauds had mastered well,[55]

and who was, for that reason, placed by him in Hell along with the other enchanters, finding himself one day at the court of Frederick II (1212-1250), so entertained with his arts a certain knight named Ulf that this man thought that he had left Palermo and Sicily, and after a long voyage, passing through the Strait of Gibraltar, had reached strange and remote regions, and had there repeatedly defeated powerful enemies in battle, conquered a vast and flourishing kingdom, married a wife, and had several children by her; spending in all these acts what seemed to him to be a score of years, but what was in reality only a very few hours.

About the year 1400, a frequent visitor at the court of the King of Bohemia and Emperor, Wenceslaus (1361-1419, surnamed the Sot, and the Sluggard), was a certain magician, Zito or Zitek by name, who performed the strangest juggleries that were ever heard of: he would enter a coach made of a walnut shell and drive about drawn by two trained beetles; he exhibited a cock which, when attached to a very heavy beam, drew it proudly behind itself as if it were a mere straw; he changed wisps of hay into swine and sold them as swine. Some of these same exploits were later attributed to Faust. In the sixteenth century a certain rabbi of Prague, named Low, attained such a degree of power that even Death could not prevail against him. But Death at last concealed himself within a rose, and the rabbi died in smelling it.

The belief in magic was universal in the Middle Ages, and it continued to be universal during the Renaissance. The laws, both ecclesiastical and civil, which condemned and punished the cultivators of the diabolic art, served only to revive and strengthen this belief, which was naturally accompanied by suspicion and fear. Just as devils were to be seen on every hand, so were witches and sorcerers seen everywhere; and there was no famous man against whom the charge of practicing magic was not brought; beginning with the great men of old, who had been dead for centuries, such as Aristotle, Hippocrates and Virgil; and coming down to the contemporaries of Leo X (Pope 1513-1521) and even later. Petrarch was suspected of practicing magic; and as late as the seventeenth century, Alessandro Tassoni (1565-1635) was brought to trial because there had been found in his house, inside a glass bottle, one of those devils that serve to amuse schoolboys and are known as Cartesian devils. Several popes — Leo III (Pope 795-816), Gerbert (who has already been mentioned), Benedict IX, Gregory VI (Pope 1045-1046), Gregory VII, Clement V (Pope 1305-1314), John XXI (Pope 1276-1277) — were subjected to the same charge. About the end of the eleventh century, Cardinal Benno declared, in his life of Hildebrand (Gregory VII), that there existed at Rome a school of magic, whence that pope and others had been graduated; there are also, dating from the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, authentic letters of Satan, written to princes of the Church, his friends and fellow labourers. A learned Frenchman, Gabriel Naudé (1600-1653), collector of the Mazarin Library, caused to be printed in 1625 a massive volume wherein he came to the defence of the great men of every condition who had been similarly accused.

But the famous enchanters were merely the vanguard of an innumerable army of lesser enchanters, wizards, and witches—of witches, in particular; for all writers on the subject are agreed that for every male devoted to magic arts there were at least ten females. Some of the famous magicians succeeded in the end in cheating Satan and slipping out of his hands; some, also, understood how to employ the evil art for a good end, forcing Satan to do better things than he would have wished to do. Such a one was Roger Bacon (1214-1294) who freed a knight that had sold his soul to Satan; at the end of his life, burning all his books, he shut himself up in a cell, whence he never came forth again, and where he died in the odour of sanctity, after two years given entirely to prayer and penance. But such cases were exceptions; of the petty sorcerers perchance not one was saved; and all richly deserved their evil fate, which was usually that of being burned alive in this world and, after death, burning eternally in the other world.

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *The Exorcism*, 1797-1798.
Oil on canvas, 43 x 30 cm.
Museo Lázaro Galdiano, Madrid, Spain.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Dulle Griet* or *Mad Meg*, 1561.
Oil on wood, 117.4 x 162 cm.
Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp, Belgium.

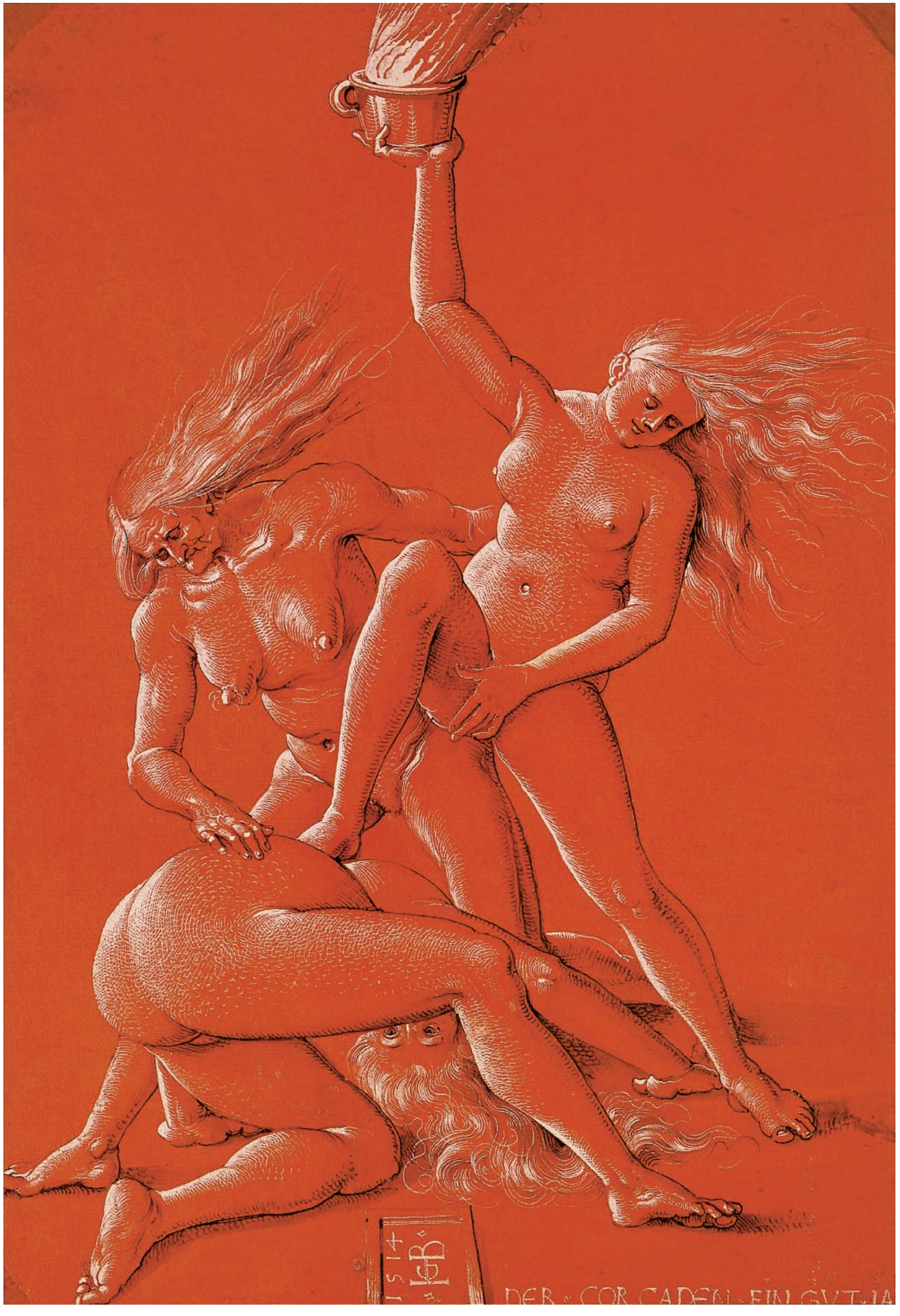
These were truly the Devil's flock and fold; not only in their souls, but on their bodies also, they bore their master's brand, the so-called *stigma* or *sigillum diaboli*, which consisted of a spot supernaturally deprived of all sensitiveness. Often, there existed on a single body several stigmata of this kind, and the inquisitors easily determined the guilt or innocence of the accused by thrusting needles into these spots.

Witches and wizards used to meet at fixed times and in appointed places to pay homage and flattery to their lord. These were the Devil's court levees. Every country had its places particularly set aside for these gatherings, which included (if the accounts of them are to be trusted) thousands upon thousands of persons. In France, the principal meeting place was Le Puy-de-Dôme; Germany had the Blocksberg, the Horselberg, the Bechtelsberg and several others; Spain, the Heath of Baraona and the Sands of Seville; Italy, the famous Noce di Benevento, Mount Paterno near Bologna, Mount Spinato near Mirandola, etc., etc. Assemblies were also held on the banks of the Jordan and on Mount Hekla in distant Iceland. They generally occurred once a week, but on different days in different lands; and there were, also, other meetings during the year, of a more comprehensive and solemn character; these were set, by preference, on days that fell very close to the principal religious festivals. In Germany, the chief festival of the witches was celebrated on the Eve of Saint Walpurga, a fact familiar to all readers of Goethe's *Faust*.

The witches—as I have already said, the number of wizards was relatively very small—used to set out for the festival after anointing themselves with certain unguents, astride broom-sticks, muck forks, fire shovels, stools or even he-goats, swine or devil hounds. They would fly through the air, at no great height from the ground; and they must take great heed not to pronounce the name of Christ during their journey, or let themselves be surprised by the early notes of the *Ave Maria*, if they did not wish to tumble headlong to the earth with great risk of breaking their necks. The ceremonies, rites and pastimes of the festivity varied according to the country where it was held, and they changed with the times; whoever would become acquainted with all of them would need to read the special treatises, the so-called "Hammers" or "Scourges of Witchcraft", written by the greatest lights of the Spanish Inquisition, as well as the records of the examinations of the witches themselves at their innumerable trials. Satan used to show himself to his devoted followers, seated on a throne or on an altar, in the form of a man, a he-goat, a wild boar, an ape or a dog, according to the occasion. If in the form of a man, he sometimes showed himself gruff, surly and gloomy, at other times, gay and mirthful; and in the latter case, he would joke with the witches, or play or sing with them. They rendered homage to him, as to their lord, kneeling before or behind him, kissing his private parts or his buttocks, confessing themselves to him, telling him all the villainies they had committed in his honour since their last meeting. He would hear them, would praise or condemn them, punishing with flogging or heavy fines those who had been lax in their attendance at the assemblies or had in any other manner failed in their duty. He received the new converts, baptised them in his own name, and instructed and admonished them. Lesser devils in great numbers formed a bodyguard about their prince and took part with the witches in the ceremonies; in which there appeared a sort of parody of the rites of the Church, of the mass and of the sacraments, with profanation of the consecrated wafers, and other sacrilegious acts, most base and foul. There was not lacking even the holy water ("unholy" would be a more fitting term), murky and malodorous, with which these strange priests sprinkled the bystanders. When the ceremonies were over, a merry banquet followed. The company was lighted by witches standing on all fours with burning candles fastened to their posteriors; the viands were sometimes delicate and exquisite, sometimes horrible and nauseating, in all respects worthy of the infernal kitchen. Oftentimes, nursing babes were eaten or corpses snatched from the graveyard. The feast ended with a dance, to the accompaniment of diabolic instruments; thereafter, each demon seized his witch and took his pleasure with her *coram populo*; but the witches declared that for themselves, at least, such embraces were none too agreeable; one of them, introduced by Pico della Mirandola in his dialogue entitled "The Witch", enters into particulars which I willingly pass over in silence.

The witches, furthermore, not only saw their demons at these festivals, but they received frequent visits from them in their own homes, in those gloomy laboratories crowded with the instruments, the paraphernalia and the thousand and one abominations of their evil art; they used also to promenade with them; they treated them as husbands, and in token of fond

Hans Baldung Grien, *Three Witches Applying Ointment*, 1514.
Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria.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intimacy they called them by names that were not diabolic but human, oftentimes affectionate, or by curious and whimsical nicknames. The demons were lavish with their presents to their sweethearts; yet these very gifts were not seldom full of diabolic treachery, money turning to chips or withered leaves, jewels to mire, or worse. Becoming pregnant by these devils, the witches often brought forth monsters which sometimes possessed human shape, sometimes that of brutes. Moreover, the devils, not content with the witches with whom the world was already filled, used to wander about, playing the fine gentleman, dressed in the height of fashion, seducing and enslaving both matrons and maids. In order more freely to attain their ends, the witches ofttimes changed themselves into cats and roamed about at night in that form; hence, more than once it happened that some unfortunate while still wearing that shape was wounded or mutilated, and becoming woman once more and displaying a gaping wound or a missing limb, made evident her own character and her own guilt.

The German Benedictine, Johannes Trithemius (1462-1516), an eminent theologian and an eminent historian, composed a book which he entitled *Antipalus Maleficiorum*, wherein he instructs all honest men how to guard themselves against witches and their accursed arts. The prophylactics and remedies that he suggests are without number and, for the most part, ridiculous: the most potent prophylactic, the most efficacious remedy, was, according to the unanimous opinion of the inquisitors, the fagot and the stake.

The Inquisition: The Persecution of Magic

THERE is nothing else that can give so adequate a conception of the fearful power of Satan as does the history of the witches and that of the persecutions waged against them by Holy Mother Church. Satan lacked but little (if the historians tell the truth) of dragging into the evil practices and the monstrous sin of witchcraft the entire human race; and cheerfully would those very zealous and circumspect inquisitors have burned the entire human race, could they thereby have conquered wickedness and defeated their enemy.

I do not intend here to retell that familiar story, which, familiar though it be, is ever worthy of study and meditation; a rapid glance will suffice for my purpose.

The persecutions of witches raged most fiercely about the close of the fifteenth century and during the two centuries which followed. Not that examples, and numerous ones, may not be found before that time: but, strange to say, such examples become more frequent and more terrible with the progress of the times, as the barbarism of the Middle Ages recedes and the new civilisation of the Renaissance draws nearer. In one of the capitularies of Charlemagne it is expressly stated that those who devote themselves to the delusive arts of magic shall, as followers of a pagan superstition, be arrested and admonished; if they persist in their error, they shall be kept imprisoned until they reform. In another capitulary, the glorious emperor speaks even more sagely: "If there be any who, deceived by the Devil, after the usage of the heathen believeth that there be wizards and witches, devourers of men; and if, moved by such belief, he burneth such ones, or giveth their flesh to be eaten of beasts, he shall be condemned to death." It was about the year 800 that Charlemagne expressed this belief that the arts of magic were a delusion and that he punished with death the slayers of supposed sorcerers: the inquisitors would have come to a sorry pass had he been living in their time.

Agobard, bishop of Lyon, who died in 840, one of the most enlightened and liberal spirits that the Church has produced, not only in that age but in all ages, denounced as absurd superstitions the vulgar beliefs touching magic; and he deplored the abuses inflicted by the ignorant populace on alleged wizards. The belief in the aerial flights of the witches, those horrible flights that were to furnish the inquisitors with a basis for capital charges against them, is a very ancient one; but equally ancient is the opinion that these flights were altogether imaginary and illusory. In the twelfth century, John of Salisbury and others called them an illusion of the Devil; and in a more concise fashion Étienne de Bourbon, in the thirteenth century, referred to them as the fancies of dreaming women. For a long time the Church employed against those charged with magic practices no other penalties than spiritual ones, and more than one pontiff rose up, like Gregory VII, to condemn and forbid any criminal process whatsoever directed against those who were guilty only of a vain and silly superstition. Nor was the Church alone in giving evidence of such sound sense: Coloman, who from 1095 to 1114 was king of Hungary, a country almost in a state of barbarism, said clearly and explicitly in one of his

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Witches in the Air*, 1798.
Oil on canvas, 43.5 x 30.5 cm.
Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.

decrees: “There are no witches, and against those who are reputed to be such no legal action shall be taken.”

But, alas! such examples of intelligence and liberality of judgment and policy were not to be perpetuated. In the thirteenth century, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) —that Saint Thomas who was later to become and to remain the oracle of the Church, that same Saint Thomas who now stands before the astounded peoples of Christendom as the sole light of philosophy—declared that according to the Catholic faith witchcraft is not an illusory thing but a real fact. In that same century the inquisition into the evils of heresy was committed to the Dominicans (and what use they made of it is known to every one), and Innocent IV (Pope 1243-1254) introduced the torture, against which another pope, Nicholas I (Pope 858-867), had inveighed four centuries earlier in most eloquent and memorable words. And now begins a strange and melancholy spectacle. The Church makes herself the guardian and the herald of superstition, she fosters the basest instincts of the rabble, encourages them and inflames them. She confounds in one—deliberately, and conscious of what she is doing—heresy and witchcraft, and she creates a monstrous promiscuity of interests, wherein ignorance, fear, stupidity and malice band themselves together and reach helping hands one to another. Now begin the processes against the witches, the fagots blaze, and with the passage of the years the madness increases instead of abating. Popes vie with one another in the zeal and ferocity displayed in this work, which they call God’s battle against Satan. Gregory IX and John XXII (Pope 1316-1334) are the most ardent among the earlier persecutors. So we come to the year of grace 1484, in which year, on the fifth day of December, the glorious pontiff Innocent VIII (Pope 1484-1492) issues his famous bull *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, wherein he gives form and system to the inquisition into witchcraft, confirms and regulates the rights and duties of the inquisitors, and opens an era of terror and grief such as has no counterpart in the history of mankind. The Church prefers to remain silent on this theme and to speak of the Terror that gave such sad fame to the French Revolution: the latter lasted scarce two years; the former, more than two centuries.

The Dominican inquisitor Jakob Sprenger then writes his foolish but terrible *Malleus Maleficarum*, or “Hammer of Witches” (published in 1489), which becomes the gospel and the code of the Inquisition throughout Europe, and which is followed by many similar books, equally terrible and equally foolish, all teaching the holy art of detecting, examining, torturing and roasting the witch in spite of every trick and wile of the demon, her natural friend and protector. From that time onward, the fagot fires are multiplied nor any longer suffered to die out; the popes fiercely fan the flames—among these Leo X, that most cultured and magnificent Leo, the patron of men of letters and of artists, the friend of every gentle art. In Lorraine alone, during the space of fifteen years, nine hundred persons are burned to death; and nine hundred more, in the space of five years, within the Diocese of Würzburg; one hundred a year are burned in the Diocese of Como; the Parliament of Toulouse burns four hundred at one time. No one can be safe against a charge of witchcraft; and the charge almost always means conviction; and conviction almost always means death at the stake. To show that one does not believe in witchcraft is in itself a serious indication, if not an actual proof, that one is guilty of it. Torture works wonders; it wrings from the most obstinate and recalcitrant the confession of their accursed commerce with Satan; it calls forth interminable series of denunciations, each one involving another, stretching out from the tribunal of the judge, like the tentacles of a monstrous octopus, through the midst of the panic-stricken populace. More than one frightened inquisitor asks himself if all mankind has not gone over to the service of the Devil. With a view of rendering the remedial work of justice more speedy than the propagation of the evil itself, proceedings are hastened to the utmost; the accused are questioned according to fixed formulas which actually put into their own mouths the confession of their guilt; the tortures are multiplied and intensified; all are burned who are suspected of being infected, men and women, grey-beards and babes; in some places the executioners, worn out by their inordinate labours, benumbed, indifferent, refuse to perform their customary tasks and renounce their office.

The effects of such rendering of justice surpass the expectations of its very administrators. Nicolas Remy, a judge of Lorraine, in an outburst of legitimate pride exclaims: “Justice has been so ably administered at my hands that in one year sixteen witches have taken their own lives rather than come before me!” It must also be said, in all fairness to the truth, that Protestants showed themselves no less capable than Catholics in this business. Luther not only believed in witches; he also used to express the wish that they might all be burnt; and among

Franz von Stuck, *The Sin*, 1893.
Oil on canvas, 94.5 x 59.5 cm.
Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Germany.

Gustav Klimt, *Beethovenfries* (detail), 1902.
Secession, Vienna, Austria.


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those who strove hardest to keep these false beliefs alive and to render the judicial procedure more harsh, the foremost place is held by that pedantic and cowardly king, James I of England. Thus in three centuries, thanks to the joint labours of Catholics and Reformers, there were sacrificed, not tens, but hundreds of thousands of human lives.

It must be borne in mind, however, that in these trials the judge had before him, and visible, the witch; also, though invisible, the Devil; for naturally the Devil did not abandon his protégée, his friend, his sweetheart. He helped her to lie (the inquisitors affirm this, and surely they ought to know) and courageously to undergo the torture; he caused the witnesses to lose their memories; he confused the ideas of the judges; he paralysed the hands of the executioners. All this came from him. If the witch died during the torture, it was the Devil that had strangled her to keep her from speaking; if the witch killed herself, it was the Devil who had urged her on in order that the trial might not continue. In Lindheim, a village of Hesse, four or five women were accused of having dug up the body of an infant and having employed it in the concoction of the usual witches' brew. Being tortured in the prescribed manner, they confessed the crime. Then the husband of one of them succeeded in having the graveyard visited, the better to arrive at the facts of the case. When the grave was opened, the little body was seen, intact, lying in its coffin; but the inquisitor, not in the least disconcerted, declared that this must be an illusion of the accursed Devil; and since he already had the confessions of the guilty women, no further investigation should be made, but justice should be allowed to take its course to the honour and glory of the Most Holy Trinity; and so the women were burned alive.

To render vain the wiles and artifices of the Devil, use was made in different localities of different precautions and remedies: the witch was arrayed in a shirt woven and sewed in a single day; she was made to drink an infusion prepared from objects that had been blessed; the instruments of torture were sprinkled with holy water; certain herbs were burned; and so forth. Whether it was the result of these practices or for other reasons, at any rate it was only on very rare occasions that the Devil succeeded in rendering to his friends the witches and wizards any help that was truly effective or permanent. The Sicilian historian Tommasso Fazello (1498-1570) says of a certain magician, Diodorus by name, that, aided by the Devil, he escaped from the hands of his guards and flew through the air from Catania to Constantinople. The trick succeeded for a while; but finally the bishop Leo was able to lay hands on him and cast him alive into a raging furnace, whence he came forth never more or came forth only to plunge headlong into Hell.

The first to take a stand against this hateful superstition and its horrible effects was the famous Cornelius Agrippa of Nettesheim (1486-1535), in the sixteenth century; he was followed and surpassed by his pupil Johann Weier (1518-1588), whose book on this subject is epoch-making. The defenders of just reason and humanity multiplied rapidly after this time, but their struggle was not crowned with victory until a much later period. The last victims of the superstition in Europe perished in the latter half of the eighteenth century; outside of Europe, in Mexico, two public burnings occurred in 1860 and 1872.

The Inquisition is dead, and ended are the trials for witchcraft; but the foolish belief itself is not dead, nor are the lamentations ended of those who would still keep it alive. Not a year passes but there comes to light some book, written by some daft and discredited divine, proclaiming that the world is in the hands of the Devil, and that Satan's satellites, trained by their master, are corrupting all things with their evil arts, are ensnaring the righteous and overcoming them. The world is full of wizards masked in another fashion, but no less cruel and dangerous than the wizards of old; and the Devil, their loving lord, has at last found a way to keep them from being burned. Could they only still be burned, then all would be well.

Max Ernst, *Attirement of the Bride*, 1940.
Oil on canvas, 129.6 x 96.3 cm.
Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy.

IV. Hell

IMAGINE a world divided into three planes. In the uppermost plane is Paradise, the palace of God, the abode of the angels and of the blessed, resplendent with light, resounding with ineffable harmonies, fragrant with never-withering flowers; it is the realm of incorruptible holiness and of everlasting happiness. In the middle plane is this terrestrial world, peopled by a fallen and suffering humanity, which sins while yearning for redemption, and agonises, dreaming still of bliss; it is the realm of perpetual change, of trials ever more renewed in the midst of a medley of good and evil. In the lowest plane is Hell, the dark abyss, where Satan and his angels, together with the numberless tribes of the damned, pay to divine justice a debt that can never be cancelled; it is the realm of irreparable sin, of wickedness irredeemable, of grief immeasurable, despairing and everlasting. Contiguous to this last realm is a region where sin is cured and purged away, where sorrow is lightened by hope; this is Purgatory, the gloomy vestibule to a radiant Heaven.

The middle realm is like an immense vivarium of souls, which are perpetually departing from it in two divergent streams, one ascending to Heaven, the other hastening down to Hell. Satan and his unnumbered cohorts work toward no other end, employ all their art and malice for no other purpose, than to drag below the greatest possible number of souls and to people Hell at the expense of Paradise. And of their success in this undertaking they have no reason to complain.

But where, precisely, was Hell? Saint Augustine (354-430) says, in his *City of God*, that no man may know this unless God himself has revealed it to him. This, however, did not prevent the strangest and most contradictory opinions from being expressed on the subject. The realm of the damned was placed in the air, in the sun, in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, at the poles, in the antipodes, beneath volcanoes, at the center of the earth, in the farthest East, on distant isles hidden in the bosom of unknown oceans or completely outside the world. A few examples will suffice to illustrate these views. Gregory the Great tells of a hermit dwelling on the volcanic island of Lipari, who once saw Pope John and Symmachus hurl into the crater the soul of King Theodoric. Aubry de Trois-Fontaines, a French chronicler who died after 1252, says, in speaking of Mount Etna, that the souls of the damned were brought there daily to be burned. Aimoin, a monk of Fleury who lived about the end of the tenth century, and Caesarius of Heisterbach tell very similar tales. Saint Brandan, sailing beyond the bounds of the known world, beheld a fire-vomiting island where demons in the guise of smiths were hammering the souls that had been brought to a red heat. In *Huon de Bordeaux*, a French poem of the thirteenth century, we are told that Hell is on an island called Moysant; and in *Otinel*, another French poem, that it is situated underneath Tartary. Huon of Auvergne found the entrance to the lower world in the remote regions of the fabled East.

The most commonly accepted opinion, however, and one which was at the same time most natural, was that which places Hell in the bowels of the earth, in exact accord with the belief of the ancients. Thus the abyss was yawning, a perpetual threat and snare, beneath the feet of sinners and of righteous men; and the earth's crust became a thin ceiling, which shook and trembled with the blast of the avenging flame and the roar of everlasting torments. The earth, sunlit without, gay with flowery fields and verdant woods, covered with waters as with drops of dew, was like a worm-eaten fruit, fair on the surface, rotten at the core; it was like one of those apples which, in travellers' tales, used to grow on the shores of the Dead Sea, brilliantly coloured and fragrant without, full of ashes within. The creature that had gnawed and spoiled the earth was Satan, whom Dante calls "the evil worm that the world doth pierce",[56] and whose fall from Heaven had as a consequence the miraculous creation of the infernal abyss.

Hell had to have its exits and its entrances, necessary, if for nothing else, for the performance of those thousand and one errands with which the devils were ever busy, going and coming in perpetual hubbub. In the Gospels, mention is made of the gates of Hell which shall not prevail against the Church;[57] Christ, girding himself to penetrate those gloomy regions, calls upon the princes of darkness to open these gates, and when he is not obeyed, he breaks them down. Where these gates were is not known with any certainty. Gervaise of Tilbury says that they were made of bronze, and that they were still to be seen at the bottom of a lake near Pozzuoli. Dante enters Hell by a gate that has no bar, above which are written the "words of colour dark".[58] There was certainly no lack of other entrances. More than one cavern, tortuous and dark, more than one gulf, sunk deep into the earth, was believed to be a mouth of Hell; and while some thought that it was within the volcanoes that the demons had their habitations and the souls of the damned suffered their

Page 168: **Auguste Rodin,** *The Gates of Hell*, 1880-1917.
Bronze, 636.9 x 401.3 x 84.8 cm.
Musée Rodin, Paris, France.

Anonymous, *Psalter of Blanche of Castile*, beginning of 13th century.
Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, France.

torments, others declared that the volcanoes were rather the mouths or vents of Hell, through which poured forth the heat and smoke of the eternal furnace. In Ireland, the famous Pit of Saint Patrick[59] opened into both Purgatory and Hell. Nor were there lacking, besides the usual and permanent entrances, others that were unusual and adventitious. The ground used to be torn asunder to allow the demons to pass through or to swallow up alive the greatest criminals. Hell was like a huge monster whose body was covered with countless mouths, greedily seeking new food for the insatiable belly. Not without reason, then, do we find Hell represented in the paintings and in the mystery plays of the Middle Ages in the form of a monstrous dragon's head, devouring souls and belching forth flames and smoke.

Hell is the kingdom of sorrow and of gloom, as Heaven is the kingdom of joy and of light. The darkness there is dense, deep, in some sense palpable. The dolorous vale of the abyss, says Dante,

> Was dark, and deep, and cloud-filled; and howe'er
> I strove to pierce its deepness with my gaze,
> No thing soever could I there discern.[60]

It is the "blind world",[61] the "place mute of all light",[62] whose eternal blackness is broken only by the blood-red flashes of the storm clouds and the whirlwinds of flame, by the flaring of heaps of burning coal or streams of molten metal.

The "kingdom of the dead people"[63] is vast and deep, as befits the countless population gathered there. In an old Anglo-Saxon poem, it is said that Christ ordered Satan to measure it, and Satan found that from the farthest limit to the gate the distance was one hundred thousand miles.

It is worthy of note, however, that the Jesuit Cornelius a Lapide (1566-1637), author of a ten-volume commentary on the Holy Scriptures, affirms that Hell has a diameter of not more than two hundred Italian miles.[64] A worthy German theologian went even further and calculated that a space of one cubic mile is sufficient to contain a hundred billion lost souls, not standing erect and at ease, but packed one on top of another, like anchovies in a keg or the trodden grapes in the winepress.

Dante describes for us a Hell constructed on geometrical principles, divided into circles which, growing ever narrower, continually descend toward the center of the earth. A similar structure is found in some of the imitators of the divine poet, but not in those who can, in a way, be called his forerunners, the authors of the visions. The Hell described in the latter resembles some earthly landscape, save that it is more horrible than the most horrible region known to man and that it never sees the light of the sun. Here are found mountains, steep and bare, valleys, rugged and impassable, dizzy precipices, forests of fantastic trees, livid bituminous lakes and foul and dreary fens. Across the length and breadth of this land run rivers, sluggish or swift, some of them issuing from the womb of ancient Avernus, as Acheron, Phlegethon, Lethe, Cocytus, Styx, which Dante, too, describes or mentions.

Nor were cities or castles lacking in the "dolorous realm".[65] Dante depicts the city of Dis, with its towers reddened by the eternal fires, with its massive iron walls.[66] Often, the whole of Hell is considered as one great city and takes the name of "the infernal Babylon"; it is opposed to the heavenly Jerusalem as Satan is opposed to God. Imagine, says Saint Bonaventure, a city, vast and horrible, of deepest darkness, burning with exceeding black and terrible flames, full of fearful cries and desperate howlings: such is Hell. A Franciscan poet, Giacomino da Verona, describes in two of his poems—rude, indeed, but glowing with faith—the two opposing cities, the one contrasted with the other. The heavenly Jerusalem is girt about with lofty walls, her foundations are laid in precious stones, she is guarded with three gates brighter than the stars, and adorned with battlements of crystal. Her streets and squares are paved with gold and silver; her palaces gleam with the splendour of marble, of lapis lazuli, of precious metals. Crystal waters are flowing on every hand, giving refreshment to marvellous trees and to the sweetest flowers; the air is impregnated with a divine light, permeated with fragrance, vibrant with supernatural harmonies. Far different is the infernal Babylon. The city is great, and long, and high, and wide, roofed with an indestructible sky of iron and bronze, walled round about with cliffs and mountains, traversed by turbid streams whose waters are bitterer than gall, full of nettles and sharp thorns that cut like knife-blades, perpetually devoured by raging flames. The air is pervaded by an intolerable stench and ever resounding with a dreadful din.

Anonymous, *The Last Judgment*, 1490.
Missal.
Russian National Library, St. Petersburg, Russia.

Anonymous, *The Last Judgment*, 14th century.
Illuminated manuscript.

Anonymous, *The Mouth of Hell,* miniature from the *Book of Hours of Catherine de Clèves*, c.1440. Illuminated manuscript.
The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, USA.

Estoria del iozn del iuzizi en qual maneira il iuestruem iuntar las gès

Lesurrecio dels bos

langel fay gueriena plos bos

resurrecio dels malz

langel fay gueriena ẽ los malz

quar me a uetz sezaint e amatz ve mtz d aue bonazurat moomm.

uos autz d uetz estar pecatros hualtz p d malble dlor.

Superbia · Luxuria · Vana Gula · Ira · Invidia · Acidia

Among the most noteworthy objects to be seen in that accursed land is, according to the testimony of many, a very slender bridge, over which the souls must pass and whence fall headlong into the pit beneath all those whose load of sins is too heavy: a picturesque fancy of the Far East which somehow found its way into the Christian visions of the Middle Ages, if, indeed, it did not spring up spontaneously among us as it did in the Orient.

The "dolorous realm" has its own topography; but it also has its meteorology, its flora and its fauna. It is infested by violent winds, some icy cold, some scorchingly hot, drenching rains that never cease, and tempests of hail and snow. The plants that are nourished by this hateful soil bristle with thorns and bear fruits swollen with poisonous juice. The beasts are really such or demons in beastly guise: Cerberus, Geryon, rabid dogs, vipers, toads, loathsome insects.

To Hell came souls of every condition and of every rank: souls of popes and of emperors, of monks and of knights, of merchants and mountebanks, of wanton women and naughty children. All classes, all professions, paid tribute to it, and a most heavy one. Humanity's chief task, the goal of all its long struggles, seemed to be that of recruiting Hell. The souls were either captured and transported thither by the demons, or, of themselves, they fell headlong into the abyss, as if dragged downward by the specific gravity of sin. A hermit of the eighth century, Saint Barontus, saw the demons carrying souls to Hell, flying in swarms like the bees when, their booty gathered, they turn homeward to the hive; Saint Obizzo (died about 1212) saw souls driving down to Hell like flakes of falling snow; and Saint Birgitta says, in one of her "Revelations", that the souls which plunge daily into Hell are more numerous than the sands of the sea. How many souls enter Paradise? No one tells us.

Many times, crowds of demons carrying souls away were seen flying through the air. Thus was carried away the soul of Roderick, the last king of the Goths of Spain; thus were those of many other equally wicked men. But even in this matter, the demons were fond of varying their method of procedure. Certain monks, says Giacomo da Voragine, were once standing before daybreak on the bank of a river, diverting themselves in idle and frivolous conversation. Suddenly, they see moving over the water a bark, filled with oarsmen, who are rowing with all their might. "Who are ye?" they ask; and the rowers make answer: "We are demons, who are taking to Hell the soul of Ebroinus, Mayor of the Palace of Neustria." On hearing this, the monks turn pale with terror and cry: "*Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis!*" "Ye do well to call on Mary", say the demons, "for it was our purpose to rend you and drown you in punishment for your vain and ill-timed chattering." The monks, waiting for no further words, return to the convent, while the demons speed their homeward course toward Hell.

The devils, moreover, were not satisfied with carrying off souls alone; but oftentimes they snatched evildoers away, both soul and body. Caesarius of Heisterbach tells about a soldier of the Diocese of Cologne, an inveterate gambler, who once played at dice with the Devil and lost; to recompense him for the loss, the Devil carried him away through the roof of the house, leaving his intestines clinging to the tiles.

To accomplish such abductions, the Devil was fond of assuming the shape of a black horse or of a rider mounted on a black horse. One day when Theodoric, already advanced in years, was in the bath, he heard one of his servants cry: "Yonder is galloping a black horse, of such beauty and mettle that I have never seen his like!" The barbarian prince leaps out of the water, hastily wraps himself in his garment and orders his own horse to be brought at once, together with the hounds. But as the servants are slow in returning, filled with impatience, he leaps upon the back of the black horse, which immediately flees away, swifter than a bird. After him speeds—but all in vain—the best horseman of his suite, with all the unleashed pack. Theodoric, perceiving that there is something supernatural about the steed that is bearing him so swiftly away, endeavours to dismount but cannot. From far behind, the other horseman calls to him: "My lord, why dost thou hasten in this fashion, and when wilt thou turn back?" And he: "It is the Devil that beareth me away. I shall return when it pleaseth God and the Virgin Mary."

Jacopo Passavanti says, in his *Mirror of True Penitence*: "It hath been written by Helinandus (died about 1229) that in Maliscona there was once a count who was a worldly man and a great sinner, arrogant toward God and hard and merciless toward his neighbour. And living in great state, having both power and riches, hale and strong, he bethought him not how he must die, and how the things of this world must pass away, nor how he must at last be judged of God. On a certain Easter day, while he was in his own palace, surrounded by many knights and squires and by many honourable citizens who were keeping Easter with

Andrea Mantegna, *The Descent into Limbo*, c. 1490.
Tempera on wood, 38.8 x 42.3 cm.
Private collection.

Eugène Delacroix, *The Barque of Dante*, 1822.
Oil on canvas, 189 x 241 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

him, lo, on a sudden a stranger, mounted on a great horse, entered at the palace gate, speaking no word to any man; and coming even to where the count and his company were, in the sight and hearing of all he said to the count: 'Up, count! Mount, and follow me.' And he, being sore afraid and trembling, arose and went after the strange knight, to whom none durst say a word. Coming to the palace gate, the knight commanded the count to mount a horse that stood there, saddled and bridled; and taking the beast by the rein and leading it after him, he hastened away, flying upward into the air in the sight of all the city, while the count uttered grievous lamentations, saying: 'Help me, O my citizens! Help your doomed and wretched count!' And thus crying, he vanished from the eyes of men and went to dwell forever with the fiends in Hell." Earlier than Passavanti and Helinandus, an altogether similar story is narrated by Peter the Venerable in his book *De Miraculis*.

In this business of abducting souls, or even living men, the devils were not always too scrupulous, and often they laid hands on some one whom they ought not to have touched. After the death of the Emperor Henry II (Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, 1014-1024) a hermit saw a swarm of devils carrying off his soul in the form of a bear to the judgment, which turned out to be favourable to the prisoner. Gregory the Great relates the story of a certain nobleman named Stephen, who, while in the city of Constantinople, suddenly fell ill and died. Brought before the infernal tribunal, the dead man heard the judge exclaim: "I ordered you to bring down the soul of Stephen the smith, not this fellow!" Straightway Stephen the nobleman returns to the world, and Stephen the smith dies in his stead. Other and still stranger examples are not lacking of such sending back and forth of souls. Thomas Cantipratensis relates the following one. A disobedient boy dies, and the devils snatch his soul to carry it off to Hell. Then comes the archangel Michael, who takes it away from them, and carries it to Heaven. There, an elderly man (doubtless Saint Peter) objects to its admission and orders Michael to put the soul back in its body.

It was easy to enter Hell as a permanent inmate; very difficult, on the other hand, to enter it as a simple visitor. None the less, many have visited it, beginning with the Virgin Mary, who went thither accompanied by the archangel Michael and a numerous troop of angels, as is related in a certain Greek Apocalypse. Shortly afterward, Saint Paul went thither, according to a widely disseminated legend of the Middle Ages, which was certainly known to Dante. Such descents into the realm of the damned were usually the effect of divine grace, concerned for the salvation of some particular sinner, or for that of an entire people that had grown forgetful of the divine precepts and admonitions; but not always did grace enter into the matter, at least not in a direct manner. Saint Guthlac, whose name I have mentioned more than once, was attacked one night in his cell by a whole legion of devils, who, inflicting many tortures on him, dragged him off to look upon the torments of Hell. That adventurous knight, Huon of Auvergne, goes to Hell at the express command of his king, who has demanded tribute from Lucifer. In the year 1218, a certain count of Geulch offered a great reward to any one who could bring him word of the condition of his father, who had died a short time before. A bold knight offered his services; with the aid of a sorcerer he went down to Hell and found the old count, who told him that his sufferings would be lightened if certain benefices, unjustly seized by him, were returned to the Church. Whenever divine grace operated in a direct manner, an angel usually guided the visitor.

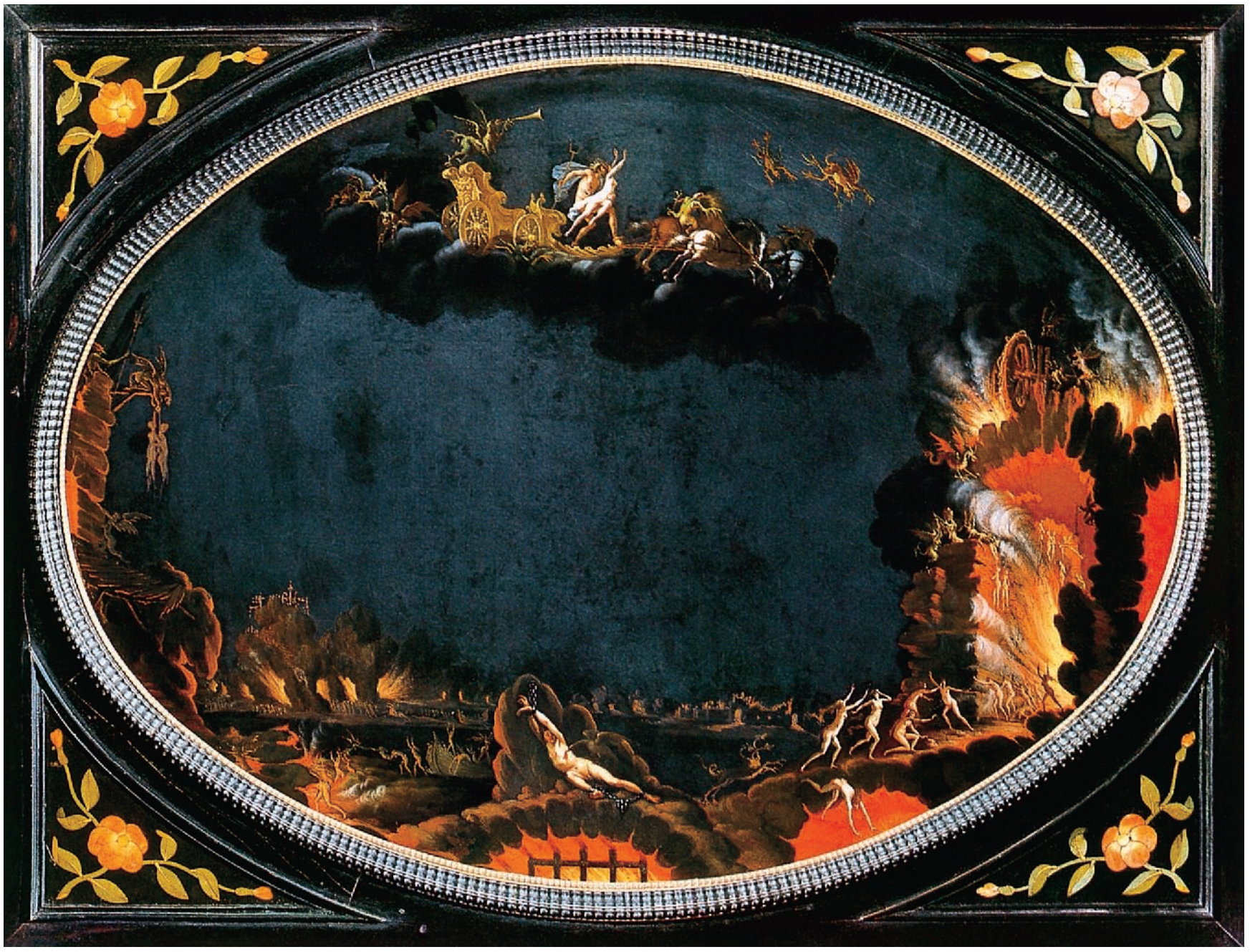
The visit might be accomplished in the spirit only; but, also, in the body. In the former case, we have the vision, properly so called; in the second, a real and genuine peregrination. Visions generally occurred only in the case of one who was in a state of mental superexcitation or weakened by long illness: while the mind was travelling on its own account, the body remained in a state of profound lethargy resembling death. I need not enter here into an examination of the psychological and physiological conditions of this phenomenon; it is sufficient to cite a few examples. Saint Fursey, an Irish monk of the seventh century, having lain ill for three days, was taken by two angels to see the torments of Hell; the two were preceded by another angel who had a flaming sword and a glittering shield. One night, Charles the Fat (839-888, King of France) was about to lie down in his bed when he heard a fearful voice crying: "Charles, thy soul shall leave thy body and be taken to see the judgments of God." And so it came to pass. Alberico, the nine-year-old son of a baron of Campania, fell into a swoon which lasted for nine days, during which time, aided by Saint Peter and two angels, he visited both Hell and Paradise. In the year 1149, an Irish knight, Tundal by

Luca Signorelli, *The Damned*, 1499-1505.
Fresco. Duomo,
Capella San Brizio, Orvieto, Italy.

Anonymous, *The Orchard of Drunkenness*, or *The Orchard of Consolation*,
12th-14th centuries. Illuminated manuscript, 44 x 30 cm.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

Anonymous, *Hell, Book of Hours*, c. 1480.
Victoria & Albert Museum, London, United Kingdom.

Hieronymus Bosch, *Visions of the Hereafter: The Fall of the Damned; Hell*,
extract from a polyptych of the Last Judgment, 1500-1504.
Oil on panel, 86.5 x 39.5 cm.
Palazzo ducale, Venice, Italy.



name, a man of evil deeds and conversation, was nearly killed by a blow from an axe in the hands of one of his debtors. When restored to his senses, he gave an account of what he had seen in the other world. Others, however, like Huon of Auvergne (already mentioned), Guerino Meschino, and the knight Owen, went to Hell in their own bodies, following the example of Ulysses and Aeneas. Dante went there in the same fashion. But however one went thither, with or without one's body, the journey was not devoid of danger: Saint Fursey bore for the rest of his life the marks of the hellfire that had touched him. The demons were very loath to see wandering about their realm such persons as were not to remain there, and they strove to harm the intruders in every possible way. They attempted to grapple Charles the Fat with red-hot hooks and to seize with glowing tongs a worthy man of Northumbria mentioned in the Vision of the Venerable Bede. Young Alberico, the knight Owen, and many others, were threatened and tormented by them in diverse ways. Without the aid of Virgil and of the heavenly messenger, Dante would more than once have found himself in evil straits.

More about Hell

HELL exists for the joint punishment of the damned and of the devils, of tormentors and tormented. Satan unites in himself many qualities and many offices which it seems, at first glance, impossible to reconcile one with another. Prime cause of all the evil in the world, an untiring instigator of sin, and a perpetual seducer of souls, he is at the same time the great administrator of justice; it is through his work that evil is checked and sin is expiated.

There is, in the lives and minds of men, no act so insignificant, no thought so trivial, that a record is not kept of it by the demons, if there but be therein some fragment, some taint, of sin. Saint Augustine once saw a devil carrying on his back a huge book in which were noted down in their order all the sins committed by mankind. More often, there existed for each sinner a separate volume, ponderous and black, which the devils would pompously display at the judgment in counterevidence to the tiny golden one in which the guardian angel had lovingly recorded the good and meritorious acts, sometimes peevishly hurling it into one of the scales of the divine balance. In many medieval churches, as, for example, that of Halberstadt, one sees the Devil pictured as writing down the names of those who fall asleep in the house of God, or in any other way fail to comport themselves properly. In *The Life of Saint Aicadrus* we read how once, when a certain poor man ventured to cut his hair on a Sunday, the Devil was seen crouching in a corner of the room, busily recording the sin on a sheet of parchment.

As a rule, the sinner who deserves no mercy is punished in Hell; but sometimes Satan, catching him in the act, anticipates the divine vengeance and chastises him while he is yet living. The murderers of the bishop Saint Regulus were strangled by him, and the assassin of Saint Godegrand was carried away alive; a certain woman of evil life, who tried to lead Saint Elias Speleotas into sin, was beaten black and blue by the fiend. If the historian Liutprand (died 972) is to be believed, the wicked pope John XII was flogged to death by the Devil, who caught him in his bed and in the arms of one of his mistresses; in spite of the fact that this pontiff, when alive and hearty, had been wont to drink the health of him who was to bring him to so wretched an end. Fra Filippo da Siena (1339-1422) relates the fearful tale of a certain woman, vain as she was beautiful and accustomed to spend hours in embellishing and adorning herself, who was one day embellished by the Devil and so disfigured that through shame and fear she died. This took place in Siena, in the year of grace 1322. On the twenty-seventh day of May, 1562, at seven o'clock in the evening, in the city of Antwerp, the Devil strangled a girl who, being invited to a wedding, had been so indiscreet as to make a purchase of a certain kind of fabric costing nine thalers the ell, in order to make herself one of those fluted ruffs that were then the fashion. Oftentimes the Devil strikes, strangles, or carries away those who show themselves irreverent in the presence of relics or who mock at the sacred rites; he enters the bodies of those who are inattentive at mass; in a loud voice he proclaims and denounces their secret sins, to the great confusion of the guilty ones. Often the diabolic fury was not appeased until it had expended itself on the corpse of the sinner; and many a fearful tale is told of bodies snatched away from churches, or burned in their tombs, or torn to tatters.

Saint Teresa (1515-1582) once besought God that she might make, for her own edification, a little trial of the sufferings of Hell. This grace was granted her; and even after six years, the

Vincenzo Mannozzi, *Hell.*
Oil on touchstone, 43.5 x 59 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy.

Fra Angelico, *The Last Judgment*, one of 35 paintings for the *Silver Treasury of the Santissima Annunziata*, c. 1450. Tempera on wood panel, 39 x 78 cm.
Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy.


ASCEDAT GETES IVALLE IOSAPHT QZA IBI SEDEBO VT IVDICE OMS GTES IOL
VENITE BENEDICTI PATRIS MEI PCIPITE REGNVM · M · XXV · C ·


SEDEBIT SVP SEDE MAIESTATIS SVE VINDICABIT BONIS MALO·M·XXV·C·
ITE MALEDICTI IGNEM ETERNVM·M·XXV·C

recollection of the outrages she had suffered chilled her with dread. Many are the tales wherein we are told of lost souls suffered for a brief season to come forth from Hell, for the sole purpose of imparting to living men some idea of the unspeakable tortures to which they are subjected. Jacopo Passavanti tells the story of a certain Monsieur Lo, a teacher of philosophy in Paris, and of a pupil of his, "keen and subtle in disputation, but arrogant and vicious in his manner of life". The latter died, but appeared a few days later to his master and told him that he was a lost soul: to let him understand in some measure the intensity of the torments he suffered, he shook his finger over the palm of his master's hand, letting fall a tiny drop of sweat which "pierced the hand through and through, with much pain and anguish, as if it had been a sharp and fiery arrow".

The sufferings of Hell are, according to the theologians, not only continuous in time, but continuous in space also; in the sense that there is not a smallest particle of the lost soul that does not suffer intolerable agony of never-varying intensity. The chief instrument of torture is fire. Origen, Lactantius and Saint John of Damascus believed that hellfire was a purely ideal and figurative fire; but the great majority of the Fathers held a contrary opinion, and Saint Augustine said that if all the seas of the world were to flow into Hell they would not avail to temper the heat of the horrible flames which blaze there perpetually. Besides fire, there is also ice; there are raging winds and beating rains; there are horrible beasts and a thousand other kinds of torments which the devils devise and employ. Saint Thomas proves that the devils have the right and the duty of tormenting the damned; that they do all they can to terrify and torture them; and, furthermore, they mock and ridicule them.

But the greatest suffering of all comes to the damned from being eternally deprived of the beatific vision of God and from having knowledge of the happiness of the saints. On the latter point, however, writers are not altogether in accord; there being some who affirm that the saints behold the sufferings of the wicked, but that the latter cannot witness the joys of the blessed. Saint Gregory the Great assures us that the sufferings of the damned are a pleasant sight to the elect; and Saint Bernard of Clairvaux waxes warm in demonstrating that the blessed enjoy the spectacle offered them by the torments of the damned, and that they enjoy it for four distinct reasons: first, because these torments do not touch them; secondly, because, now that the wicked are all

Hans Memling, *Triptych of the Last Judgment* (right panel), 1467-1473.
Oil on wood, entire triptych: 242 x 360 cm.
Muzeum Narodowe w Gdańsku, Gdansk, Poland.

damned, the saints need no longer fear any mischief from them, diabolic or human; thirdly, because their own glory will appear greater by contrast; and fourthly, because that which is pleasing to God must also be pleasing to the righteous.

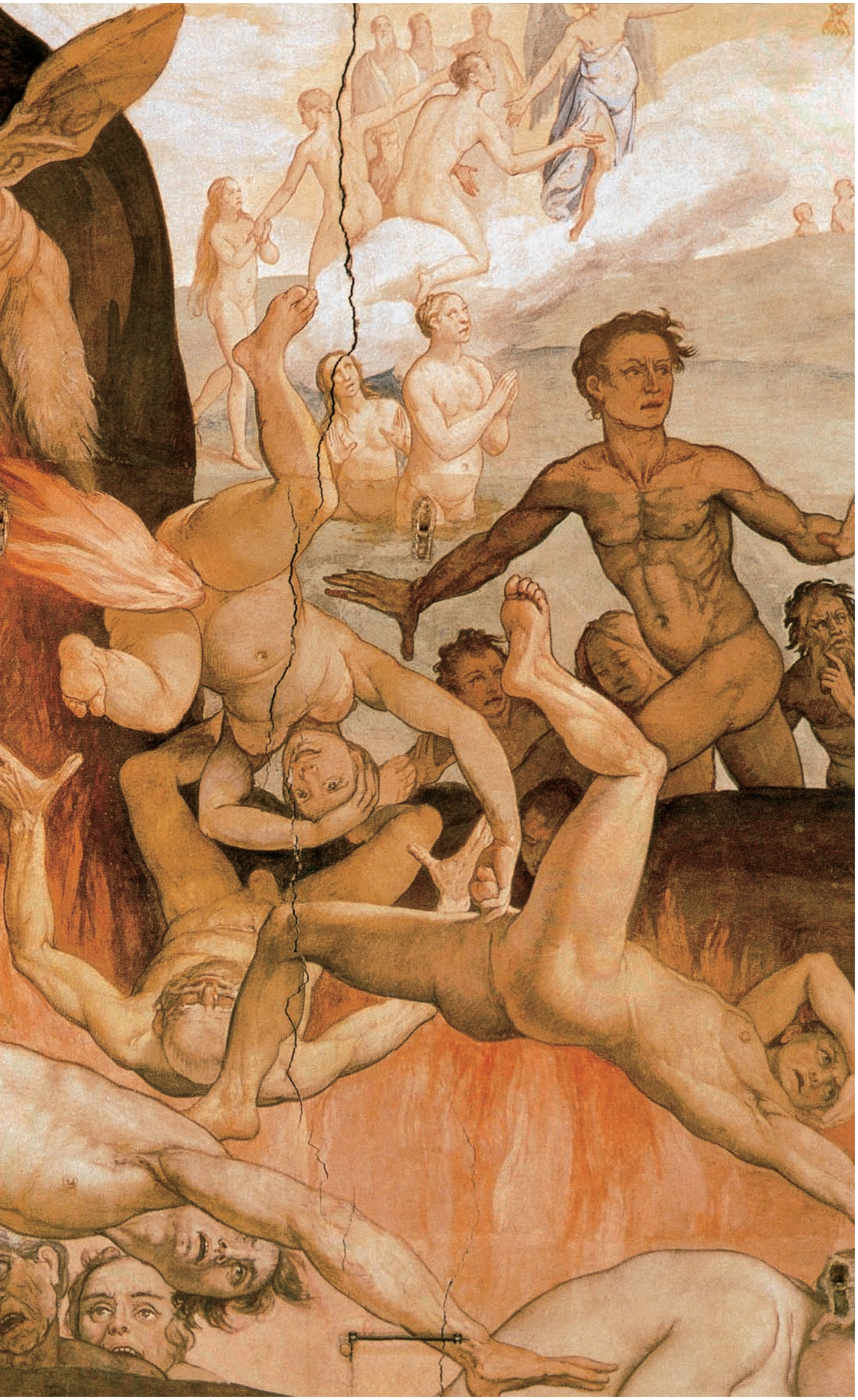
And surely the spectacle was such, both in variety and in intensity, as to satisfy even the most difficult taste. Let us endeavour to become spectators ourselves for a moment, at least in imagination; and to this end let us follow the footsteps of some of those pilgrims who had the fortune to visit the "kingdom of the dead people".

A monk by the name of Peter, of whom Gregory the Great speaks in one of his "Dialogues", saw the souls of the damned immersed in a boundless sea of flames. Fursey saw four great fires, some distance apart from one another, in which were being punished four distinct classes of sinners, and many demons were busy about them. These visions are not among the earliest ones, which belong to the sixth and seventh centuries and show us a punishment that has not yet become diversified but remains simple and uniform: in the visions of the succeeding centuries there is a gradual development of variety and complexity in the penalties, and Hell begins to reveal itself in all the multiplicity of its horrors and terrors.

The monk Wettin, whose vision is related about the beginning of the ninth century by an abbot of the monastery of Reichenau, came, escorted by an angel, to certain mountains of incomparable loftiness and beauty, which appeared to be of marble and whose base was encircled by a vast river of fire. In the waves of that stream were immersed an innumerable multitude of the damned, while others were being tormented in a thousand other ways. In one great fire were seen many churchmen of various ranks fast bound to stakes, each facing his own mistress who was similarly bound; and the angel told Wettin that these sinners were scourged on their private parts every day of the week save one. In a black and sooty castle, whence emanated a dense cloud of smoke, were imprisoned several monks, and one of these was also confined in a leaden casket.

Far more diversified was the Hell seen by the monk Alberico at the beginning of the twelfth century, when he was still a child. In a dismal valley, many souls were standing immersed in ice, some only to their ankles or their knees, others up to their breasts or their necks. Just beyond loomed a fearful wood,

Jan van Eyck, *The Last Judgment*, c. 1430.
Oil on wood mounted on canvas, 56.5 x 19.7 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.



formed of trees sixty cubits in height and bristling with thorns, from whose sharp and spiny branches were hanging by their bosoms those heartless women who had refused to nourish motherless babes with their own milk; to each victim clung two snakes, suckling at those breasts once so cruelly denied. Along a ladder of red-hot iron, three hundred and sixty-five cubits high, were ascending and descending those who, on Sundays and saints' days, had not refrained from sexual intercourse; and now one, now another of them would plunge headlong into a huge caldron filled with oil, pitch and resin, which was seething at the ladder's foot. In fearful flames like those of a furnace, tyrants were being punished; in a lake of fire, the murderers; while, in a giant stew pan, full of molten bronze, tin and lead, mixed with brimstone and resin, were those easygoing parish priests who had winked at the misdemeanours of their parishioners. A little farther on yawned, like a well, the mouth of the deepest pit of Hell, full of horrible darkness, stench and clangour. Hard by, was tethered with an iron chain a serpent of enormous size, before which hung suspended in the air a multitude of souls; with every breath the serpent drew, it swallowed some of these souls, just as if they were flies; with every exhalation, it spewed them forth again, blazing like sparks of fire. The blasphemers were boiling in a lake of molten metal, whose waves gave forth a crackling sound; in another lake, formed of sulphurous water, full of snakes and scorpions, the traitors and false witnesses were forever drowning. Thieves and extortionists were bound with huge chains of red-hot iron, and from their necks hung heavy iron weights.

But of all the descriptions of Hell that the Middle Ages have handed down to us, the most terrible one, the one most replete with the poetry of horror, the one most abounding in inventive fancy, is the description which we read in the "Vision of Tundal", already mentioned. Escaping from the hands of countless demons, the soul of Tundal, guided by a shining angel, traverses the densest darkness until it comes to a horrible valley, full of burning coals and covered with a sky of red-hot iron six cubits in thickness. On that huge roof rain down incessantly the souls of murderers; and there, penetrated by the fearful heat, they melt like lard in the frying pan and, liquefied, seep through the metal as molten wax filters through a cloth, dribbling down on the coals beneath, where they return to their first state, restored for everlasting punishment. Farther on is a mountain of marvellous size, full of horror, in the midst of a vast solitude. Thither one comes by a narrow path swept on one side by reeking flame, on the other by hail and snow. The mountain is full of demons, armed with hooks and tridents, who assail the souls of the conspirators and the renegades that are toiling along that path, cast them down, and in perpetual alternation toss them from the fire onto the ice and from the ice into the fire. And lo! another valley, equally gloomy and dread, the bottom of which cannot be discerned. There the air quivers with the rumbling of the sulphurous river that runs below and with the incessant howling of the damned, and it is charged with smoke of unbearable foulness. The opposite walls of that gulf are united by a bridge, a thousand paces in length, scarce a foot in breadth, impassable for the proud, who plunge from it into endless torments. After a long and painful passage, there appears to the frightened soul a monster, larger than the largest mountain and unspeakably horrible to behold. Its eyes resemble two burning hills, its mouth is so large that it could contain nine thousand armed men. Two giants, like mighty columns, hold this mouth agape, and from it gushes an unquenchable flame. Goaded and pushed onward by a host of demons, the souls of the misers plunge into the fire, enter the mouth, and from the mouth are thrust into the belly of the monster, whence issue the howlings of myriads of tormented ones. Next comes a mere, vast and stormswept, traversed by a bridge two miles long studded with sharp-pointed nails. Monsters gather along the bridge, puffing out flames of fire and gulping down all the souls that fall from it, which are those of the thieves and the extortionists. From a huge, round building, resembling an oven, there spurt out flames which lick and burn the souls a thousand paces away. In front of the doors, in the midst of the fire, stand diabolic executioners armed with knives, sickles, augers, hatchets, spades, mattocks and other tools, with which they flay, decapitate, bore, quarter and chop the souls of the gluttons, afterward feeding them to the fire. Still further on, there crouches on a frozen pool a monster different in form from all the rest; it has two feet, two wings, a very long neck and an

Giorgio Vasari (beginning)**, Federico Zuccari** (end)**,** *Punishment of Lust, Last Judgment* (detail), between 1572 and 1579. Fresco.
Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence, Italy.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, also known as **Michelangelo,** *The Last Judgment,* 1534-1541. Fresco, 1370 x 1220 cm.
Sistine Chapel, Vatican.

Luca Signorelli, *The Damned* (detail), 1499-1505.
Fresco. Duomo,
Capella San Brizio, Orvieto, Italy.


IONAS


QVI COELVM CECINIT MEDIVMQVE IMVMQVE TRIBVNAL
LVSTRAVIT QVE ANIMO CVNCTA POETA SVO
DOCTVS ADEST DANTES SVA QVEM FLORENTIA SAEPE
SENSIT CONSILIIS AC PIETATE PATREM
NIL POTVIT TANTO MORS SAEVA NOCERE POETAE
QVEM VIVVM VIRTVS CARMEN IMAGO FACIT

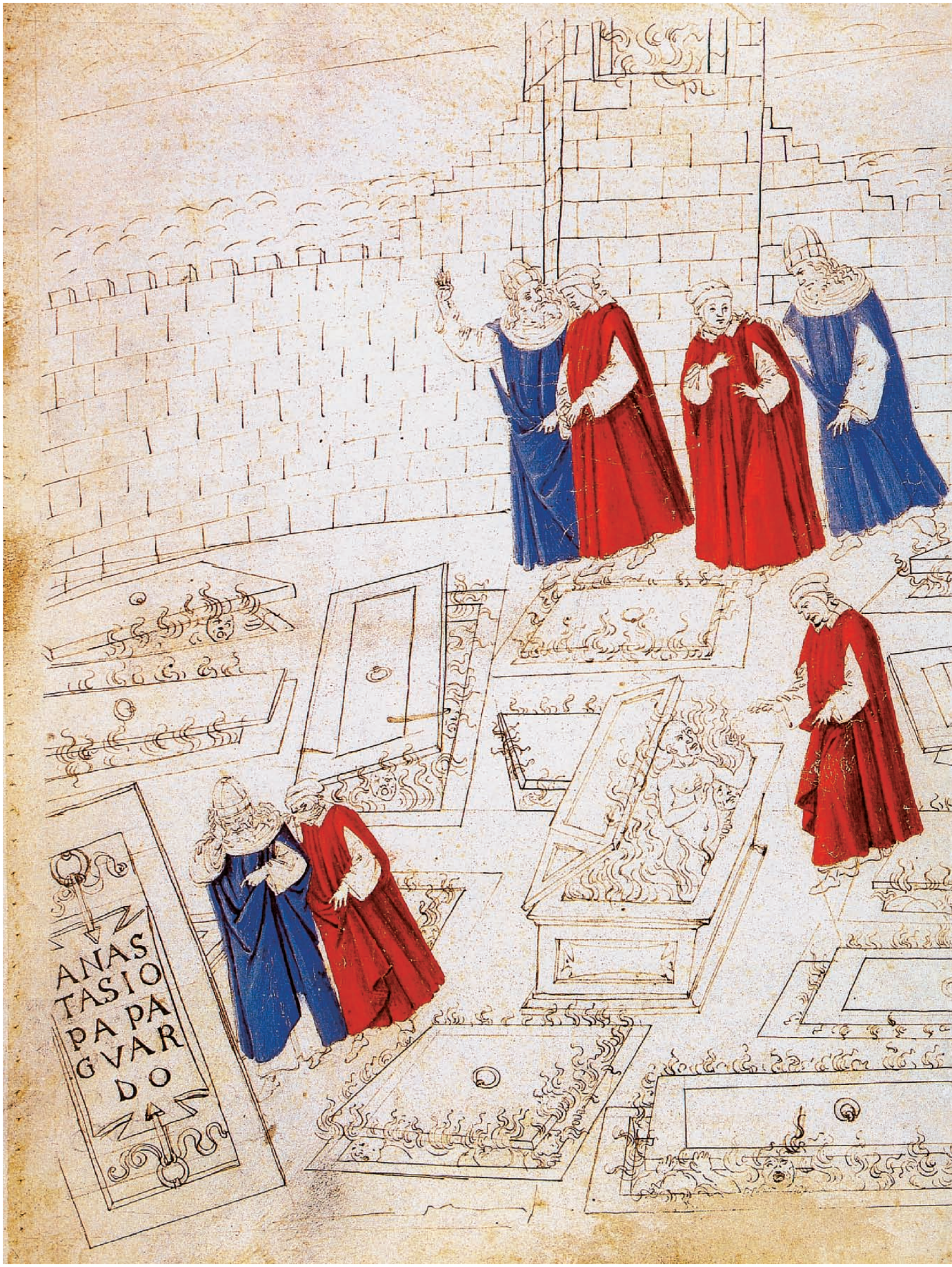
iron beak which spouts forth unquenchable flames. This monster devours all the souls that come within its reach, digests them and, when digested, evacuates them in the usual manner. This ordure of souls falls on the frozen pool, where each soul is returned to its original shape and, thus restored, becomes pregnant, whether it be female or male. The pregnancy follows its natural course, and during that time the souls remain on the ice and feel their vitals being torn by the progeny they have conceived. At the end of that season, they all—men as well as women—bring forth monstrous creatures with heads of red-hot iron, sharp-pointed bills and tails bristling with hooks. These creatures issue from any part of the body, and in their exit they tear and drag after them both flesh and vital organs, clawing, biting, roaring; this is the punishment of the licentious, and especially of those who, entering the service of God, have not been able to subdue the flesh. In another and more distant valley, are many forges and countless demons in the guise of smiths, who seize the souls with heated tongs and toss them on the coals kept ever aglow by the breath of the bellows; then, when the souls have become red-hot and malleable, with great iron rakes they drag them from the fire, and heaping together twenty, or thirty, or even a hundred of them, they cast this fiery mass upon the anvils and with their sledges hammer it in turn; and when it has been thus hammered and welded they hurl it through the air to other no less terrible smiths who, seizing it anew with iron tongs, begin the game afresh. Tundal himself was subjected to this torture, which is prepared for those who have heaped sin upon sin. After undergoing this formidable test, the soul arrives at the last and deepest gulf of Hell, resembling in form a quadrangular cistern, from which there rises a lofty column of fire and smoke. An infinite number of souls and innumerable demons come forth in that column in the form of sparks, which fall back again into the pit. There, in the farthest and most fearful depth of the abyss, dwells the Prince of Darkness, stretched out fast bound upon an enormous gridiron and thronged about by demons who stir the crackling coals beneath him and blow them with the bellows. He is of monstrous size, black as the raven's pinions, and with a thousand hands armed with iron claws; he flourishes and coils in the darkness a tail of exceeding length, thick-set with sharpest darts. He raves and tosses—this horrid monster—and mad with pain and rage, he flings his thousand hands about through the gloomy air that is all impregnated with souls; and all that he catches he crams into his burning mouth, as a thirsty rustic gulps a cluster of grapes; then, exhaling, he blows them forth and spatters them about; and when he takes another breath, he draws them once more within himself. Thus are punished those who did not hope in God's mercy or who did not believe in God himself; and thus, also, all the other sinners who, having for a season undergone other torments, are at last subjected to this one, final and everlasting.

Others have described Hell as more nearly resembling an immense and horrible kitchen or a dreadful dining hall, where the devils act as cooks and as banqueters; the viands are the souls of the damned, prepared and garnished in various manners. Giacomino da Verona, who has been mentioned before, says that the cook Beelzebub puts the soul to roast "like a fat pig over the fire", seasons it with a sauce composed of water, salt, soot, gall, sharp vinegar and a pinch of strong poison; and thus appetisingly prepared, he causes it to be served at the table of the King of Hell, who, tasting it, immediately sends it back, as it appears to him to be underdone. A French trouvère, contemporary with Giacomino, Raoul de Houdan, describes in one of his short poems, entitled *Le Songe d'Enfer*, a grand infernal banquet which he was permitted to attend on a day when King Beelzebub held open court and general council. Hardly had he entered Hell when he saw a great multitude busied in setting the tables. Any one who would might enter, and no one was excluded. Bishops, abbots and clerks greeted him amicably; Pilate and Beelzebub bade him welcome; and at the hour appointed all sat down at the tables. A more magnificent banquet and rarer viands were never seen in the court of any king. The tablecloths were made of usurers' skins, and the napkins of the skins of aged prostitutes; courses and entremets left nothing to be desired: fat, basted usurers; hashed robbers and murderers; harlots with garden sauce; heretics broiled on the spit; fried lawyers' tongues; also, ragouts of hypocrites, monks, nuns, sodomites and other dainty game. Wine was lacking; if one was thirsty he drank the juice of villainies.

The devils exercised the office of taskmaster and of executioner. It was their duty, as has been seen, to roast, boil, flay and quarter souls. Such an office had its subdivisions and grades; and as the tormented were distributed throughout the infernal regions in accordance with their special sins, so were the tormentors also distributed according to the punishments

Domenico di Michelino, *Dante and the Three Kingdoms,* 1465.
Oil on canvas.
Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Florence, Italy.

Sandro Botticelli, *Illustration from Canto X*, from Dante's *Inferno,* c. 1490.
Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican.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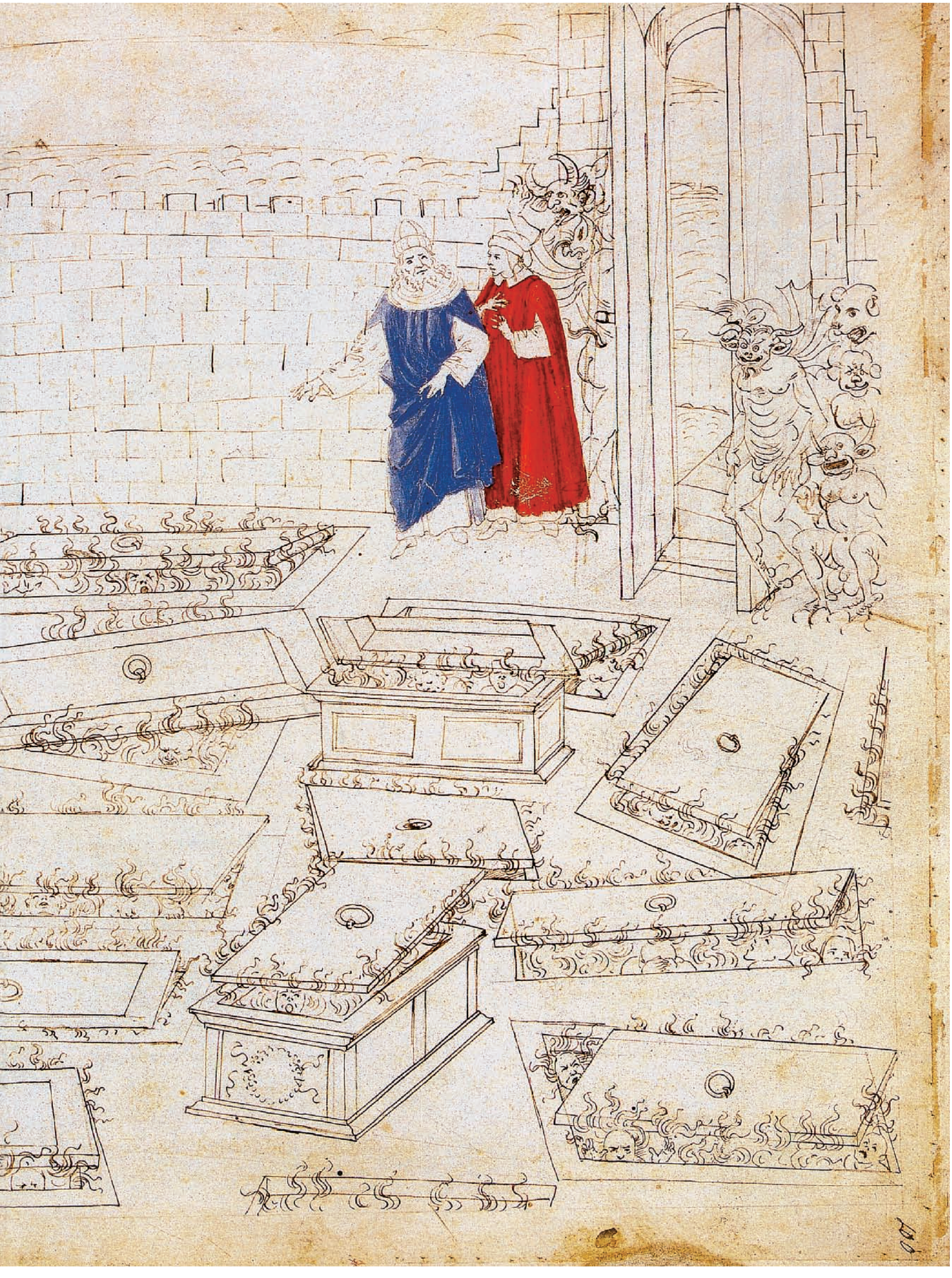

assigned to their special care; and just as each fault had its particular instigators, so did it have its particular diabolic punishers. But while the punishers were devoting themselves to their office, did they, too, experience the chastisement that their own wickedness merited? Were they, too, tortured at the same time that they were torturing?

As to this, opinions vary. There is no lack of writers, and writers of good repute, who affirm that the devils do not suffer from the pains of Hell; for if they did so suffer, only with great reluctance would they devote themselves to their duty of tempting and tormenting, a duty which they appear, on the contrary, to exercise with remarkable zest. In the visions, as in the poem of Dante, Lucifer is usually confined in the lowest depth of Hell, where, in accord with the statement of the Apocalypse, he is subjected to the severest torture;[67] but of the other demons it is not said, as a rule, that they suffer grievous torments. That they should sometimes torment one another, come to blows, or soundly drub one another, seems only natural; and cases of this sort are to be found in the "Vision of Tundal," as well as in *The Divine Comedy*, in the passage which describes the Pit of the Barrators.[68] Neither did the accursed spirits lack relaxations and pleasures. As every good work was to them a source of torment, so did they find a source of enjoyment in every evil work; and what we know about human affairs permits us to guess that they had more frequent cause for rejoicing than for grief. Oftentimes, in pious legends, the devils are seen capering in glee about some soul that has just become their fellow citizen. Peter Cellensis (died 1183) says, in one of his

Sandro Botticelli, *Illustration from Canto XVIII*, from Dante's *Inferno,* c. 1490. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany.

sermons, that the Devil, being submerged in the flames of Hell, would long ago have starved to death, were he not revived by the sins of men; and Dante assures us that even in Hell the Devil finds solace in seeing the affairs of this world going on after his own liking. Even admitting that the suffering of the devils was very great, it did not lack alleviation.

Theologians generally agree in saying that in Purgatory there are no demons to torment the souls; but very many of the visions represent Purgatory as full of devils, busy in exercising there their office of tormentors. The Church, which only in 1439, at the Council of Florence, ratified the dogma of Purgatory (a doctrine which had been developed previously by Saint Gregory and Saint Thomas), has not committed itself on this particular point. Dante, whose imaginations and conceptions in regard to the location and the structure of Purgatory are altogether his own, with regard to the relations of Purgatory to the demons holds to the opinion of the theologians and abandons that of the mystics. It is true that the ancient adversary tries to penetrate the poet's Purgatory in the form of a snake,

The one, mayhap, that gave to Eve the bitter food;[69]

but the angels, "the heavenly hawks",[70] put him to flight. It should be noted, in passing, that the pains of Purgatory were believed by some to be even more severe than those of Hell; this was because they did not last forever, as did the latter.

Hell was the ordinary abode of the damned and the place where they regularly suffered their merited punishment; but let it not be thought that this rule was altogether without

Sandro Botticelli, *Illustration from Canto XV*, from Dante's *Inferno,* c. 1490.
Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican.

Anonymous, *Hell* (detail)*,* 16th century.
Oil on canvas.
Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, Lisbon, Portugal.

exceptions. Passing over, for the present, certain fortunate spirits among the damned, who by very special divine grace were withdrawn from the abyss and admitted to Heaven and of whom I shall have occasion to speak later; it should be noted that in certain determined cases the damned were able, for a longer or shorter period of time, to escape from their prison; and that there was, so to speak, a hell outside of Hell. As has been seen, apparitions of the damned were of frequent occurrence; but it profited them nothing to be outside their customary place of suffering, for suffering followed them still as the shadow follows the body. Others of the damned were not received into Hell, but suffered in some strange place on the earth, perchance in order that they might serve as salutary warnings to those who came across them in their wanderings. Thus Saint Brandan, sailing in search of the earthly Paradise, found in a great maelstrom of the sea that greatest of criminals, Judas Iscariot, perpetually tossed about by the furious billows; and one of the heroes of the Carolingian epics, Huon de Bordeaux, wandering in the East, found Cain imprisoned in an iron cask studded within with nails, which was unceasingly rolling about a desert island. Giovanni Boccaccio, retelling in his own fashion the tales of older days, relates the fearful story of that Guido degli Anastagi[71] who, taking his own life because of unrequited love, was condemned to everlasting punishment; daily he rides about the countryside, now here, now there, mounted on a black steed, holding a rapier in his hand, and with two mastiffs running before him; ever pursuing the cruel, heartless woman; she also, condemned like him, on foot and naked, is forever fleeing before him; till, overtaking her, he transfixes her with his rapier, rips her body with his hunting knife, and tosses her heart and other organs to his ravenous dogs. Etienne de Bourbon (died about 1262) speaks of certain spectres that used to be seen in the neighbourhood of Mount Etna, engaged in building a castle which fell in ruins every Saturday night, only to be begun again from the foundations each Monday morning. It seems, however, that these were souls undergoing purgation rather than souls of the damned.

More than once, at dead of night, the entire population of Hell was seen passing in procession through the air or moving through forests, drawn up in ranks like those of a vast marching host. The monk Otlo (1013-1072) tells a tale of two brothers who, riding one

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Fra Angelico, *The Last Judgment, Hell* (right panel), c. 1435-1440.
Tempera on wood, 102.7 x 28 cm.
Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany.

Bartolomeo di Fruosino, illustration from Dante's *Inferno*, c. 1420.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.


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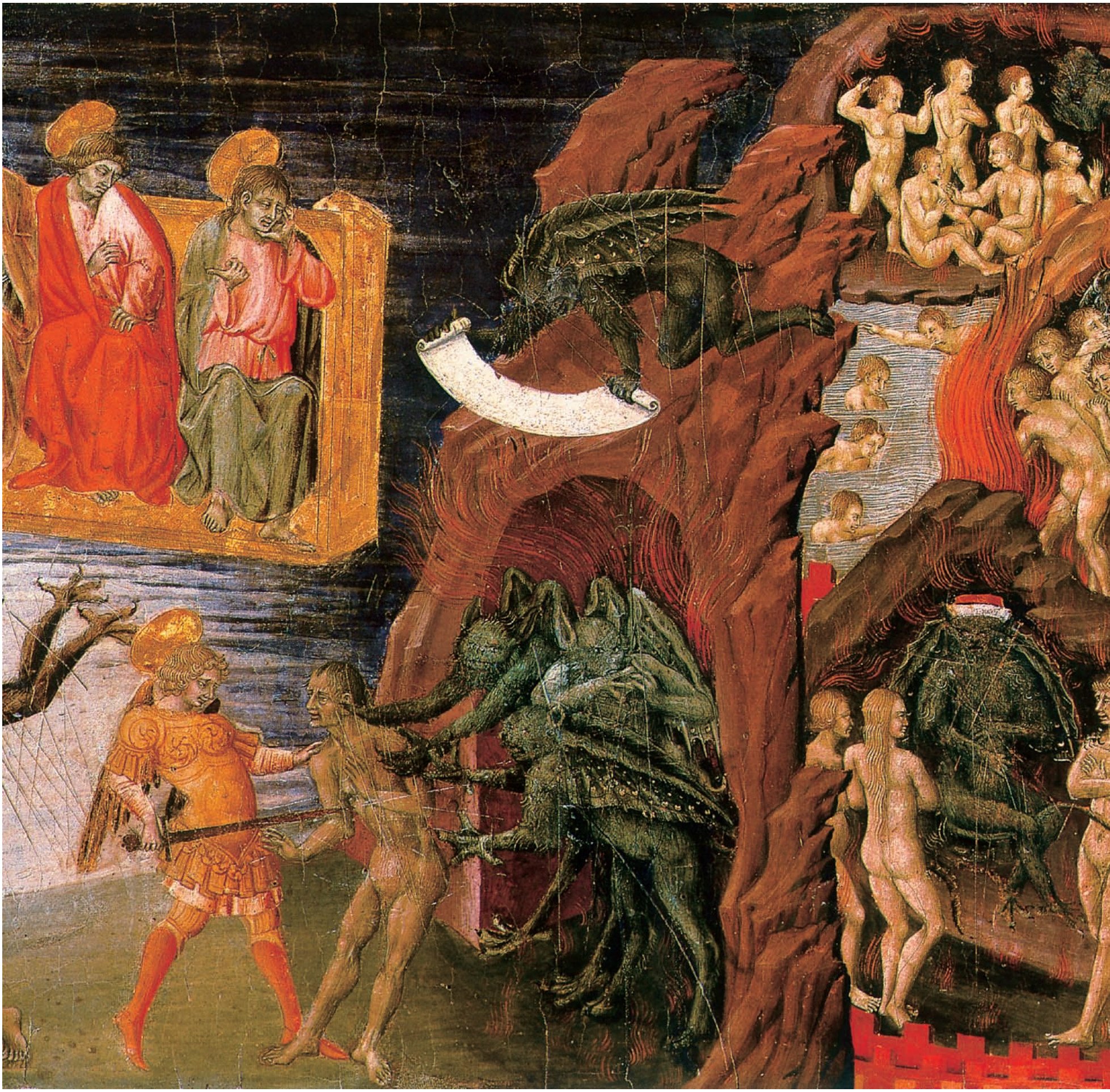
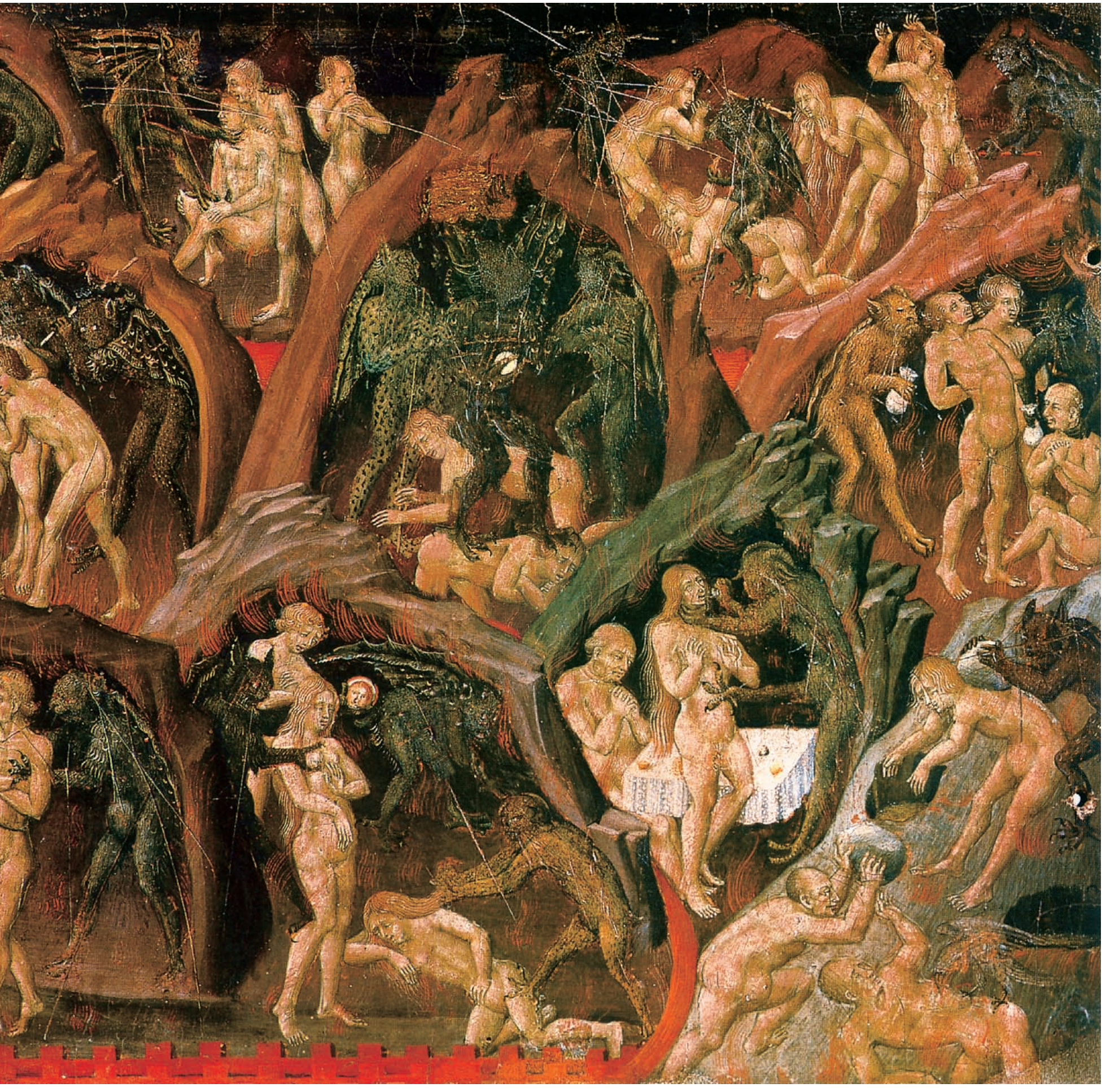


Giovanni di Paolo, *The Last Judgment,* after 1445.
Tempera and gold on wood.
Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, Italy.



day, suddenly beheld in the air a very great multitude passing at but a little distance above the ground. Terrified, and crossing themselves, they besought these strange travellers to tell them who they were. One of them, who from the steed he rode and from his apparel appeared to be a cavalier of note, made himself known to them, saying: "I am your father; and unless ye restore to the convent whence I unjustly took them the fiefs that ye know of, I shall be damned beyond remission; also, along with me, all of my descendants who shall keep possession of the ill-gotten lands." The father gives his sons some inkling of the torments that he is suffering; the sons repair his fault, and in this wise they free his soul from Hell.

But a story even more marvellous and fearsome than this is found in the narrative of another monk, the chronicler Ordericus Vitalis, who lived till about the middle of the twelfth century. A priest by the name of Gualchelmus, curate of Bonneval, was returning one night in the year 1091 from a visit to a sick man and was still a long way from his home. While he was crossing the deserted fields, lighted by the moon which shone high in the heaven, his ears were assailed by a deep, portentous sound, like that of a mighty army on the march. Seized with terror, he tries to hide among some shrubs that are growing close at hand; when lo, a giant, armed with an enormous club, bars his way and without otherwise molesting him forbids him to move. The priest remains riveted to the spot and becomes witness of a strange and fearful spectacle. First, there passes an innumerable company of footmen, driving along a great number of cattle and laden with all manner of plunder. All are uttering most grievous lamentations and importuning one another. There follows a troop of gravediggers, bearing fifty biers, and on each bier sits a horrible dwarf with an enormous head shaped like a keg. Fast bound to a great log which two dusky Ethiopians are carrying on their shoulders, comes a wicked man who is filling the air with horrible howlings. A monstrous demon sits astride him, digging his back and loins with heated spurs. After these, appears an endless cavalcade entirely made up of sinful women; the wind each moment lifts their airy bodies a full cubit in the air, then drops them back on saddles studded with red-hot nails. Behind this cavalcade trails a band of churchmen of every grade; and after these, an army of horsemen clad in full armour, riding gigantic coursers and unfolding black banners to the breeze. The priest has a conversation with one of these horsemen, which it is not necessary to repeat here; Ordericus declares that he heard the whole account from the priest's own mouth. In the Apocalypse, attributed to Saint John, we read that the torments of the damned will last throughout the ages, and that they shall have surcease neither day nor night;[72] and ecclesiastical writers are unanimous in declaring that God abandons the damned and forgets them. Saint Bernard says explicitly in one of his sermons that in Hell there is no room for indulgence, as there is no possibility of repentance. This is the opinion confirmed by the rigid dogmatic theology; but opposed to this, there exists another opinion, suggested by a theology that is more tolerant and more humane, a theology that knows naught of the subtleties of dialectics but comes from the heart and goes to the heart: according to this other opinion, the infinite mercy of God does not halt before the gates of Hell, but, like a ray of kindly sunlight, pierces the abyss and brings some rest and respite to soothe the unutterable tortures of the damned.

The Christian poet Prudentius (lived about 348-408) speaks in one of his hymns of the rest that is granted to the souls of the lost on the night of Christ's resurrection. In an apocryphal Apocalypse of Saint Paul, composed toward the end of the fourth century by some Greek monk, we are told of the descent of the Apostle to the Gentiles into the realm of everlasting perdition. Guided by the archangel Michael, the apostle has already passed through the whole "dolorous kingdom"; he has seen the different orders of sinners and the bitter penalties to which divine justice subjects them; at this sight he has shed tears of pity and of grief. He is about to take himself away from the horror of darkness when the damned cry out with one voice: "O Michael! O Paul! Have compassion upon us; pray for us to the Redeemer." The archangel says to them: "Weep ye all; and I will weep with you, and Paul and all the choirs of the angels will weep with me: who knows but God may extend His mercy to you?" And the lost souls cry: "Have mercy on us, thou son of David."[73] And lo, Christ comes down, crowned, from Heaven; and He reproaches the sinful souls with their wickedness and reminds them of the blood that was shed for them in vain. But Michael, and Paul, and thousands upon thousands of angels, kneel down before the Son of God and beseech Him to show mercy. Then Jesus, moved to pity, grants to all the souls that are in Hell this grace, that they shall have rest and shall be without any torment from the ninth hour of Saturday until the first hour of Monday.

Fra Angelico, *The Last Judgment* (detail), 1432-1435.
Tempera and gold on wood, 105 x 210 cm.
Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy.

This, perhaps the most beautiful of all the devout legends to which the Christian imagination has given birth; afterward translated from Greek into Latin and from Latin into the common tongues of Europe, it had a wide vogue; and it is more than probable that Dante was acquainted with it and referred to it in his divine poem; but the thought that inspired it is not so exclusively its own as not to be found again in other legends of the Middle Ages. Saint Peter Damianus relates the following, on the authority of Archbishop Humbert. Near Pozzuoli there rises, in the midst of the foul black waters, a rugged, rocky promontory. Up from these pestilent waters there come at set seasons certain horrible birds which may be seen from the evening of Saturday until the morning of Monday. During this time they fly, as if let loose from a cage, back and forth about the mountain; stretching their wings and preening their feathers with their beaks, as though enjoying some sort of rest and refreshment that has been granted them. No one ever sees them feeding, nor has any fowler, with all his cunning, ever succeeded in capturing any of them. When the dawn of Monday appears, lo, there comes a raven, like to a vulture in size, and with hoarse croaks begins to summon these birds and drive them away before him. One after another, they all plunge into the pool, nor do they let themselves be seen again until the following Saturday; wherefore some believe them to be the souls of the damned on whom has been bestowed, in honour of Christ's resurrection, the privilege of resting during Sunday and the nights that precede and follow it.

But whether with or without temporary mitigation and temporary repose, the pains of Hell endured throughout eternity. The doctrine defended in the fourth century by Origen, surely one of the greatest minds produced by ancient Christianity; that is, the doctrine of the final salvation of all creatures and of the final return to God of all that came from God—a doctrine also taught in the succeeding century by Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390) and by Gregory of Nyssa (335-395) —had incurred the disapprobation of the more jealous guardians of dogmatic truth and the anathema of the councils; and it had altogether given place to the doctrine of eternal and irrevocable damnation. This fearful threat was therefore perpetually present to men's minds, and every means was employed to impress and inculcate it there more deeply. The arts vied with one another in aiding faith; and Giotto (1266-1337), in the Arena of Padua; Orcagna (1308-1368), on an inner wall of Santa Maria in Florence; and an unidentified painter, in the Campo Santo of Pisa, all depicted with pencils of flame the terrors and horrors of the infernal abyss. In the Mystery Plays there used to appear upon the stage the abysmal mouth of the symbolic dragon, the devourer of souls. Dante described to all the nations that realm of darkness over whose awful gate were graven the words:

"All hope abandon, ye who enter here."[74]

From the pulpit, uplifting with one hand the crucifix in witness of his words, the friar would enumerate, one by one, the tortures of those accursed souls that had fallen under Satan's sway; and when he had ended, the organ would begin to thunder, while under the deep arches, in the twilight of the marble naves, reverberated the fearful chant that told of the horrors of the dreadful pit:

Ubi tenebrae condensae,
Voces dirae et immensae,
Et scintillae sunt succensae
Flantes in fabrilibus.
Locus ingens et umbrosus,
Faetor ardeñs et fumosus,
Rumorque tumultuosus,
Et abyssus sitiens.[75]

Henri Romain, *Abstract of Livy.*
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei,* 15th century.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

Limburg Brothers, *Hell*, from *The Luxurious Hours of the Duke of Berry (Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry),* beginning of 15th century.
Musée Condé, Chantilly, France.

V. Defeats of the Devil

SATAN had, as we have seen, numerous partisans; but he had also numerous adversaries: the former in Hell and on earth, the latter on earth and in Heaven. Partisans of Satan were all the other demons and all wicked men, especially heretics and wizards; his adversaries were all good men, and in a particular manner the saints, living or dead, the ecclesiastics, if not by virtue of their character, by virtue of their calling, also, the various orders of angels, the Virgin Mary and the Lord God. God took—as in the time of Satan's first rebellion—but little part in this struggle, awaiting the fullness of time and the destined limit set for his diabolic arrogance; against His unworthy enemy He suffered the battle to be waged by His Mother, by the saints, by all the heavenly hosts, and by the men who did not lack His grace or the aid of Holy Church. And it was a daily battle, perpetually renewed; hardly had Satan been beaten when he would rise again, and driven from one position, he would reappear in another. Occasionally, Satan exchanged the role of vanquished for that of victor.

Let us see, first, what victories were gained over the great adversary by men of flesh and blood; later, we will see what victories were gained over him by the inhabitants of Heaven.

The Christian, who fought against Satan for the salvation of his own soul, had no lack of weapons, whether for attack or for defence, such as were required for so fearful a combat; and of these weapons, some were spiritual, some material. He had, also, all the support of divine grace, without which there was no hope of salvation; furthermore, he had faith and virtue, behind which he defended himself as behind the ramparts of a strongly fortified citadel. The practices of religion to which he diligently devoted himself—prayer, attendance on sacraments, fastings, prolonged vigils—were like so many operations of warfare, calculated to keep the enemy at a distance or cause him to give ground if he had already advanced too far. A formidable weapon, ever at hand in time of need, was the sign of the cross, no less useful for attack than for defence. Innumerable were the devils who had to confess with their own lips that it was not possible for them to withstand the virtue of this most sacred symbol which filled them with terror and confusion. With the sign of the cross, not only were devils put to flight, but conflagrations were extinguished, tempests were laid, the sick were healed and many other difficult things were accomplished. Great efficacy, also, had the names of God the Father, Jesus and the Virgin Mary, if invoked with the fervour of faith and flung like a challenge in the very faces of the fiends. Next came holy water, more scalding for their accursed necks and backs than were the boiling pitch and molten lead of their own hellish caldrons. Bells, which filled the air with their pealing voices, calling the faithful to the rites of worship, to meditation, to prayer or announcing the festivals so filled with grace, routed the demons far and wide, ofttimes scattered the storms the fiends had raised, and produced many other marvellous effects; hence, the hymn of the bell:

Laudo Deum verum,
Plebem voco,
Congrego clerum.
Defunctos ploro,
Pestem fugo,
Festa decoro.
Funera plango,
Fulgura frango,
Sabbata pango.
Excito lentos,
Dissipo ventos,
Paco cruentos;[76]

and sometimes, at the end, the fearful line:

Est mea cunctorum terror vox daemoniorum.[77]

The relics of the saints who had triumphed over all the assaults and all the wiles of Satan aided countless others in winning similar triumphs; and the same may be said of certain blessed writings, to be worn about the neck or sewed into garments, and of certain amulets. Nor was there a lack of purely natural objects which were opposed and injurious to the devils: such were certain gems, as the chrysolite and the agate, which put them to flight, and the sapphire, which reconciled one with God; such were certain plants, as garlic[78] and rue,[79] and an herb called by the French *permanable*, which had power to enchant the demons. Salt was one of the things of which they showed themselves most afraid. The cock, as has already been noted, was a great adversary of the devils; with his morning clarion call, precursor of the day, he forced them (but not all of them) to hide themselves away. Finally, in certain cases, the Christian could use to good effect, as we shall see, either his fists or a stout cudgel. Moreover, one who had fallen into the

Page 216: **Raffaello Sanzio,** also known as **Raphael,** *St. Michael Slaying the Demon*, known as *The Large St. Michael,* c. 1518.
Oil on wood mounted on canvas, 268 x 160 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

Sandro Botticelli, *The Mystical Nativity,* c. 1500.
Oil on canvas, 108.6 x 74.9 cm.
The National Gallery, London, United Kingdom.

power of the enemy could, with more or less lengthy and severe penances, rescue himself and put his cruel master under his feet.

Nevertheless, it must be admitted that these weapons and these defences did not always avail, as may be seen from famous examples in the lives of many saints, and not merely of the lesser or mediocre ones, but of those of highest standing. It happened all too often, whatever may have been the reason, that the devils impudently and impiously repeated, word for word, in mockery, the holy prayers with which the saint was endeavouring to cow them and even the psalms of the sacred Psalter; that they sniggered outrageously at the sight of that cross, a glimpse of which usually caused them to turn their backs and flee; that they danced and capered under the drops of holy water; and that their assaults grew more furious and more frequent, the greater the means of defence employed.

The saints were, of all human beings, the most redoubtable adversaries of Satan, those who strove against him without rest or respite, whether in self-defence, or in defence of others, or to put a stop to his mischief-making. Many were the tricks and numberless the annoyances which they had to suffer at his hands; but often they squared their account with him, with interest; and the fiercer and longer the battle, the more glorious and complete was their triumph. A volume might be filled with the authentic history of the affronts, the quaint indignities, and the pious castigations, that Satan and his fellow spirits received from the righteous servants of God, from women as well as from men, from hoary, long-bearded anchorites, and from devout virgins scarcely emerged from girlhood. Saint Anthony, the first hermit, who had patiently endured from the devils a thousand outrages and even the most savage beatings, one day, in order to show one of them of how little account he held him and his antics, spat right in the demon's face; whereupon the fiend, put *hors de combat*, took to his heels. Now it may be said that the spittle of the saints may have had qualities not possessed by ordinary men's saliva: in fact, the bishop Donatus, who lived in the times of Honorius and Arcadius (Arcadius was Byzantine Emperor, and Honorius Emperor of the West, 395-408), slew a huge and terrible dragon by merely spitting in its mouth.

We have seen what virtue there was in the sign of the cross. With a sign of the cross, Saint Sulpicius and Saint Frodobert (died 673), while still young children, drove away a devil who tried to stop them on their way to school. Using this same weapon, other holy men obtained even more wonderful results. Peter the Venerable tells us that when a devil had found his way into the Abbey of Cluny for the purpose of tempting some one of the monks, the prior, who was a man of great shrewdness and no less holiness, with no other implement than the sign of the cross drove the devil into the latrine.

Let no one be astonished if Saint Sulpicius and Saint Frodobert defended themselves so well against the Devil, even putting him to flight, while they were still mere lads. Just as holiness was oftentimes precocious, so were certain faculties and powers which are conferred by holiness. The abbot Saint Pachomius was, from his most tender years, a very great and implacable adversary of the Devil; Saint Victor of Archiac struck terror into the demons while he was yet in his mother's womb. Nor is this miracle greater than the one performed by the images of Saint Ignatius Loyola of blessed memory, which, whether painted or carved, sent scampering away the boldest and most brazen of the accursed spirits.

Many saints bound the Devil, some with chains, some with a simple thread. The pope Saint Silvester (bishop of Rome 314-335), the same who, according to the most authentic histories, cured the Emperor Constantine of leprosy and received as his reward Rome

Milanese School, *Jesus Releasing the Possessed,*
end of 10th century. Ivory.
Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, Germany.

Anonymous, *St. Bernard Striking down a Demon, Book of Hours,* 1490.
Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris, France.

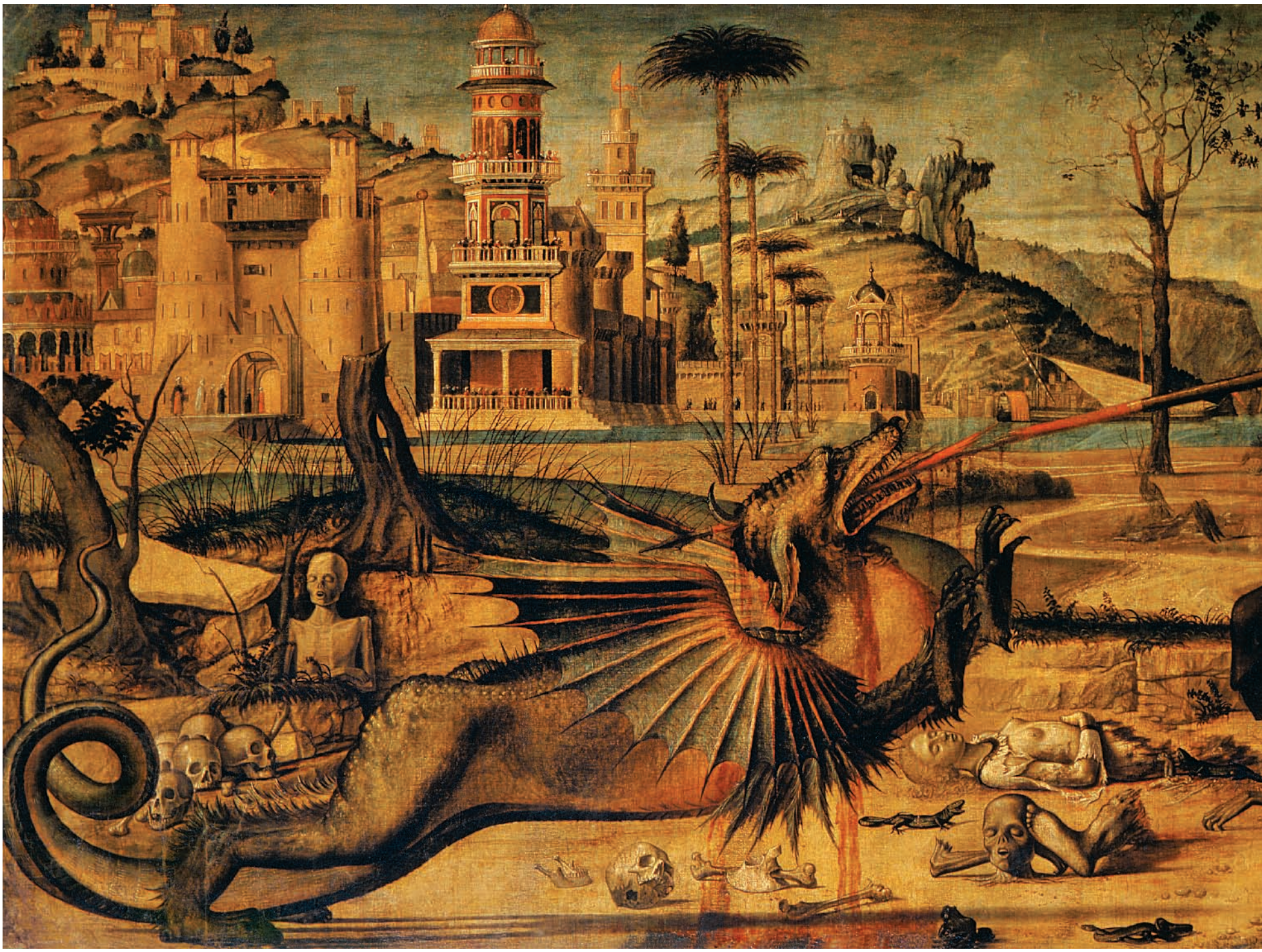

E DVXIT EOS DE TENEBRIS 7 VMBRA MORTIS 7 VINCVLA EORV DIRVPIT. PS. CVI. C
REDEMISTI NOS DEVS IN SANGVINE TVO EX OMNI TRIBV LIGVA 7 PPLO. APOCAL. V. C.

and the whole Empire of the West—Saint Silvester caught the Devil in a deep cave, where he had taken on the form of a dragon, bound him with a thread and sealed his mouth with the sign of the cross. In Hibernia, the holy abbot Mun bound him with a red-hot chain. Other saints were unwilling to go to so much trouble or did not think of this expedient, and they carried out the operation in other ways.

Saint Apollonius, an abbot in the Thebaid, caught the demon of pride one day in the shape of a little Ethiopian and buried him in the sand. On one occasion, when some demon or other under the form of a giant had suddenly come upon Saint Contestus (died in 513) and was seeking to entice him into dissipation, the holy man cast his own stole over the demon's neck and led him about, like a dog, through all the city. Saint Illidius (died in 383) compelled one of the devils to carry two pillars from Treves into Auvergne; Saint Procopius of Prague (died in 1053) forced several of them to drag his plough through stony ground. The blessed Notker Balbulus (840-912), entering the church one night, found the Devil there in the shape of a dog; he ordered him to stand still and, grasping a stout cudgel which had once belonged to Saint Columbanus (543-615), he broke it over the demon's back. Saint Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, treated the Devil even worse. This worthy man was working one day at his blacksmith's forge, as he was wont to do during his leisure hours, when, lo, the tempter presented himself to him in the form of a young and beautiful woman. The saint pretends not to recognise him and enters into friendly conversation with him, waiting, meanwhile, until a pair of pincers that he has laid on the coals shall have become properly heated. When he sees them as he wants them, seizing the opportune moment, he grasps them, brandishes them and with marvellous dexterity he nabs the nose of the unlucky fiend; pulling and twisting with such fury that, in his anguish, the Devil spins round like a top, bellows like a buffalo and, as

Fra Angelico, *Christ in Limbo*, one of 35 paintings for the *Silver Treasury of Santissima Annunziata,* c. 1450. Tempera on wood, 39 x 39 cm.
Museo di San Marco, Florence, Italy.

Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Descent to Hell,* back panel of the *Maestà,* 1308-1311. Tempera on wood, 51 x 53.5 cm.
Museo dell'Opera del Duomo, Siena, Italy.



Vittore Carpaccio, *St. George and the Dragon,* 1502.
Tempera on canvas, 141 x 360 cm.
Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice, Italy.

soon as ever he can, darts away like an arrow. Saint Dominic was somewhat more humane. One night when the saint is at his studies, suddenly the Devil begins to busy himself about him and tries to annoy him. The saint neither suffers himself to be disturbed nor loses his patience; but taking the candle by the light of which he is reading, he places it in the demon's hands, ordering him to hold it quite steady; then, as if nothing had happened, he goes on with his reading. The Devil is forced to obey; the candle burns on till it is all consumed, and he scorches all his fingers. This same joke is said to have been indulged in by Saint Anthony and by Saint Bernard. In an almost identical case, Luther contented himself with hurling his inkwell at the Devil's head; but Luther was not a saint; they even say that he was the Devil's son. The saints were not obliged to be too considerate of the Devil's comfort. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux was once travelling in a carriage when the Devil came and broke one of the wheels. So much the worse for him: the saint ordered him to transform himself into a wheel and take the place of the one he had shattered.

Oftentimes, when they have dealings with the saints, the devils are caught in their own snares. One day a certain devil caused Saint Lupus, who was at that moment engaged in prayer, to be seized with an insufferable thirst. The saint sends for a cup of fresh water, and the devil immediately injects himself into it in the natural hope of thus being able to enter the body of the holy man; but the latter calmly covers the cup with the pillow from his bed and holds the presumptuous fiend a prisoner until the following morning. Other saints played this same practical joke on their enemies, but held them captive for a longer time. Saint Conon the Isaurian used to shut the devils up in sealed bottles and place these in the foundation of his house. But the master of all these, long before their own time, had been Solomon; of whom it is said that he shut up in a brass vase I know not how many legions of devils and then sunk the vase in a morass near Babylon. The devils would be there still had not the greedy Babylonians, in an evil hour, fished up and opened the vase, thinking that the wisest of kings had concealed a treasure in it. And what shall I say of Saint Chiuppillo, a saint who is not listed in the calendar, but whom the Neapolitans know well and mention often? No other saint, to my knowledge, ever thought of playing on the arrogant tempter the joke that Saint Chiuppillo played on him, or of giving him such sound advice as this saint gave him. If I pass the matter over in silence, it is to avoid giving too wide publicity to the Devil's humiliation.

Petrus Christus, *The Last Judgment,* 1452. Wood, 134 x 56 cm.
Staatliche Museen, Berlin, Germany.

Master of Castelsardo, *The Archangel St. Michael, Retable of St. Peter,* 1498-1500.
Chiesa di San Pietro, Tuili, Italy.

Female saints showed themselves not a whit behind their brothers when it came to giving the Devil what he deserved. One or two examples will suffice to prove this. Saint Juliana (beheaded in 304) had refused to accept as her husband Eulogius, the prefect of Nicomedia, since he was a worshiper of idols. The prefect, after beseeching and admonishing her to no purpose, first had her beaten with rods; then he commanded that she be hung up by her hair and that molten lead be poured upon her head. But not being able to harm her in any way, he had her loaded with chains and cast into a dungeon. In the dungeon, there appeared to the virgin the Devil, in the form of an angel, who said to her: "O Juliana, I am the angel of God, who sendeth me to thee that thou mayest resolve to serve idols and not consent to die so evil a death." But Juliana addresses a fervent prayer to heaven, and the demon is forced to discover himself. Then the valiant maiden, in order to teach him never again to tempt holy virgins, binds his hands behind his back, throws him to the ground and, without being in the least moved by his cries, gives him a sound flogging with the same chain with which she is bound. The prefect orders Juliana to be brought forth from prison and subjected to new tortures. She comes forth, dragging her enemy after her. The demon complains and entreats her, saying: "O Juliana, make not a laughingstock of me in this fashion; for I shall henceforth be able to attempt nothing against any one. It is said that the Christians are merciful ; why hast thou no mercy on me?" But Juliana does not heed him; she leads him in triumph through all the marketplace and casts him at last into a sewer. But the mad prefect has seen all this, yet he will not acknowledge himself in the wrong. He orders the maiden to be broken on the wheel; but an angel shatters the wheel, and the maid is more whole and sound than before. Countless spectators of this great miracle are converted to the faith of Christ, and, on the spot, there are beheaded four hundred men and a hundred and thirty women. The prefect causes Juliana to be submerged in a caldron full of seething lead. This attempt likewise proving vain, he orders her to be beheaded without further delay. At that moment, the demon reappears in the form of a youth and eggs on the executioners, recalling the offences that she has committed against the gods and against himself; but merely by opening her eyes a little, Juliana puts him to flight. At last she wins the crown of martyrdom. Another Juliana (died in 1258), prioress of Mont-Cornillon, when the demon became too troublesome, cast him under her feet and trampled him as one tramples the grapes in the winepress.

More poetic, if not more marvellous, is the case of a Saint Gertrude—I know not which one of the several who bore that name. Here, the Devil is neither flogged nor bound; but what he does shows how great power the saint had over him. A certain knight had fallen desperately in love with this most beauteous virgin; but she, a stranger to all earthly love, and desirous of no other marriage than the eternal union with the heavenly bridegroom, had shut herself up in a cloister, where she spent her days in contemplation and prayer. Unable to do aught else, the gentle knight bestows all his wealth on the order wherein Gertrude has enrolled herself, and in the space of three years he is reduced to beggary. Grieving, not at his poverty, but at his inability to make further expenditures in honour of his sweet mistress, he wanders about the countryside; one night he comes upon the Devil, who promises to make him as rich as he was before, if he will pledge himself to give him his soul at the end of seven years. The lover accepts the offer, writes out the bond in his own blood, and grown richer than before, he freely lavishes his wealth in his lady's honour. Meanwhile, the years go by and the appointed day is at hand. The knight goes to take his leave of the maiden and informs her of the fate that awaits him; then, quaffing a cup of wine which she offers him, he mounts and rides away. At midnight he betakes himself to the spot where his terrible creditor has given him rendezvous. But the demon, on seeing him, is seized with great consternation and restores, unasked, the fatal document: he had perceived, seated on the horse's croup behind the knight, the virgin Gertrude, who had come to help her lover.

More than once, the natural enmity which existed between devils and saints led to actual challenges and duels and hand-to-hand combats. Saint Wulstan (died 1095) stopped at a church one day to pray before the altar. Then comes the foolhardy Devil and challenges him to a wrestling match. The saint accepts the challenge, obtains a strangle hold, plumps his adversary to the ground, and gives him a thorough trouncing. Saint Andrew of Scythia (died about 940) once had a curious vision: he seemed to be in an arena; on one side was a multitude of Ethiopians (that is, of devils); on the other, a multitude of men in white robes (that is Christians). The Ethiopians were discoursing among themselves of races and wrestling matches, and they seemed to be awaiting the word of a gigantic Moor, who surpassed them all in strength and stature. The white-robed ones were doubtful whether any one of themselves durst engage this giant. Saint Andrew engages him and defeats him. The white-robed ones make the circus resound with

Lucas Cranach the Elder (studio)**,** *The Key to the Abyss,* from Luther's *Bible,*
c. 1534. Engraving on coloured wood.
Stadtarchiv, Zerbst, Germany.

Raffaello Sanzio, also known as **Raphael,** *St. George and the Dragon*,
c. 1503-1505. Oil on wood, 29 x 25 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

their plaudits, and an angel lays three crowns upon the victor's head. Certain writers tell of a Lombard, a man of great piety and with brawny arms, who earnestly desired to measure his strength with the Devil and prayed God to grant him this grace. One day, when he happened to be in Spain (this was in the time of Saint Vincent Ferrer), there met him in the fields a poor old crone, wrinkled and bent; he took her to be the Devil, and without more ado, cast himself upon her and pummelled her to death.

Should one attempt to tell all the good that was wrought by the saints while they were yet in this base world, hindering the devils from working evil, long indeed would be the tale. On numberless occasions they forced the fiends to say what they had far rather left unsaid, to confess their every secret and every purpose, the knaveries they had committed and those they hoped to commit. Many saints recognised the enemy under whatever form it might suit him to conceal himself; others scented him, as the setter dog scents game. From all this, very great benefit accrued to the good cause; and we can easily understand how there may be truth in the affirmation of even the most conservative biographers, that in the fifteenth century the only man who kept the devils from bringing the unhappy land of Italy to utter ruin and confusion was Saint Francis of Paola (founder of the order of Minims).

Even if he were not a saint, by using the proper weapons a man could overcome the Devil when the fiend assailed him from without; but if the Devil, like an enemy who by secret passages has obtained access to a fortress, had already entered his body, the task of conquering him became far more difficult; and usually, in order to force him to retire, the help of others was needed, as we have already seen. True, Thomas Cantipratensis records the case of a demoniac cleric who himself cast out the devil by burning a heretic, but such cases were exceptional. Even admitting the efficacy of this remedy, the possessed person did not always have at hand a heretic to burn; furthermore, heretics were burned by the Inquisitors, who were most jealous of the prerogatives of their office. As a rule, the demoniac was already *hors de combat*; and the battle was fought, not between the demon and himself, but between the demon and a more or less experienced champion, who, from without, and with varying success, employed the arts of warfare. Strictly speaking, the demoniac was a castle within which the Devil, or the devils, defended themselves against their assailants and often triumphantly repulsed them. Many were the methods employed in driving out demons, and their efficacy depended, partly on their own nature, partly on the nature of those who made use of them. There existed, in the latter respect, a great difference between the humble exorcist, who possessed nothing beyond his own ecclesiastical character, and the miracle-working saint, who could hang his hood on a sunbeam or change water into wine. Where the former succeeded only after long and painful exercises, sometimes running the risk of being invaded by the very demon from which he was freeing his patient, the saint succeeded with a mere word, a gesture, a glance. Exorcism was a long and intricate operation, or a very simple and short one, according to circumstances. It might call for unremitting prayers, ritualistic formulas, lighted candles, fumigation and the like; but it might also dispense with all these. It should be added that not all devils were of one nature or of like humour; and while there were some who turned tail at the first attack or even at the first sound of battle, there were others who put up a desperate defence, and who had to be extracted bodily from the possessed person, as one draws a nail from a plank with pincers. Many demoniacs were cured by simply touching the relics of some famous saint or by drinking a little water in which had been dropped a pinch of dust scraped from some famous saint's tomb; several were healed (or shall we say, ransomed) with the water which had served to wash the most holy sandals of Saint Elias Speleotes. When exorcised by saints, the devils were wont to give some visible token of their terror and confusion. A devil exorcised by Saint Aper made his exit, with great noise, at the first opening which presented itself, accompanied, says the faithful biographer, by a copious evacuation of the bowels. Well did the foul enemy deserve such fortune.

Erasmus of Rotterdam, in one of his "Colloquies", entitled *Exorcismus sive Spectrum*, blithely derides all the formulas, rites and gibberish of the exorcists; but it is a known fact that his orthodoxy was none too sound, and his ridicule did not prevent a certain Capuchin of Mantua from composing, toward the close of the sixteenth century, a Latin book whose title, translated, reads thus: *The Scourge of the Demons, containing Fearful Exorcisms, Most Potent, Efficacious and Well Proved Remedies, Expedient for Driving forth from the Bodies of those Possessed both Evil Spirits and every sort of Bewitchment: together with the Benedictions and other matters necessary for such Expulsion*. Let us not forget that one of the "well-proved remedies" was the rod: more than one energumen, soundly thrashed by some muscular saint, was seen to humble himself as if by a miracle and to recover without the need of any other exorcism.

Gérard David, *The Archangel St. Michael,*
c. 1510. Oil on wood.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Austria.

Conclusion

ICI EST AMERS ELLIAHCELS RI EMERROE LES PORTES:

AGAINST the conversion and redemption of the Devil there exists an impediment that has never occurred to the theologians, and one which the theologians would deny if it did occur to them: the Devil is dead or about to die; and, dying, he will not re-enter the kingdom of heaven, but he will re-enter and become dissolved in the imagination of man, in the same womb whence he first issued forth.

According to the belief of the Rabbis, many demons are mortal. In the trials for witchcraft, more than once the accused told how the Devil fell ill from time to time, came to death's very door, and then recovered. Many are the folk tales, still current here and there throughout Europe, wherein the Devil actually dies. But it will suffice to cite a Mantuan legend, in which a youth assumes various forms in order to escape the Devil, who likewise assumes various forms while pursuing him. At last the youth, changing himself into a polecat, kills his persecutor, who has changed himself into a hen: "and this is the reason"—thus ends the tale—"why there is no longer any devil".

Strange and significant, indeed, is such an affirmation in the mouths of the common people. The Devil is no more: but, before taking leave of him and of his history, let us look at some of the symptoms and some of the causes of his dissolution. The Devil was born from certain causes, he lived and prospered under certain conditions, adapting himself, as best he could, to their slow but continuous changes. To the law of change, which governs all things, he too succumbed; and, as a living organism, he passed through all the stages in the evolution of life: the causes and conditions of his existence removed, he declines and dies, as might a creature of the tropics transported to the rigorous polar clime. He dies, because his usefulness is ended, and because the idea that made him live is no longer able, amid the mighty contest of rival existences, to hold its own against other ideas, younger and more vigorous.

To discern the symptoms of his dying, we have merely to look about us. What is his work now, to what it was in other times? Where are those fearful apparitions of his, those perpetual ambuscades, those offences of every sort, those terrifying miracles? Where are the formidable hosts with which, in the night time, he used to traverse plains and forests, or pass flying through the air? Where are the coal-black steeds whereon he bore away men steeped in wickedness? Where the conflagrations that he kindled, the tempests that he unchained, the devastating pestilences that he produced? The Church herself, while she cannot admit of the Devil's dying, nevertheless must needs confess that he is far more hampered now than of yore, and that he has ceased to do many of the things that he once did.

And in men's minds, the thought of him, the suspicion of him, the dread of him, have been ever waning; not only among persons of culture, but among the rabble; not only in the cities, where the mutation of ideas and of customs is most rapid, but also in the country, where ancient beliefs and ancient habits longest survive. His name is often heard in daily speech; in proverbs, ejaculations and familiar phrases; but his image is, in general, absent from the mind.

Magic rites are still in vogue among the ignorant classes; but rare indeed are now the cases where the Devil enters into them, and of his famous *sabbats*, assemblies and games, there is no longer any mention. To whom, save to a hopeless lunatic, could it ever now occur to summon the Devil, to form a pact with him, to give up one's soul to him, to gain in return a promise of riches and honours? The Church herself no longer talks of these and similar sins, which she formerly punished with the stake; and she seems glad indeed to forget them. She even goes further, and of the Devil himself she speaks as little as she can; and whereas in the past she was anxious always to call, in every possible way, to the memory of men his name, his figure, his power and his works, it now appears that she herself does not recall these things. Thus is the law of evolution evidenced in those very organisms which show themselves most rebellious against that law, and which are most prone to fancy themselves enduring and unchangeable. Compare a sermon of today with a sermon of five hundred years ago. In the latter, the Devil leaps forth in the midst of every sentence, monstrous and terrible, illumined by the flames of the eternal furnace; in the former, it is a rare thing to hear a casual utterance of his name. Compare a modern church with a church of the Middle Ages: in the latter, the Devil in all his aspects, in all his attitudes, pictured, sculptured, in intaglios, in paintings, in bas-reliefs, in the benches of the choir, in the capitals, in the decorations, ever on the stage, an indispensable character in a drama long and vast as the history of mankind itself; in the former, not a shadow of him, not a sign.

Nowadays, no traveller stands in dread of coming upon gloomy forests, Alpine solitudes, dismal caverns, bottomless

Page 234: **Anonymous,** *Satan is Put in Chains for a Thousand Years,*
end of 16th century.
Miniature in the Russian apocalyptic style.

Anonymous, *Psalter of Winchester,*
between 1150 and 1160.
British Library, London, United Kingdom.

lakes or whirlpools of the sea, haunted by demons treacherous and fell. If an obstinate sinner suddenly disappears, leaving no trace behind, no one any longer imagines that the Devil has seized him by the hair and flown away with him to Hell; but searches are organised and notices published in the firm belief that, living or dead, he must be somewhere—not in the other world, but in this. If some poor wretch is found strangled in his bed, no one any longer believes that it was the Devil that gave him his quietus; but we say that a crime has been committed, and the police busies itself in running the criminal to earth. Women no longer go in constant terror of the nocturnal embraces of the Devil, nor fear that they may become the mothers of a diabolic offspring, or that they may behold the children of their own bodies carried off by a devil disguised as a godfather or a guardian. If one falls ill, he no longer fancies that he is bewitched or that he has the Devil inside his body; and he has recourse, not to the exorcist, but to the physician; if one is dying, he no longer sees around his bed a ring of devils, black as pitch, their jaws bristling with sharp-pointed teeth, their eyes bulging, their hooked hands outstretched, intent to snatch his soul. One proof, among many, that such diabolic occupancy of men's minds has ceased or, at least, extraordinarily diminished, is found in the fact that cases of demonomania have become very rare and tend to disappear entirely. In past centuries, and even until times not very distant from our own, certain nervous disorders and, especially, certain forms of hysteria regularly gave rise to the phenomena of diabolic obsession or possession, for the very reason that men's minds were filled with the thought and the fear of the Devil: now, instead, they resolve themselves into manifestations of an altogether different nature, determined by our present manner of living, the changed direction of ideas, new interests and new preoccupations. Physicians have already long perceived and declared this. The miracles once performed by exorcists in the churches are now performed by physicians in the clinics.

As civilisation goes forward with the building of her vast and wonderful edifice, she changes again and again the implements of her labour; with her own hands, she tears down and destroys the framework and the scaffoldings and the other aids that she has employed in erecting the structure. What at one time was necessary for her, becomes at other times useless or obstructive; and she rids herself of it, in spite of those who object and of those who oppose her. Our civilisation is casting off the Devil, who served her well in other times, but who has now become for her a useless encumbrance; she casts him off, as she casts off slavery, special privilege, religious fanaticism, the "divine right" and so many other things; and as she will continue to cast off so many other things in the future. Against this, there is no remedy possible. The Devil was an integral part, and a chief part, of things and of ideas, of a complex and mighty government, which for centuries gathered under its sway all of human life. When this government was changed in a certain measure, so must needs be changed the part reserved in it for the Devil; now that the change has advanced still further, the Devil must needs go out of it. A ruder religion, a cruder morality and ignorance—these brought in the Devil and made of him the monster that we have seen; a more refined religion, a riper morality and science—these strip him, little by little, of his horrible characteristics and his fearful power, press him on every side, drive him out of the conscience, out of life, out of the world. The spirit that denies[80] is in his turn denied.

If one wishes to be fair, he must not too severely blame the Church for having suffered the figure of that gloomy Adversary to grow till he became, as it were, a second Ahriman; and for having thus encroached upon the rights, and denaturalised the conception, of the kingdom of God: if, without making due allowance and proper concessions, one chides the Church for not having held fast to the simple and pure teaching of the Gospels, he shows that he but poorly understands human nature, and that he has an altogether false conception of history, of its processes and of its needs. The Devil is an offspring of history, and, as such, he is endowed with an indomitable and unquenchable vitality. The Church, even had she been able and willing to do so, would not have been in a position to suppress and crush him; since he was perpetually reproducing himself in the consciousness of individuals, and, from the consciousness of individuals, was ever making new interruptions into history. To imagine a religion in the Middle Ages—a religion not professed by the few alone, but common to countless multitudes—a religion without a Devil—that would be impossible, as impossible as to imagine, under other conditions of time and of civilisation, a religion without idols, without oracles, without bloody sacrifices. The Devil of the Middle Ages has, without a doubt, his source and root in a religious dogma anterior to that era; but it

Albrecht Dürer, *The Apocalypse* (detail), 1498.
Library of the Museo Correr, Venice, Italy.

is that era, as imaged in the sum total of its thoughts, its institutions and its customs, that gives him fullness of being and perfection of character. He is a necessity of that time, and so truly a necessity that the Reformation does not touch him, but accepts him as he is.

But a religion changes, little by little, just as everything else changes which really lives; it changes in men's minds if not in their dogmas, in their feelings if not in their books. Christianity itself changes; and when the obstacles are removed, which once stood in its way, it returns, step by step, toward the purity of its origins; it is ever growing more spiritual, becoming once more what it was in the beginning—a religion of hope and of love, of joy and of peace, removing from itself all the dark and terrible elements that long ages of barbarism transfused into its bosom. This task, alas, is not yet completed with respect to its dogmas; nor are those performing the task who call themselves the guardians and the servants of the truth; but it is being performed of itself, spontaneously and in silence, in the secret places of men's consciousness. How many Christians I have known and now know—and these the most deeply religious and most worthy—who will not hear of a Devil, and who resolutely deny that a God of mercy and of love can condemn his unhappy creatures to an eternal hell, to irreparable wickedness, to a punishment that is horrible, and useless because it is everlasting! Now the true religion (and let those remember this, who believe themselves to be its teachers) is not one which, cold and rigid, encases itself in dogmas, but one which, living and moving, like a flame, burns in men's souls and warms them and lightens all the pathways of life.

As religion changes, so does morality, and the two processes of change cannot go forward separated the one from the other; but each is coordinate with the other; each is determined by the other; and both are conditioned by other changes, which they condition in their turn, thus completing that vast, elusive circle of causes and effects through which moves on, unwearying, the history of the life of humanity.

Whatever others may say to the contrary, moved by prejudice or by an imperfect knowledge of times and events, morality is increasing throughout the world; if we understand by morality the sum total of those mental states and those forms of action which assure the existence and the happiness of individuals and of their communities, and which favour the highest manifestations of individual and social life. Man is slowly becoming humanised, drawing farther and farther away from the brute; and morality, through the centuries, is becoming refined, broadened, uplifted. There is more humanity in the world now than there was a century ago, far more than there was in the Middle Ages, infinitely more than there was in the Stone Age. I know that the advocates of a revealed religion and an unchangeable morality deny all this, to the best of their ability; but woe to them, if what they deny *a priori* were not true! And the proofs that it is true are numberless, scattered lavishly over every page of whatever book of history one may open. To attempt to cite them, or even a small part of them, would be a tedious task; but let us make a simple assumption. Let us assume that the Middle Ages—with their kings, their barons, their rival factions and their mutually hostile cities, with their wars of conquest, their civil wars, their wars of religion—had possessed the formidable means of destruction which science has given to us: would there still exist in the world a city or a castle wall; would there still exist civilised nations? We may well doubt it.

From the very fact of their living together in social groups, men are ever becoming more moral; living in societies, they are more and more adapting and submitting themselves to those forms and conditions of life that are necessary or favourable to the existence of society itself. This is but one example of the universal phenomenon of the adaptation of organisms to their environment. Morality becomes a habit, comes to be instinctive, as do all voluntary acts when repeated indefinitely; and it transmits itself to succeeding generations; the more instinctive it becomes, the less is the need of legal precepts or prohibitions and of the authorisation of penalties. If laws and penalties are ever becoming less harsh, this is a sign, not of the decrease, but of the increase, of morality: the external authority of the laws becomes the internal authority of conscience; and punishment, which is not in its nature corrective, becomes remorse: that is, self-correction. This is the reason that capital punishment is disappearing from modern legislation, as are many other cruel penalties that were formerly in use: this, too, is the reason for

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William Blake, *The Angel Michael Binding Satan ("He Cast Him into the Bottomless Pit, and Shut Him Up"),* c. 1805. Drawing with watercolours, black ink, and graphite on off-white woven paper, 35.9 x 32.5 cm. Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA.

the decline and loss of the belief in a tormenting Devil and a Hell filled with damned souls on which hope never smiles. In the Middle Ages, for each lightest offence, the judge held forth the threat of death; the confessor, that of hell: and rightly so, since any other argument would have been incapable of holding back from their evil acts men who were by nature rude and violent; but to restrain from evil acts men who have become refined, less terrible arguments suffice, the death penalty is abolished, and the Devil disappears. The more capable men become of being governed by reason, the more incapable and impatient do they grow of being governed by fear. So despotic governments are replaced by liberal ones; and if other facts did not prove it, the growth of morality would be sufficiently proved by the cessation of despotism, the mitigation of laws and penalties, and the disappearance of the Devil.

Last of all comes science, which is completing the work begun by a more enlightened religion and a more perfect morality, and which would be capable of performing the whole task by itself, even without the cooperation of the other two. When we speak of science, we are speaking, among other things, of the exact opposite of demonism. Demonism appears spontaneously in history and not through the work of charlatans; it responds to certain conditions of the human spirit and certain phases of knowledge. Uncivilised man knows no way of explaining the phenomena of nature other than placing a will like his own behind each thing and peopling the universe with beings, good or evil, superior to nature. This is demonism. Now comes science and lets us see that behind things there exist no capricious wills, but disciplined forces, and that nature obeys, not arbitrary decrees, but laws. Demonism is, by that sole fact, immediately and irreparably destroyed. The men of the Middle Ages see and hear the Devil everywhere: in the raging wind, in the crashing billow, in the blazing flame, in the lightning flash, in the hailstorm, in the will-o'-the-wisp, in diseases, in their own thought and feeling; modern men, if they possess some degree of culture, see in the life of things only a perpetual current of cause and effect, whose movements can, with the aid of sufficient knowledge, be both predicted and described. They have before them, not the realm of arbitrary power, but the realm of fixed law. As one drives an enemy from one position to another, so science has driven the Devil from one phenomenon to another and has now left him, on the earth or in the heaven, not a single corner wherein he can set his foot and whence he can once more cast his shadow over the world. Science has done even more: she has shown how and why the Devil was born and of what elements of our own nature he has been formed; and she has made him better known to us, who deny him, than he was in bygone times to those who believed in him. Heinrich Heine tells us, in one of his poems,[81] how he once called up the Devil, and, looking at him closely, recognised in him one of his old acquaintances. We can say even more: we can say that in the Devil, looking at him closely, we recognise our own selves.

Science attacks and puts to flight all superstitions, of whatever nature they may be, wherever she finds them; and she will not rest until she has conquered and scattered them all; but she does not assail them all with equal violence, nor does she win equal victories over all. The lesser ones elude her assaults more easily than do the greater ones, for the reason that they offer a lesser hold and are content with little room and little support; thus the grasses of the meadow are scarcely shaken by the whirlwind that passes over them, while the mightiest trees are uprooted. Science may leave the humble superstition, of slight importance and slight effect, vegetating close to the ground; but not so the arrogant and stubborn superstition which, with its numerous ramifications, blocks her path at every turn; not so the all-powerful superstition that has intruded the Devil into things and souls, into nature and history. This superstition she combats, of necessity, at every step, wherever she meets it; and for this reason, while many phantasms continue to live undisturbed in the popular fancy, the lively offspring of fear and ignorance, the Devil declines, the Devil dies, the Devil disintegrates into smoke.

Strange vicissitude of earthly affairs! He dies and disintegrates through the agency of science—that same Devil who was once thought to be the instigator of those restless inquiries and those secret rebellions of the spirit of which science boasts that she herself is born.

Satis scis si Christum scis—"Thou knowest enough if thou knowest Christ"—so spake the wisdom of the ascetics and the saints; any other knowledge was looked on with suspicion, and those men who possessed any acquaintance whatsoever with the secrets of nature were accused of having bargained with the Devil, the ancient liar, who seduced the first woman with the promise of knowledge. Both the triumphs of science and the growth of a new

Thomas Rowlandson, *The Flight of Bonaparte from Hell-Bay,*
1815. Coloured engraving.
Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, Paris, France.

LA FÉE BERLIQUETTE

AU BON MARCHÉ

2 Brimborion arriva, à l'approche de la nuit, près d'une ferme où il demanda asile.

Je ne puis t'en offrir un, dit le fermier, car je marie ma fille. Brimborion s'écria en colère : « Je voudrais que la noce fût à tous les diables ».

civilisation, of which science is becoming, more fully every day, the guide and the teacher, have been deplored and cursed as works and victories of the Devil.

And now, behold the Devil transformed in the vision and in the glowing language of the poet, and become a symbol, luminous and wonderful—symbol of Science, unafraid and unsubdued, who shatters dogmas and uproots superstitions—symbol of rebellion, which overthrows all tyrannies—of liberty, beneath whose ample wings a new life is beginning. Voltaire hailed as "brothers in Beelzebub" his closest friends who, like D'Alembert and Diderot, wrought with him in the great philosophic and civic revival. Michelet (1798-1874), in *La Sorcière*, told of this symbolic Satan; and to this Satan Carducci (1835-1907), addressed his hymn:

All hail, O Satan! O rebellion, hail!
Reason's avenging power, all hail to thee!
Sacred to thee shall rise incense and prayers,
For thou hast overcome the priests' Jehovah.

Satan became God in his turn, and he had his worshipers and his prayers. Another poet, Baudelaire (1821-1867), in the anguish of some nameless sorrow, called on him for aid:

O thou, of angels fairest, wisest one;
Thou god, by fate betrayed, defamed, undone;
O Satan, pity my long wretchedness!

O Prince of Exile, doomed to suffer wrong;
Conquered, yet ever rising up more strong;
O Satan, pity my long wretchedness!

Thou foster-father of those driven by wrath
Of God, their Father, forth from Eden's path;
O Satan, pity my long wretchedness!

The conquered is changed to conqueror; he re-enters that heaven whence he once was banished, and he slays his enemy. The impious Rapisardi[82] described, in admirable verses, this final victory of Lucifer:

Thus speaking (and he pointed to the Sun,
Which 'neath his feet was rising), smote he it
With his sharp beam, piercing it through and through.
Straightway it hissed, as doth a red-hot mass
Of iron plunged in the wave—the fleeting shape
Of Deity; and in such form as lime,
All crackling, decompounds and melts away
In vapour at the unexpected touch
Of water or of biting vinegar,
E'en so before the beam of Truth it waned
Into an empty phantom, thence to steam,
And wavering, wasting, vanished into air.

But these are poetic symbols and myths, which other poets have not failed to contradict. In the *Armando* of Prati (1815-1884), Mastragabito (that is, Satan) dies of exhaustion: in a little poem by Maxime Du Camp (1822-1894), *La Mort du Diable*, Satan beseeches God to grant him the boon of death, and he dies beneath the feet of Eve, the ancient mother once by him deceived, who thus fulfills not a work of vengeance but the work of mercy. The good Béranger (1780-1857) declared that the Devil had been dead ever since the time of Saint Ignatius Loyola, and that his death was achieved by that saint himself:

For the miracle I here retrace
(Observing brevity's restraints)
Give praise to the great Saint Ignace,
Patron of all our little saints.
By a trick that might be thought almost
Knavish (could saints to such tricks be led)
He made the Devil give up the ghost.
The Devil is dead, the Devil is dead.
For Satan caught him about to dine,

And cried: "Now pledge me, or be disgraced!"
He pledged him; but in the Devil's wine
A dose of holy poison he placed.
So Satan drank, got the colic, and cursed,
Writhed, grimaced and twisted, in anguish dread;
Till at last, like a heretic, he burst.
The Devil is dead, the Devil is dead.

Anonymous, *The Berliquette Fairy,* c. 1900.
Advertising image for the department store Au Bon Marché.
Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France.

Félicien Rops, *Woman on a Wooden Horse.*
The British Museum, London, United Kingdom.

Anonymous, *Fil au Démon* (advertisement), c. 1880-1890.
Lithography. Bibliothèque des arts décoratifs, Paris, France.

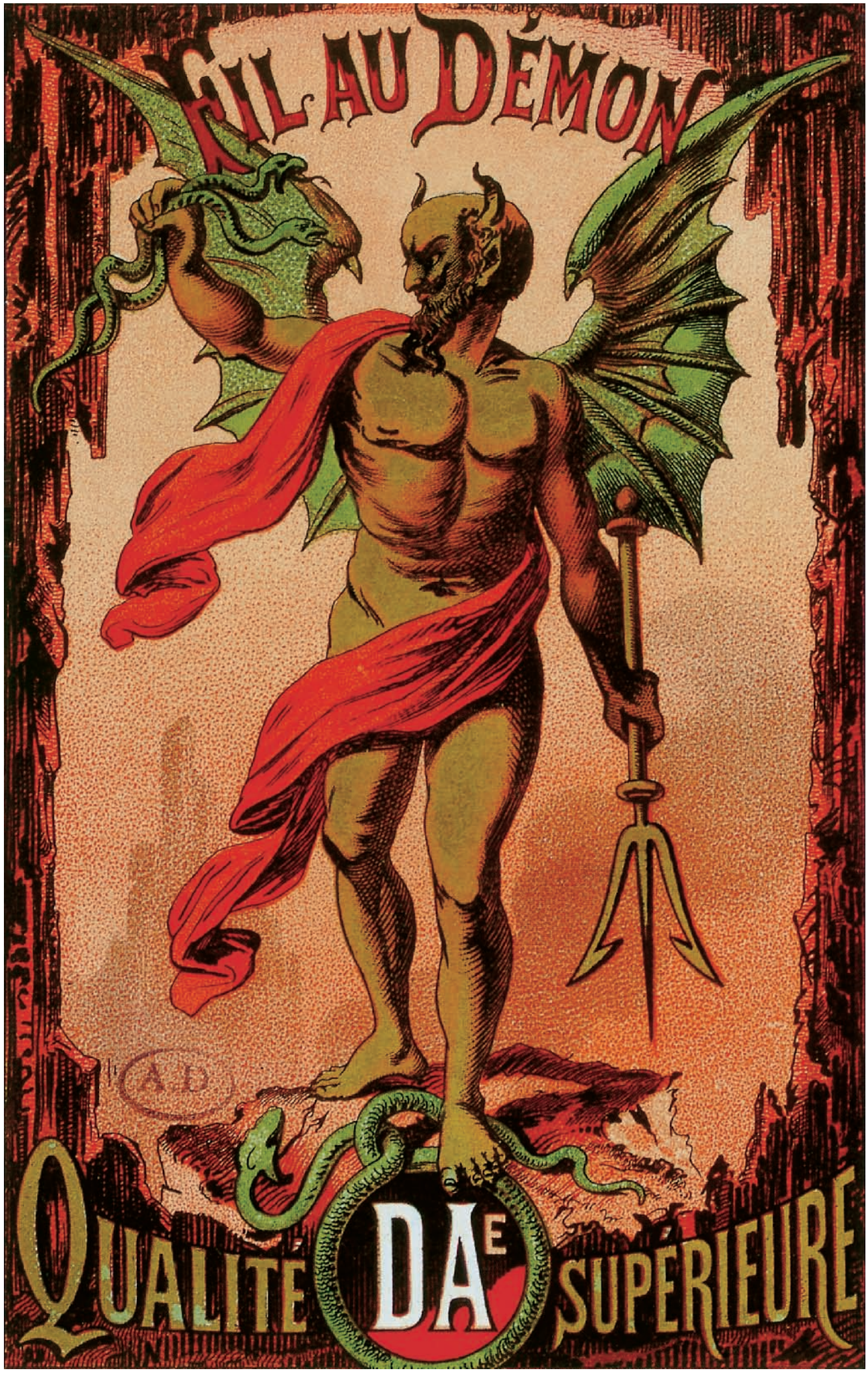
"The Devil is dead!" the monks all say;
"And none will buy *agnuses* any more!"
"He is dead!" cry the canons, "and no one will pay
"For *oremuses* now, as they paid before."
The gloomy conclave is filled with despair:
"Good-bye to our power; our profit is fled."
"We've lost our father!" they all declare;
"The Devil is dead, the Devil is dead!"

But Saint Ignatius, the poet adds, sought and obtained the post previously held by the deceased and received hell as his heritage. Finally, it should be borne in mind that Wilhelm Hauff, in Germany, and Frédéric Soulié, in France, wrote *Memoirs of the Devil*,[83] and that memoirs are usually written of one who is dead, not of one who is still living.

In reality it is science, who slays so many things even while she creates so many others, that has slain or is now dispatching the Devil, whose help, if she ever did need it, she needs no longer. Through her are fulfilled the memorable words of the ancient Virgil:

Happy is he who hath learned to know the causes of all things,
Treading beneath his feet all fears and fate unrelenting,
Quelling the threatening roar of Acheron's ravenous billows.[84]

But that the Devil is dead, or even dying, is not admitted by every one; and many still insist in seeing his work (since they cannot see it elsewhere) in the obscure phenomena, or in the too evident juggleries, of animal magnetism and of spiritism: just a century ago, His Infallible Holiness the supreme pontiff Leo XIII, moved by some deviltry of spirits and visions which, for two whole weeks, filled all the newspapers of the Peninsula, poured out an ardent prayer to the Archangel Michael; bidding him grasp anew his formidable sword and, sounding forth his battle cry to the four winds above and beneath the Milky Way, descend once more, take the field against his ancient and yet unconquered adversary, and put him forever in his proper place. O most blessed Father! I know not what answer was made from on high to your invitation; but what need of troubling the repose of the worthy paladin of Heaven? The task that Christ began twenty centuries ago, that task civilisation has completed. Civilisation has conquered Hell and has, forever, redeemed us from the Devil.


FIL AU DÉMON
QUALITÉ DA E SUPÉRIEURE

Notes

[1] Isaiah xiv, 12: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning.”

[2] *Cf.* II Peter ii, 4; Jude vi.

[3] Genesis vi, 1-4.

[4] Moore’s *Loves of the Angels* and Byron’s *Heaven and Earth, A Mystery*.

[5] Robigo (Mildew) averted the blight. Febris, the goddess of fevers, had three temples in Rome.

[6] Genesis iii, 1.

[7] In the form Beelzebub, this name appears only in the first three Gospels of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the form Baal Zebub occurs four times in the first chapter of the Second Book of Kings. Baal Zebub (or Baal Zebul), “Lord of Flies,” was a Canaanitish divinity, the chief seat of whose worship was at Ekron.

[8] Leviticus xvi, 7, 10-26. “And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord (Yahwe, Jehovah), and the other lot for the scapegoat (Azazel).”

[9] Job i, 6; ii, 1.

[10] Zechariah iii, 1-2.

[11] “For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity.

“Nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world: and they that do hold of his side do find it.” Wisdom of Solomon ii, 23-24.

[12] Isaiah xiv, 7.

[13] I Peter v, 8.

[14] John xii, 31.

[15] Hebrews ii, 14.

[16] Luke xi, 21.

[17] Revelation xii, 9; xx, 2.

[18] Saint Brandan of Clonfert, born in 484, died in 577 is reported to have made a voyage (the “Navigation of Saint Brandan”) in search of the terrestrial paradise and to have landed with his companions on a miraculous island in the Atlantic.

[19] In the ninth book of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* (lines 1155-1164), the hermit says to the knight: “They who stood neutral while Lucifer and the Trinity were fighting, even all those angels, noble and of high estate, were made to come down to earth, to guard this very stone [the Holy Grail]; yet the stone remained pure. Nor do I know whether God at last granted them pardon or doomed them to more grievous punishment.”

[20] *Inferno,* iii, 39-64.

[21] *Inferno,* xxxiv, 70-81.

[22] *Of.* the Italian and French proverbs: “II diavolo, quand’ è vecchio, si fa romito”; “Quand le diable devient vieux il se fait ermite.”

[23] *Inferno,* xxxiv, 18. In the *Inferno,* it is the Giants, not the Titans, who appear as warders of the Ninth Circle of Hell (*Inf.* xxxi).

[24] From the data given by Dante in Canto xxxiv of the *Inferno,* Lucifer’s height has been estimated at about 2,500 feet.

[25] The Gospel of Nicodemus is one of the so-called “apocryphal writings”.

[26] *Inferno,* xxi, 31-36.

[27] *Inferno,* xvii, 1-27.

[28] *Paradise Lost*, i, 423-431.

[29] *Inferno,* xxxiii, 118-147.

[30] Matthew xii, 24; Luke xi, 15. Also, Mark iii, 22.

[31] *Inferno,* xxxiv, 28.

[32] Matthew iv, 3.

[33] *Convito* (Convivio) iii, 13.

[34] *Inferno,* xxvii, 123.

[35] Jean Bodin was one of the writers who sought to revive the prosecution of witches in the latter half of the sixteenth century. His *Daemonomania* was published in 1579.

[36] Perhaps the reference is to Matthew x, 28, or to xii, 24-26.

[37] *Of.* John xii, 31; xiv, 20; xvi, 11.

[38] “Grumbling and rumbling like an ox in the shambles, the demon began to hammer in his smithy; he smote with chisel, with pestle, with mallet; and all the horrible cavern shook; the lightnings from his hammers raised a tempest; his burning eyes seemed two live coals within his head; he bellowed; fire flashed from his nostrils with a noise like the noise of great waters in that somber season when the stork departs.”

[39] Ephesians iv, 27.

[40] This quotation is not from Saint Paul, but from Saint James (James iv, 7).

[41] According to ancient and medieval physiologists, the four “cardinal humors” of the body were: blood, phlegm, choler (bile), and melancholy (black bile).

[42] Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Stridonensis Presbyteri Epistolae, xxii, 7 (Migne, Patrologia Latina, xxii, 398).

[43] Decamerone, iii, 10.

[44] Luke xiv, 11. As Antonio says, “The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.”

[45]Victorinus (second century) was a hermit who fell into the sin of incontinence.

[46] *Cf.* II Corinthians xi, 14: "For Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

[47] Genesis vi, 1-4.

[48] The descent of Christ into Hell, to liberate the souls of righteous persons who had lived under the Old Dispensation, is a frequent subject of early and medieval Christian writings.

[49] Robert I, surnamed Le Diable, was Duke of Normandy 1028-1035. He made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but died shortly after his return. Meyerbeer's opera *Robert le Diable* was first produced in 1831.

[50] *Cf.* II John ii, 18: "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

[51] *Cf,* Matthew iv, 8; Luke iv, 5.

[52] *"Blut ist ein ganz besondrer Saft,"* "Blood is a very special sort of juice." Goethe's *Faust,* Part I, line 1386.

[53] *The Tragedy of Dr. Faustus* was first produced in 1594.

[54] An enchanter who appears in the Charlemagne cycle of the *chansons de geste.*

[55] "Veramente/Delle magiche frode seppe il gioco." *Inferno,* xx, 117.

[56] "II verme reo che il mondo fora." *Inferno,* xxxiv, 108.

[57] Matthew xvi, 18: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

[58] "Senza serrame ancor si trova" ("Still without a bar it stands"). *Inferno,* viii, 126.

"Christ has broken down the gate of Hell." *Cf.* Vergil, *Aeneid,* vi, 127: "Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis" ("Night and day the doorway of gloomy Dis stands open").

"Queste parole di colore oscuro/Vid' io scritte al sommo d'una porta" *Inferno,* iii, 10-11:"These words of colour dark ['Through me ye go unto the sorrowful city. . . . All hope abandon, ye who enter'] I saw, written above a gate."

[59] On an island in Lough Derg, County Donegal, is a cave (known as Saint Patrick's Purgatory) where Christ is said to have shown the saint a deep pit wherein whoever passed a day and a night could behold the pains of Hell and the delights of Heaven.

[60] "Oscura, profonda era e nebulosa

Tanto, che per ficcar lo viso al fondo,

Io non vi discerneva alcuna cosa." *Inferno,* iv, 10-12.

[61] "Or discendiam quaggiù nel cieco mondo" ("Now we go downward to the blind world"). *Inferno,* iv, 13.

[62] "Io venni in loco d'ogni luce muto" ("I came unto a place mute of all light"). *Inferno,* v, 28.

[63] "Lo regno della morta gente." *Inferno,* viii, 85.

[64] The Italian mile varies, in different localities, from 1488 to 2226 meters.

[65] Dante calls Lucifer "the Emperor of the dolorous realm" ("Lo imperador del doloroso regno"). *Inferno,* xxxiv, 28.

[66] Inferno, viii.

[67] Revelation xx, 10: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

[68] *Inferno,* xxi.

[69] "Forse qual diede ad Eva il cibo amaro." *Purgatorio,* viii, 99.

[70] "Gli astor' celestiali." *Purgatorio,* viii, 104.

[71] *Decamerone,* v, 8.

[72] Revelation xiv, 11: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night."

[73] *Cf.* Mark x, 47, 48; Luke xviii, 38, 39.

[74] "Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch'entrate." *Inferno,* iii, 9.

[75] "Where is thick darkness, dreadful cries unceasing, and fiery coals that breathe within the forges. A region huge and full of gloom, a burning, smoky stench, a tumultuous uproar, and the insatiable pit."

[76] "I praise the true God, I call the people, I assemble the clergy. I weep the departed, I put the pestilence to flight, I celebrate the festivals. I mourn the funerals, I shatter the thunderbolts, I proclaim the Sabbaths. I rouse the slothful, I scatter the winds, I make the fierce gentle."

[77] "My voice is the terror of all the demons."

[78] In Stoker's *Dracula,* frequent mention is made of garlic as a protection against vampires.

[79] In England, the rue was formerly called "herb of grace," or "herb-grace" (corrupted into "herby-grass" and "herbgrass").

[80] *Of.* the words of Mephistopheles, in Goethe's *Faust;* "Ich bin der Geist, der stets verneint !" "I am the spirit that ever denies!"

[81] *Buch der Lieder* (*Die Heimkehr,* 37).

[82] These lines are from the last canto of Rapisardi's epic *Il Lucifero.*

[83] Hauff's *Mitteilungen aus den Memoiren des Satans* was published in 1826; Soulié's *Les Mémoires du Diable,* in 1836 and 1837.

[84] "Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas, Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari." *Georgics*, ii, 490-492.

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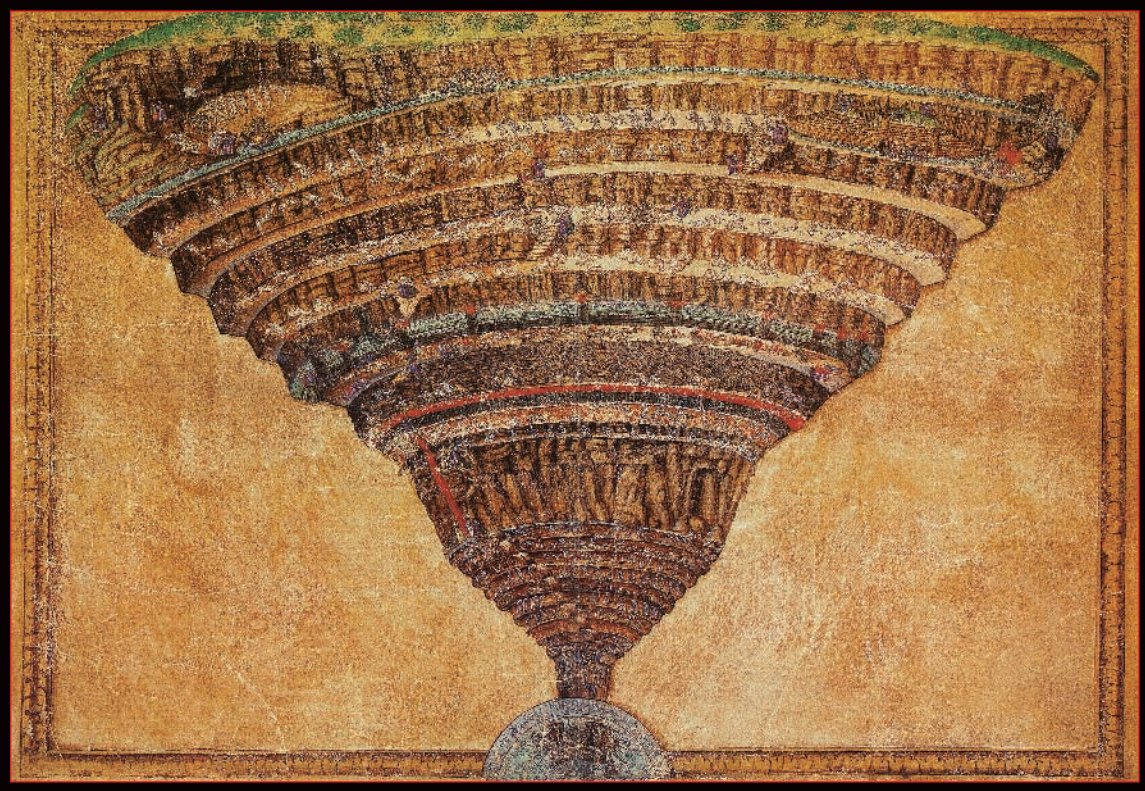

"The Devil holds the strings which move us!" (Charles Baudelaire, *The Flowers of Evil*, 1857)

Satan, Beelzebub, Lucifer... the Devil has many names and faces, all of which have always served artists as a source of inspiration. Often commissioned by religious leaders as images of fear or veneration, depending on the society, representations of the underworld served to instruct believers and lead them along the path of righteousness. For other artists, such as Hieronymus Bosch, they provided a means of denouncing the moral decrepitude of one's contemporaries.

In the same way, literature dealing with the Devil has long offered inspiration to artists wishing to exorcise evil through images, especially the works of Dante and Goethe. In the 19th century, romanticism, attracted by the mysterious and expressive potential of the theme, continued to glorify the malevolent. Auguste Rodin's *The Gates of Hell*, the monumental, tormented work of a lifetime, perfectly illustrates this passion for evil, but also reveals the reason for this fascination. Indeed, what could be more captivating for a man than to test his mastery by evoking the beauty of the ugly and the diabolic?