

**The Prince
of Darkness**

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The Prince of Darkness

*Radical Evil and the Power
of Good in History*

Jeffrey Burton Russell

Cornell University Press

Ithaca and London

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First published 1988 by Cornell University Press
First printing, Cornell Paperbacks, 1992

Printed in the United States of America

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Russell, Jeffrey Burton.

The Prince of Darkness.

Includes index.

1. Devil—History of doctrines. 2. Good and evil—
History of doctrines. I. Title.

BT981.R867 1988 235'.47 88-47744

ISBN-13: 978-0-8014-8056-0 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8014-8056-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)

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*To Alberto, Cameron, Cheryl, Karen, Marylou, Miriam,
Pam, Rick, Tim, and the Good Old Days.*

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Preface

The attempt to comprehend the problem of evil has occupied me for twenty years. Through my four earlier volumes on the Devil I have tried to gain understanding of that problem by examining the history of evil's most powerful symbol.

This book, *The Prince of Darkness*, presents the main outlines of that history in a single volume. My intention here has been to write the story of the Devil in the Western world, from its beginnings down to our own times, for readers whose interest is immediate rather than academic. I have drawn on much of the material on which the four earlier books are based, but I have avoided their density of detail and their extensive footnotes in order to bring the most important questions into sharper focus and to make clearer the deep issues that underlie the story.

My quest for an understanding of evil has been personal search as well as scholarly research, and I invite the reader to join me on this difficult but rewarding journey. As I have grown in the course of the search, my view of the question continues to deepen. This book corrects some errors found in the four volumes and recasts some of their arguments in more mature form. Above all I have tried throughout to open myself and others to the understanding that knowledge without love, and scholarship without personal involvement and commitment, are dead. This book is for those who love to know and know how to love.

Readers who wish to follow up quotations, locate source materials, or be guided in further reading on particular topics can find that information by consulting the indexes and bibliographical sections of my earlier series on the Devil. The chapters in this book correspond to those

volumes largely as follows: Chapters 2–4: *The Devil: Personifications of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*; Chapters 5–7: *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*; Chapters 8–10: *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*; and Chapters 11–16: *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*. All four were published by Cornell University Press. Readers may also wish to consult an excellent recent book by Neil Forsyth, *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

Translations are my own except for those from the Hebrew and the Russian. For passages from the Hebrew Bible I have for the most part used the New International Version. In quoting from the two novels by Dostoevsky in Chapter 15, I have used the published translations of Constance Garnett.

My deep thanks are due again to all those who helped me with the first four volumes and also to J. Gordon Melton and Dennis Rohatyn.

JEFFREY BURTON RUSSELL

Santa Barbara, California

The Prince of Darkness

I *Evil*

EVIL is directly experienced and directly intuited. A young woman is beaten; an old man is mugged; a child is raped; a terrorist rips a plane apart in midair; a great nation bombs a civilian population. Those whose minds are not bent by personal or societal madness immediately respond to such actions with justifiable anger. You do not make abstract calculations in ethical philosophy when you see a baby being beaten. At the most fundamental level, evil is not abstract. It is real and tangible.

This direct perception of evil is the most important thing. But standing back to reflect on the general nature of evil is also valuable. What is evil? What do evil actions have in common? Philosophers have traditionally identified three kinds of evil. The first is *moral*, evil that occurs when an intelligent being knowingly and deliberately inflicts suffering upon another sentient being. This category excludes the surgeon's inflicting necessary pain on a patient. The issue is not physical pain, but suffering, which involves a conscious knowledge, anticipation, and dread of pain without an understanding of any good reason why one should be hurt. The second kind of evil is the *natural*, the suffering resulting from processes of nature such as cancers and tornadoes. Some argue abstractly that natural processes should not really be called evil, but this is an evasion, for we perceive them directly as such. Further, natural and moral evils overlap. A child may starve in a famine resulting from a drought, but if I could have saved him or her had I been more open with my bank account, is the evil natural or moral? Further, if any intelligent Being is responsible for the cosmos, then the suffering that occurs in the cosmos is that Being's responsibility, and again moral and natural evils converge. The third kind of evil is the *metaphysical*, an abstract

concept that will not much occupy us in this book. Metaphysical evil is the necessary lack of perfection that exists in any created cosmos, since no cosmos can be perfect as God is perfect.

Evil also comes in different orders of magnitude. Some evil is personal, as when an individual murders a child. Some evil is transpersonal, as when a mob lynches a victim or a government bombs a city. There seem to be no limits to transpersonal evil, for we are now risking the entire human race and most of the life of this planet with our nuclear arsenals. Transgeneric evil may also exist. If intelligent and morally flawed beings exist on other planets, then evil extends beyond humanity. Finally, evil may also extend beyond the transgeneric to the cosmic. The human willingness to menace the entire planet with destruction in order to oppose whatever nation or group is currently defined as the enemy may reflect the will of the Devil himself, the Prince of Darkness who consciously chooses to destroy and ruin the cosmos to the extent he is able. Inflicting suffering for the sake of suffering, doing evil for evil's sake, the Devil is by definition the personification of cosmic evil.

Few educated people today take the concept of the Devil seriously. Some relativistically deny the existence of evil altogether. Others admit the existence of evil actions but not of evil individuals. Still others admit that persons can be evil but limit evil to human beings. Historians and anthropologists know, however, that the unexamined assumptions of a society tell us more about the society than they do about the truth of the assumptions.

Often people assume that in the modern world the idea of the Devil is old-fashioned and therefore false—an objection that assumes that “the modern world” (however defined) has discovered some metaphysical truth (however defined) that makes the existence of the Devil less likely now than it used to be. In fact, the Devil's existence is no less likely now than it ever was. Society's assumptions, styles, and prejudices have changed—and will change again—but the underlying problem of evil remains the same. Therefore the real question is whether the concept of the Devil makes any sense. Did it ever? Does it now? Will it in future?

Three general modes of thought exist in Western society at the end of the twentieth century. One is the traditional Judeo-Christian world view, which has been weakening steadily for the past two centuries but is now gaining renewed strength in some parts of the world. The second is the traditional scientific, materialist world view, increasingly dominant since the eighteenth century. This view is now undermined by twentieth-century physics, which suggests that “matter” is an intellectual



M. C. Escher, *The Scapegoat*, 1921. The Devil appears as the shadow side of God, the dark side of the divine nature. © M. C. Escher Heirs c/o Cordon Art—Baarn, Holland.

construct rather than ultimate reality. The third is New Age thought; hostile to both traditional views, it is characterized by a wide diversity of angles of vision and by a desire to explore reality beyond conventional lines. The constructive clash among these divergent views has produced signs that a new synthesis may be in gestation.

Where does the Devil fit in? Is the Evil One an outmoded superstition? The only universally valid definition of “superstition” is “a belief that is not coherent with one’s overall world view.” The idea of the Devil is indeed a superstition within the scientific world view, but it is not a superstition in the Christian and Muslim world views, because the concept is coherent within those views. New Age thinkers tend to be interested in the idea of the Devil but to reinterpret it from an inexhaustible variety of new points of view, which lack overall coherence.

Whether or not the Devil exists outside the human mind, the concept of the Devil has a long history and the most fruitful approach to it is historical.

The historical approach observes the origins of the concept, sketches its early lines, and shows its gradual development through the ages down to the present. The concept of the Devil is found in only a few religious traditions. There was no idea of a single personification of evil in ancient Greco-Roman religions, for example, and there was and is none in Hinduism or Buddhism. Most religions—from Buddhism to Marxism—have their demons, but only four major religions have had a real Devil. These are Mazdaism (Zoroastrianism), ancient Hebrew religion (but not modern Judaism), Christianity, and Islam. Through these four religions, the tradition of the Devil can be historically traced and defined.

By “tradition” I do not mean something that has been handed down unchanged. The idea that religious ideas have been passed down unaltered over the centuries from Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad is an illusion. Religious tradition is best understood as a continuity, but one that is dynamic, living, developing, and evolving. In Christianity, tradition is rooted in, and continuous with, the earliest Christian community and the person of Jesus. But the teachings of the Christian community (whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant) today are not identical with those of the first century. They have developed substantially over the intervening centuries. Tradition connects modern Christianity with primitive Christianity, but the connection is dynamic, not static.

In this way, the Devil is defined by the historical tradition. Efforts to say that the Devil “really” is something different from the historical tradition are self-contradictory. Some modern Satanists, for example,

enjoyed saying that the Devil is “really” a “good” being. But the very definition of the Devil is that he is evil. To call the Devil “good” is like calling a buzzing insect a horse. One is legally free, of course, to use words in whatever way one chooses, but if one wants to be understood one uses words in their normal sense. You would make a fool of yourself by trying to saddle up a horsefly. Phrases such as “the Devil is,” “the Devil was,” “the Devil became” appear in this book as shorthand for “the concept of the Devil is, was, or became.” No one can say what the Devil is or is not in absolute reality, because we have no propositional access to realities beyond the human mind.

Historical theory provides a certain basis for limited human knowledge, but, like science, it has no room for statements about metaphysical reality. In fact, many historical theorists argued that humanity progresses by moving from the superstitious to the rational. In this view, old ideas such as the Devil and God are less likely to be true than new ones, and “old fashioned” replaces “untrue” as the criterion for rejection. This view makes sense neither to those believing in a rationally planned cosmos nor to those who believe that the cosmos is planless. In fact the progressive view is fundamentally incoherent, for it argues that there is no goal yet we are moving toward it. Only if one adopts this impossible, though enormously popular, view can one manage to dismiss ideas on the grounds that they are “outmoded.” Notwithstanding, vague ideas of progress linked with vague ideas of relativism, despite the fact that the two are logically incompatible, to undermine the idea that theology was one road to truth.

A note on some words and names. No connection whatever exists between the word “Devil” and the word “evil,” nor is there any between “Devil” and the Indo-European root *dev* found in the Indo-European *devas* and the English “divine.” The English “Devil,” like the German *Teufel* and the Spanish *diablo*, derives from the Greek *diabolos*. *Diabolos* means “slanderer” or a “perjuror” or an “adversary” in court. It was first applied to the Evil One in the translation of the Old Testament into Greek in the third and second centuries B.C.E. to render the Hebrew *satan*, “adversary,” “obstacle,” or “opponent.” The Prince of Darkness has had many names, and I use the most common ones—Satan, Lucifer, and Mephistopheles—as synonyms for the Devil.

The basic reason for examining the Devil in the Judeo-Christian-Muslim traditions is that these traditions essentially created the concept. (I regret that this book is too short to provide an examination of the rich Islamic tradition. Readers interested in the Muslim Devil will find him

discussed in my *Lucifer*.) There is also a second important reason for taking this approach. With their emphasis upon monotheism, these traditions had to cope with the responsibility of God for evil. How is the existence of evil reconcilable with that of a good and omnipotent God? The question has been answered along two radically different lines. One response is that God is fully responsible for the cosmos just as it is, and we live in a determined, “predestined” world. The alternative answer is that some restrictions or limitations exist on God’s absolute power. A variety of such restrictions have been proposed by philosophers over the centuries: chaos, matter, free will, quantum randomness, and a principle of evil. This tension between determinism and freedom has always been a source of enormous intellectual and spiritual creativity and power. The tension setting the power of God against the existence of evil is the ultimate source of the concept of the Devil.

Discussing evil means using propositions: where it comes from, how it acts, what limits it, and so on. Discussions of evil are necessarily conceptual. But one must also keep the eye fixed upon the underlying reality of evil, which is the real experience of real suffering.

2 *The Devil around the World*

ALTHOUGH the concept of the Devil—a single personification of evil—does not exist in most religions and philosophies, the problem of evil exists in every world view except that of radical relativism. If the cosmos has any intrinsic meaning, if a moral intelligence of any kind exists, some effort needs to be made to reconcile that intelligence with the existence of evil. Most societies, observing both good and evil in the cosmos, perceive that moral intelligence as ambivalent. Their God has two faces, good and evil: he is a coincidence of opposites.

This ambivalence is expressed differently in different societies. Most polytheist views assume that the many gods are the manifestations of the one God, the one ambivalent principle. Hinduism offers a clear example of the ambiguity of the God. Brahma “creates the harmful and the helpful; the gentle and the cruel; truth and falsehood; life and death.” This God manifests himself in a variety of forms. According to the *Brabmanas*, “the gods and demons both spoke truth, and they both spoke untruth. The gods relinquished untruth, and the demons relinquished truth.” These demons can now be blamed for at least some of the evil in the world. But since all beings are aspects of the God, evil and good both ultimately stem from him and are integral parts of him.

Why does the God do evil, or cause it to be done, or permit it to be done? Theodicy is the attempt to understand the relationship of the God to a cosmos that suffers. Some theodicies are theological, rational, philosophical efforts to get at an answer; others are mythological, attempts to explain by telling stories.

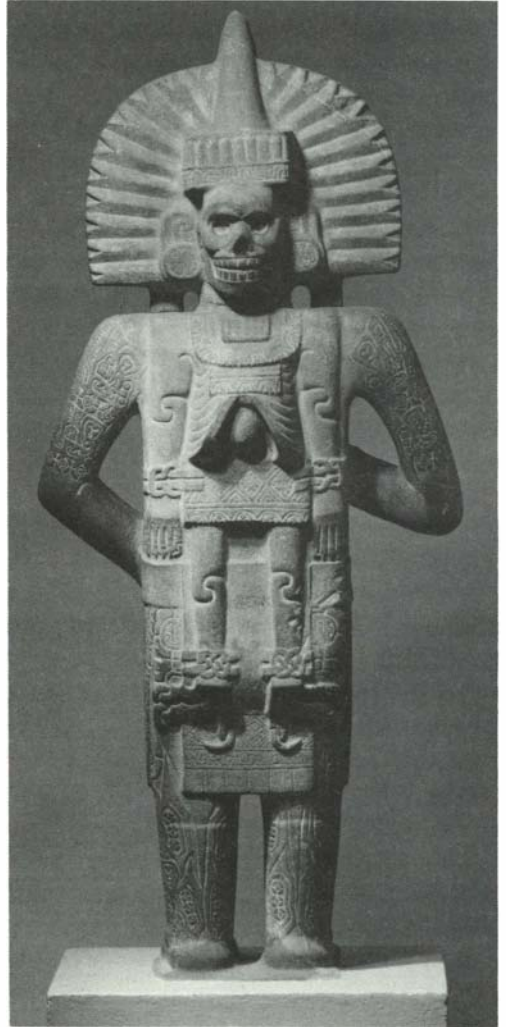
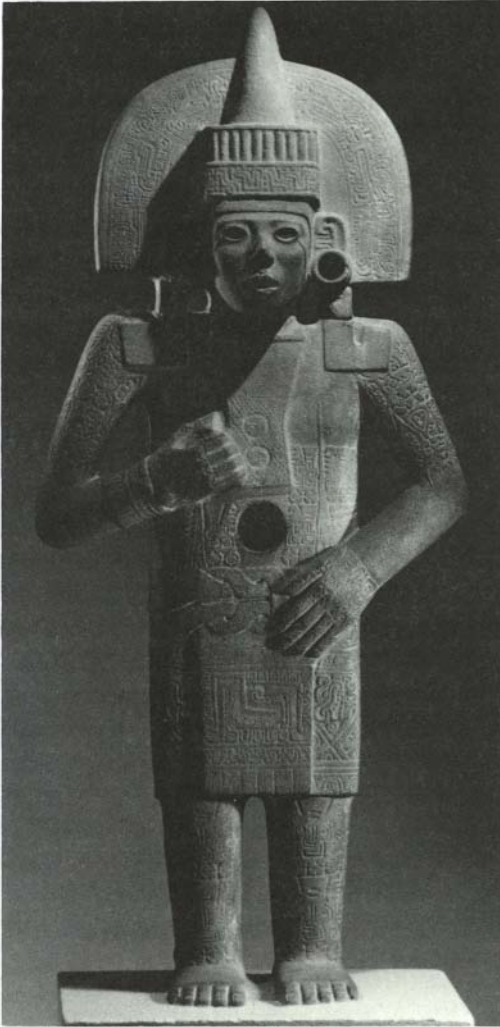
Mythological theodicies often personify the malevolent aspects of the God and construct gods, demons, or other beings somewhat analogous to

the Devil, but on the whole myth tends not to create wholly evil beings. Myth is close to the unconscious, and the unconscious is ambivalent. What comes from the unconscious is basically perception of self, and we sense ambivalence in ourselves. It is usually the conscious that rationalizes and distorts, splitting the natural ambivalence of good and evil into polarities, opposite absolutes. Religions such as Christianity and Islam that emphasize the rational over the mythological are thus more hospitable to the idea of the Devil. Still, myth is not an unformed outpouring of the unconscious; like poetry, art, or music, it arises from a creative tension between unconscious materials and conscious forms. Myth, like theology, often tries to separate the good from the evil in the God.

Good and evil alike come from the God. Because people feel a tension between good and evil in themselves, they feel a comparable tension within the God. Good and evil must be struggling within him. People also wish to feel that the God is good and benevolent, so they dislike attributing evil to him. For these reasons they tend to assume an opposition of forces within the godhead. Often they externalize this opposition, twinning the God into separate good and evil entities. In such divisions, the good side of the God is often identified with the "High God" and the bad side with the adversary of the High God. An additional tension arises: the tension between the unity and the diversity in the God. Since most religions have avoided assuming a plurality of ultimate principles, most have one ultimate God, and that one God remains a coincidence of opposites.

The coincidence of opposites is sometimes expressed as a war in heaven between good and evil gods. Historically, when a culture replaces one set of gods with another, it tends to relegate the losing set to the status of evil spirits. The Christians made demons out of the Olympian deities of Greece and Rome, just as the Olympian religion had earlier transformed the earthbound Titans into evil spirits. Early Indo-Iranian religion had two sets of gods, the asuras (ahuras) and the devas (daevas). In Iran, the ahuras defeated the daevas, and the leader of the ahuras became the High God Ahura Mazda, the god of light, while the defeated daevas were demoted to evil spirits under the rule of the lord of darkness. In India, the devas defeated the asuras. In one sense, the result in India was opposite to that in Iran, but in a deeper sense the process was the same, in that one group of deities was vanquished by another and relegated to the status of evil spirits.

Polytheists sometimes express the divine coincidence of opposites in individual deities who are ambivalent, with "two souls within their



Quetzalcoatl, 900–1250 C.E., limestone. The benevolent god of life and art is also god of death. The opposite sides of this freestanding sculpture show the two aspects of divinity. Courtesy the Brooklyn Museum, Henry L. Batterman and Frank Sherman Benson funds.

breasts.” The great gods of India, including Kali, Shiva, and Durga, manifest opposite poles in a single being: benevolence and malevolence, creativity and destructiveness. Polytheists may also express the two faces of God in myths about closely related but adversary pairs of deities. The gods in each pair are seen as opposites, but always on a deeper level they are the same being. Among the Iroquois the earth’s daughter bears twin sons, who quarrel within her womb. One twin is born in the normal way, but the second twin is born through his mother’s armpit, killing her. The younger son, called Flint, strives unceasingly to undo the work of his constructive brother. The older son creates animals; Flint tries to imitate him, fails, and in his rage throws up rugged cliffs and mountains to divide tribe from tribe and so frustrate the unity his brother has planned for humanity. Like the yin and yang of Taoism, such twins or doublets are both opposite and united; beneath their conflict they seek integration and centering.

The evil aspects of the God are often associated with the underworld, but the underworld is itself ambivalent. It is good, for it is from beneath the earth that the crops spring forth and from the underground that rich metals can be mined. But it is also evil, for the dead are buried in the earth, and beneath the earth is a dark land where they wander in shadows. The gods of the underworld, such as the Greco-Roman Plouton or Pluto, are lords of both fertility and death. The Devil’s association with hell comes from his identification with the malevolent aspects of the subterranean lord. The red glow of hellfire, together with the red tint of land scorched by fire and with the color of blood, led to the association of the Devil with the color red.

Blackness and darkness are almost always associated with evil, in opposition to the whiteness and light associated with good. This is true even in black Africa. Blackness has an immense range of negative and fearful associations: death, the underworld, the void, blindness, night stalked by robbers and ghosts. Psychologically it signifies the fearful, uncontrollable depths of the unconscious. It is also associated with depression, stupidity, sin, despair, dirt, poison, and plague.

The void, nothingness, chaos, is another symbol that myth links with the Devil. Chaos, yawning emptiness, is the formless, undifferentiated state that exists at or before the beginning of the world. “At first,” says the Rig Veda, “there was only darkness wrapped in darkness.” And Genesis 1.2 says, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness moved over the face of the abyss.” In one sense chaos is good, for it is the creative potency without which nothing could come into being. But in

another sense it is evil, for it must be overcome, formed, and shaped if gods or humans are to exist. Chaos often appears in myth as a monster, such as the Hebrew Leviathan or the Babylonian Tiamat, who must be defeated by god or hero. The Mesoamericans said that primeval chaos was a thing with countless mouths swimming in the formless waters and devouring all that she could seize. She was vanquished by the gods Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca, who rent her body asunder to allow the universe to be formed. Chaos is a prerequisite for cosmos, but cosmos can be formed only by defeating chaos. At the end of time, cosmos may revert to chaos. This has the double effect of destroying the world but also returning to primeval creative power. The Tandava dance of Shiva expresses both joy and sorrow. It annihilates the illusory world (*maya*), but in so doing it integrates the world with Brahma. Many rites were aimed at the re-creation of chaos in order to regain and release creative force. Often connected with fertility, such rites sometimes became unbridled, uncontrolled license and could readily be perceived as threatening and destructive. Thus the Devil came to be linked with orgy, a symbol of the terrifying formlessness of chaos.

Chaos is often represented as a snake, serpent, or dragon. The Dayak of Borneo believed that the world is enclosed in a circle formed by the watersnake biting its tail. The primeval serpent pursuing itself in endless circles is another symbol of the coincidence of opposites, the union of beginning and end. Serpents help and heal; the symbol of the medical profession is the serpent of Aesculapius. Deities wearing snakes as their emblems often bear them in the shape of the crescent moon, symbol of growth and fertility. But through the moon the snake is also associated with night, death, and menstrual blood. Through the serpent the Devil is associated with these terrors and with the dragon of chaos that must be slain so that life and order may be released.

The crescent moon also suggests horns. Horns derived additional symbolic power from their connection with the phallus and with the procreative power of bull animals. Shiva may take the form of both bull and phallus; Vishnu and Krishna are also portrayed as bulls. Horns are also identified with the rays of the sun: horns or rays emanated from the brow of Moses coming down from his encounter with God. Hats in the shape of horns, such as medieval crowns or bishops' mitres, indicated the power of the wearer. The sign of horns (such as the upturned horseshoe) brings good luck, fertility, and power.

The Devil's horns therefore symbolize his princely power, but they also carry a powerful negative connotation. Horns bring to mind the

danger of wild beasts and the bull that gores; they suggest the mysterious, frightening otherness of animals; and their association with the moon recalls not only fertility but also night, darkness, and death.

Legions of lesser spirits around the world manifest the terrors of nature. Wild and disruptive, they exhibit the strange, numinous quality that provokes the undirected terror that the Greeks named “panic” after the god Pan. They possess body or mind, causing disease or insanity. They appear as male incubi or female succubi, seducing sleepers. Their ugliness and deformity are outward and visible signs of their distorted natures. They may act as moral tempters, but more frequently they attack individuals directly and crudely. In traditional Japan, where the natural and supernatural worlds were closely intertwined, not only humans, but animals, plants, and even inanimate objects had ghosts. These ghosts were usually hostile, particularly the *oni*, whose horns and three hideous eyes signified both power and malevolence.

Demons both East and West frequently serve as executioners of the God’s justice by tormenting the damned souls in hell. In Japan, twenty-four thousand demon servants worked unceasingly to drag the unfortunate souls before the divine tribunal of Emma-O. Grotesque and horrifying in appearance, the demons also use hideous tools of torture. In China and Japan as well as in the West, it is not always clear whether the demons are employees or inmates of hell—whether they suffer as well as meting out pain to others.

The evil spirit of temptation appears in some cultures. The nearest thing to the Devil in Buddhism is Mara, whose name means “death” or “thirst,” and whose attributes are blindness, murkiness, death, and darkness. With his daughters Desire, Unrest, and Pleasure, he attempts to obstruct the lord Gautama’s progress toward enlightenment, but the Buddha, knowing that the only true good lies in transcending the world, drives him away. The Mesoamericans believed that the man-god Quetzalcoatl was tempted by many demons who offered him wine and other enticements to lure him from the path of duty.

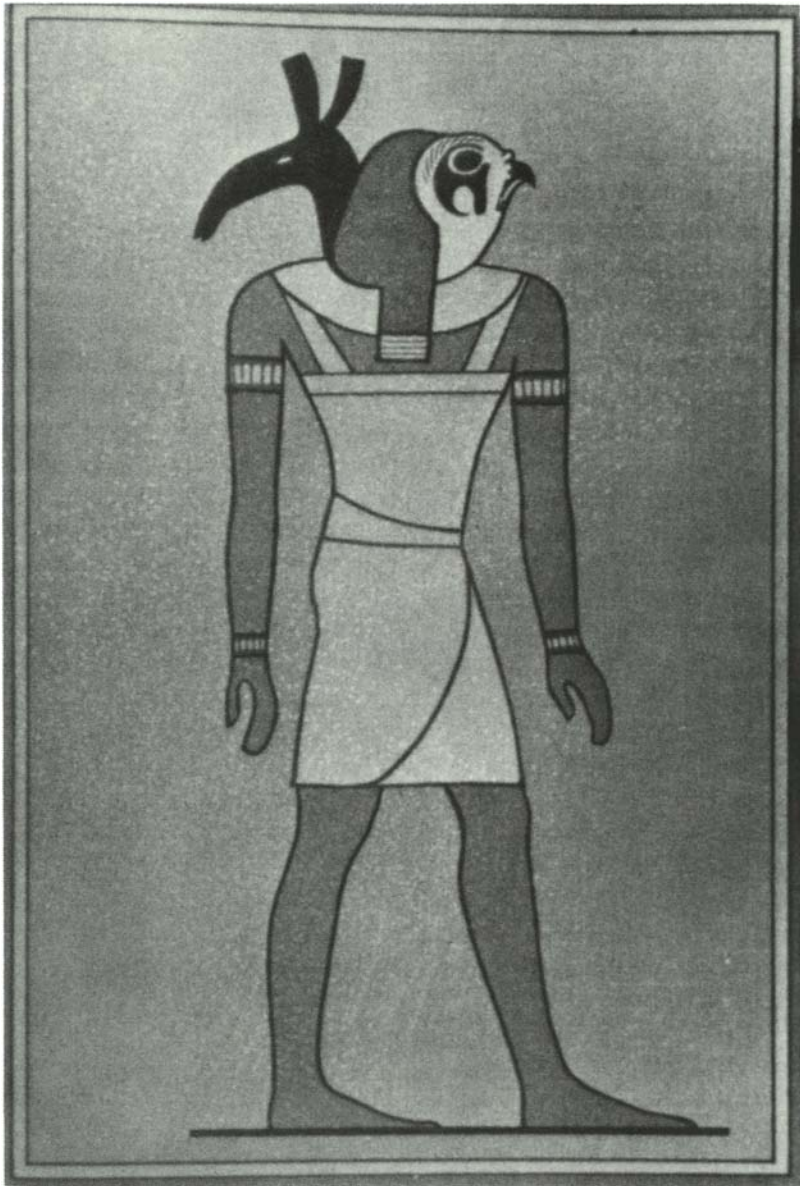
The similarities among the worldwide representations of evil are remarkable. Since many of these societies are not connected historically, the similarities suggest a common, inherent psychological response to common perceptions of evil. Certain civilizations, however, stood directly in the historical background of the Judeo-Christian concept of the Devil. Here the cultural connections are clear and pronounced. The most important of these civilizations were the cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Canaan, and Greece.

The many gods of the Egyptians were manifestations of the one God. The God and the gods are ambivalent: they both help and hinder humanity. Since the God never changes, the cosmos never changes. The Egyptian cosmos is a stable coincidence of opposites, a manifestation of divine order and harmony. The universe is not a thing; it is alive; it pulses with godness. It is not merely the creation of the God; it is the God's outward and visible manifestation. In such a divine cosmos absolute evil cannot exist. Individual evil exists, but it is limited; it is an isolated act for which the individual is accountable and for which he will be punished in the afterlife. It produces a limited perturbation of *ma'at*, the ordered, harmonious justice of the cosmos, but *ma'at* quickly adjusts itself through the inevitable punishment of the wicked, and the serenity of the divine cosmos continues.

All Egyptian deities are manifestations of the whole cosmos and so reflect both the constructive and the destructive aspects of cosmic harmony. Even the merciful god Osiris is sometimes an adversary of the noble sun god Re, whereas a frequently destructive deity such as Seth is gracious to his own worshipers. The pharaoh, who is the human incarnation of the God on earth, shares the divine ambivalence: "that beneficent god, the fear of whom is throughout the countries like the fear of Sekhmet in a year of plague. . . . He fights without end, he spares not. . . . He is a master of graciousness, rich in sweetness, and he conquers by love."

No Egyptian deity ever became the principle of evil, but one god, Seth, displays the destructive element more than the others. From an early time in the development of Egyptian religion, Seth was an enemy of the sky god Horus. Horus was a god of northern Egypt, the low country where the Nile spread out in black, fertile, tillable plains. Seth was a god of the dry, arid south, where the red deserts stretched lifeless to the rocky, burning mountains on the horizon. Because of Seth's association with the desert, he was usually portrayed as a reddish animal of unknown identity, and redhaired people were considered in some special way his own. As Egyptian religion developed, Seth came to be identified more and more with the power of death and locked in endless struggle with Horus or Osiris, gods of goodness and life.

Still, the Egyptians did not lose the sense that the gods represented one divine principle. The deadly enemies Seth and Horus were also perceived as brothers, twins, doublets, sometimes even as one god with two heads. The conflict between them was a violation of *ma'at* and had to be resolved. The Egyptians were torn between two solutions. In one, they



The Horus-Seth god, Egypt. Horus and Seth are a doublet, representing two sides of the divine principle. The followers of the two gods were often antagonistic, but in some places Seth, who looks here toward our left, was worshiped together with Horus as one god.

united Seth and Horus as one god, but this answer left the persistence of dissension in the cosmos unexplained. So they also considered another solution, one in which Seth seeks to restore the cosmic unity, but in all the wrong ways. Here Seth's role approaches that of Satan.

Seth seeks to resolve the conflict by destroying his adversary, whether Horus or Osiris. He tricks Osiris into getting into a large chest, locks it up, and sinks it into the Nile. Isis bears her dead husband a son, Horus the Younger, who takes his father's place as Seth's adversary. Seth tries unsuccessfully to murder the baby Horus, and when Horus grows up Seth marshals a huge army to crush his ancient enemy. Always thinking wrong, Seth tries to restore the divine union by an act of grotesque force: he attempts to sodomize the divine Horus. Horus, resisting, castrates Seth and so deprives him of his power, but Seth in turn tears out one of Horus' eyes and buries it. The struggle between desert and fertility, death and life, south and north, the underworld and the earth, had begun to prefigure the Judeo-Christian struggle of good against evil. From the Egyptian point of view, the cosmos could not be resolved by bloody conflicts but only by peaceful centering and integration. True to the actual state of the world, the myth relates no such reconciliation.

The civilizations that arose in Mesopotamia, where both human conflicts and natural disasters were far more frequent than in Egypt, saw the cosmos as far more fundamentally unsettled. The Egyptians had to explain a world in which evil intruded into divine harmony, the Sumerians and Babylonians one in which harmony was barely visible at all. The world had been fundamentally alienated from the divine plan, and the inscrutable gods might help, abandon, or simply ignore a nation, a city, or an individual. A Babylonian poem similar to the Book of Job presents a dialogue between a just man who is suffering and his friend. The sufferer inquires why those who worship the gods suffer and those who ignore them prosper. His friend entreats him to submit to his lot with good grace, but the sufferer complains that nowhere do the gods seem to block evil men or evil spirits. "How have I profited," he inquires, "that I have bowed down to my God?" He receives no satisfactory reply. The cosmos of the Mesopotamians was sorely out of joint, and they were deeply troubled that neither they nor the gods could set it right.

In consequence, the Mesopotamian world was filled with hostile demons. These were generally spirits of lesser dignity and power than gods. The terrible *annunaki* were the jailers of the dead in hell. The *etimmu* were the ghosts of the many who had died unhappy. The *utukku* lived in desert places or graveyards. There were demons of plagues,

nightmares, windstorms, drought, warfare, and every human ill. One of the most frightful was Pazuzu, god of the howling north winds that leached the soil of moisture and withered the crops. Another was Lilitu, the ancestral prototype of the Lilith of Isaiah 34. Lilitu was a frigid, barren “maid of desolation,” part human and part bird of prey, who roamed the night draining men of their bodily fluids. Such demons were everywhere, and people had to protect themselves by enlisting the aid of a more powerful spirit. “The man who has no god as he walks in the street, the demon covers him as a garment.”

Canaanite or Phoenician religion influenced Hebrew thought even more directly. The high God of Canaan was El, the god of sky and sun, often portrayed as a bull. His son was Baal, whose name means “the lord.” Baal was god of vegetation and fertility; his symbols were the bull and the crescent horns. The central Canaanite myth was the conflict of Baal, aided by his sister Anath, against the god Mot, prince of sterility and death.

The lord Baal goes out to do battle with Mot, but after a long struggle the prince of death defeats him, and the lord is forced to humiliate himself before his fierce foe, promising to be his slave. Mot kills him, sending him to the underworld. Baal is gone from the face of the earth for seven years, during which the crops wither and the world is barren. Death would have ruled forever, but Baal’s sister Anath, the terrible maiden goddess of love and war, wanders the world, seeks out Mot, and, “Death, thou shalt die.” She seizes Mot, and “with sword she cleaves him. With fan she winnows him—with fire she burns him. With hand-mill she grinds him—in the field she sows him.” In one and the same deed, Anath kills Mot and refertilizes the earth, and indeed Death’s death revives her brother Baal, who returns triumphant from the underworld while the earth bursts into bloom. Mot too revives, however, and Baal and Mot are locked in eternal combat. This eternal warfare is the struggle of a doublet—Baal and Mot, life and death—both the God, both representing the cosmos, a universe in which good and evil are forever entwined.

The apparently contradictory ethical qualities of the Greek gods, which the Christians so disdained, derived in part from the fact that each god of the classical period is a synthesis of diverse elements from ancient local cults. More important, the ambiguities display the coincidence of opposites. Both good and evil proceed from the God, of whom the individual gods are manifestations. Ethical ambivalence was expressed

either within the personality of a single deity or in twin or doublet deities.

A few Greco-Roman deities had direct influence on the Devil. The Christians associated all the pagan deities with demons, but Pan more than others. Pan was feared for his association with the wilderness, the favorite haunt of hostile spirits, and for his sexuality. Sexual passion, which suspends reason, was suspect to both Greek rationalism and Christian asceticism; a god of sexuality could easily be identified as evil, especially since sexuality was linked through fertility to the underworld and to death. Pan, hairy and goatlike, with horns and cloven hooves, was the son of Hermes. A phallic deity like his father, he represented sexual desire in both its creative and its threatening aspects. Pan's horns, hooves, shaggy fur, and outsized phallus became part of the Christian image of Satan.

The curious, deep association between fertility and death marked Hades, the ruler of the underworld, who presided over the dark and dreadful kingdom of dead souls and who brought death to crops, animals, and humans. Hades' other name was Pluto, god of wealth, for the underworld yields the tender crops and offers hope of renewed life. The ambivalence of Hades was reflected in that of his spouse, the gentle Persephone, lady of springtime, whose cruel husband ravished her from the face of the earth every autumn. Emerging from her underground prison every year, Persephone caused the earth to green. But it was also she who led the Erinyes, the spirits of vengeance, in their pitiless search for revenge.

Charun, the Etruscan god of death, made his own contribution to the shape of the Evil One. Charun derived his name from the Greek Charon, boatman of the dead, but the Etruscan god was far more horrible than the grizzled old ferryman. Charun had a huge, hooked nose similar to a bird's beak, a shaggy beard and hair, long, pointed, bestial ears, grinding teeth, and grimacing lips. Sometimes he is shown with wings or with serpents growing from his blue-colored body. He commonly wielded a huge mallet with which he struck the head of a person about to die. Most of these characteristics, except the mallet, appeared in medieval and modern pictures of the Devil.

Each of the religions so far discussed has been monist, assuming a single divine principle underlying the diversity of the cosmos. About 1200 B.C. the Iranian prophet Zarathushtra laid the basis for the first