

ing place of God, its earth for man, and its nether world for the shades and demons. The world in which we live knows no above or beneath, no heaven or hell, no host of good and evil spirits moving about to help or hurt man. It sees matter and energy working everywhere after the same immutable laws through an infinitude of space and time, a universe ever evolving new orbs of light, engendering and transforming worlds without number and without end. There is no place in infinite space for a heaven or for a celestial throne. A world of law and of process does not need a living ladder to lead from the earth below to God on high. Though the stars be peopled with souls superior to ours, still they cannot stand nearer to God than does man with his freedom, his moral striving, his visions of the highest and the best. Through man's spiritual nature God, too, is recognized as a Spirit; through man's moral consciousness God is conceived of as the Ruler of a moral world; but this same process at once does away with the need for any other spirits or divine powers beside Him. God alone has become the object of human longing. Man feels akin to His God who is ever near; he learns to know Him ever better. He can dispense with the angelic hosts. As they return to the fiery stream of poetic imagination whence they emerged, nebulous figures of a glorious world that has vanished, man rises above angel and Seraph by his own power to the dignity of a servant, nay, a child of God. Indeed, as the rabbis said, the prophets, sages, and seers are the true messengers of God, the angels who do His service.¹

¹ Ned. 20 b; Midr. Teh. Ps. CIII, 17-18; Ibn Ezra: Introduction to his commentary on the Pentateuch.

CHAPTER XXXI

SATAN AND THE SPIRITS OF EVIL

1. The great advantage of Judaism over other religious systems lies in its unified view of life, which it regards as a continuous conflict between good and evil influences within man. As man succeeds in overcoming evil and achieving good, he asserts his own moral personality. Outside of man Judaism sees no real contrast between good and evil, since both have emanated from God, the Spirit of goodness. Judaism recognizes no primal power of evil plotting against God and defying Him, such as that of the Persian dualism. Nor does Judaism espouse the dualism of spirit and matter, identifying matter with evil, from which the soul strives to free itself while confined in the prison house of the body. Such a conception is taught by Plato, probably under Oriental influence, and is shared by the Hindu and Christian ascetics who torture themselves in order to suppress bodily desire in their quest of a higher existence. The Jewish conception of the unity of God necessitates the unity of the world, which leaves no place for a cosmic principle of evil. In this Judaism dissents from modern philosophers also, such as John Stuart Mill and even Kant, who speak of a radical evil in nature. No power of evil can exist in independence of God.¹ As the Psalmist says: "His kingdom ruleth over all. Bless the Lord, ye angels of His, ye mighty in strength that fulfill His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word."²

¹ Compare Gen. R. to Gen. I, 31.

² Ps. CIII, 19-20.

This increased the difficulty of the problem of the origin of evil. The answer given by the general Jewish consciousness, expressed by both Biblical and rabbinical writers, is that evil comes from the free will of man, who is endowed with the power of rebelling against the will of God. This idea is symbolized in the story of the fall of man. The serpent, or tempter, represents the evil inclination which arises in man with his first consciousness of freedom. So in Jewish belief Satan, the Adversary, is only an allegorical figure, representing the evil of the world, both physical and moral. He was sent by God to test man for his own good, to develop him morally. He is "the spirit that ever wills evil, but achieves the good," and therefore in the book of Job he actually comes before God's throne as one of the angels.¹

2. In tracing the belief in demons we must draw a sharp distinction between popular views and systematic doctrine.² During the Biblical era the people believed in goat-like spirits roaming the fields and woods, the deserts and ravines, whom they called *Seirim* — hairy demons, or satyrs, — and to whom they sacrificed in fear and trembling.³ As Ibn Ezra ingeniously pointed out in his commentary, Azazel was originally a desert demon dwelling in the ravines near Jerusalem, to whom a scapegoat was offered at the opening of the year, a rite preserved in the Day of Atonement cult of the Mosaic Code.⁴ In fact, in ancient Babylon, Syria, and Palestine diseases and accidents were universally ascribed to evil spirits of the wilderness or the nether world. The Bible occasionally mentions these evil spirits as punitive angels sent by God. In the more popular view, which is reflected

¹ Job I, 6.

² See J. E., art. Demonology; Satan; Belial; Enc. Rel. and Eth., art. Demons and Spirits, Jewish; Davidson, l. c., 300-306; Dillmann, l. c., 334-340; D. F. Strauss, l. c., II, 1-18.

³ Lev. XVII, 7; Deut. XXXII, 17; Isa. XIII, 21; XXXIV, 14.

⁴ Lev. XVI, 8; see Ibn Ezra; J. E. and Enc. Rel. and Eth., art. Azazel.

by apocryphal and rabbinical literature, and which was influenced by both the Babylonian and Persian religions, they appear in increasing numbers and with specific names. Each disease had its peculiar demon. Desolate places, cemeteries, and the darkness of night were all peopled by superstition with hosts of demons (*Shedim*), at whose head was *Azazel*, *Samael*; *Beelzebub*, the Philistine god of flies and of illness;¹ *Belial*, king of the nether world;² or the Persian *Ashma Deva* (Evil Spirit), under the Hebrew name of *Ashmodai* or *Shemachzai*.³ The queen of the demons was *Lilith* or *Iggereth bath Mahlath*, "the dancer on the housetops."⁴

The Essenes seem to have made special studies of both demonology and angelology, believing that they could invoke the good spirits and conjure the evil ones, thus curing various diseases, which they ascribed to possession by demons. While these exorcisms are not so common in the Talmud as they are in the New Testament, there remain many indications that such practices were followed by Jewish saints and believed by the people. Often the rabbis seem to have considered them the work of "unclean spirits," which they endeavored to overcome with the "spirit of holiness," and particularly by the study of the Torah.⁵

3. This answers implicitly the question of the origin of demons. Obviously the belief in malevolent spirits is incompatible with the existence of an all-benign and all-wise Creator. Accordingly, two alternative explanations are offered in the rabbinical and apocalyptic writings. According to one, the demons are half angelic and half animal beings, sharing intelligence and flight with the angels, sensuality with beasts and with men. Their double nature is ascribed to incompleteness, because they were created last of all beings, and

¹ J. E., art. Beelzebub.

² J. E., art. Belial.

³ Enoch VI, 7; J. E., art. Ashmodai; Levy: W. B., Shemachzai.

⁴ Levy: W. B., Lilith; Iggereth.

⁵ J. E., art. Demonology.

their creation was interrupted by the coming of the Sabbath, putting an end to all creation.¹ According to the other view they are the offspring of the "fallen angels," issuing from the union of the angels with the daughters of men as described in Gen. VI, 1 f. These spread the virus of impurity over all the earth, causing carnal desire and every kind of lewdness. The whole world of demons is regarded as alienated from God by the rebellion of the heavenly hosts, as if the fall of man by sin had its prototype in the celestial sphere.² A rabbinical legend, which corresponds with a Persian myth, ascribes the origin of demons to the intercourse of Adam with Lilith, the night spirit.³ On the other hand, the archangel Samael is said to have cast lascivious glances at the beauty of Eve, and then to have turned into Satan the Tempter.⁴ The Jewish systems of both angelology and demonology, first worked out in the apocalyptic literature, were further elaborated by the Cabbalah.

Angelology found a conspicuous place in the liturgy in connection with the *Kedushah* Benediction and likewise in the liturgy and the theology of the Church.⁵

On the other hand the belief in evil spirits and in Satan, the Evil One, remained rather a matter of popular credulity and never became a positive doctrine of the Synagogue. True, the liturgy contained morning prayers which asked God for protection against the Evil One, and formulas invoking the angels to shield one during the night from evil spirits.⁶ But the arch-fiend was never invested with power over the soul, depriving man of his perfect freedom and divine sovereignty, as in the Christian Church.

¹ Aboth V, 6; P. d. R. El., XIX; Gen. R. VII, 7.

² Enoch VII; Yalkut Gen. 44, 47.

³ P. d. R. El., XIII; Yalkut Gen. 25.

⁴ See Abrahams' Ann. to Singers' *Prayerb.* XLIV f. and for the Church, Enc. Rel. and Eth., Demons and Spirits, Christian.

⁵ Abrahams, l. c., p. 7, 196; XX, CXXV.

⁶ Erubin, 18 b.

4. In the formation of the idea of the arch-fiend, Satan, we can observe the interworking of several elements. The name Satan in no way indicates a demon. It denotes simply the adversary, the one who offers hindrances. The name was thus applied to the accuser at court.¹ In Zechariah and in Job² Satan appears at the throne of God as the prosecutor, roaming about the earth to espy the transgressions of men, seeking to lure them to their destruction. In the Books of Chronicles³ Satan has become a proper name, meaning the Seducer.

The Serpent in the Paradise story is more completely a demon, although the legend intends rather to account for man's morality, his distinction between good and evil. Satan was then identified with the serpent, who was called by the rabbis *Nahash ha Kadmoni*, "the primeval Serpent," after the analogy of the serpent-like form of Ahriman. Thus Satan in the person of the serpent became the embodiment of evil, the prime cause of sin and death.⁴ Possibly a part in this process was played by the Babylonian figure of *Tihamat*, the dragon of *chaos* (*Tehom* in the Hebrew), with whom the god Marduk wrestled for dominion over the world, and who has parallels in the Biblical Rahab and similar mythological figures.

We must not overlook such rabbinical legends as the one about how the poisonous breath of the serpent infected the whole human race, except Israel who has been saved by the law at Sinai.⁵ Occasionally we hear that the Evil Spirit (*Yezer ha Ra*) will be slain by God⁶ or by the Messiah.⁷ These Haggadic sayings, however, were never accepted as normative for religious belief. On the contrary, they were always in dispute,

¹ Ps. CIX, 6.

² Zech. III, 1; Job I, 6.

³ I Chron. XXI, 1.

⁴ See B. Wisdom II, 24; P. d. R. El., XIII.

⁵ Shab. 146 a; Yeb. 103 b; Ab. Zar. 22 b.

⁶ Suk. 52 a.

⁷ Targ. to Isa. XI, 4.

and many a Talmudic teacher minimized the fiendish character of Satan, who became a stimulus to moral betterment through the trials he imposes.¹ Philo, allegorizing the legends, turns the evil angels of the Bible into wicked men.²

5. As to demons in general, the Talmudists never doubted their existence, but endeavored to minimize their importance. They changed the demon *Azazel* into a geographical term by transposing the letters.³ They explained "the sons of God who came to the daughters of men to give birth to the giants of old" as aristocratic Sethites who intermarried with low-class families of the Cainites.⁴ As to the rest, the entire belief in demons and ghosts was too deeply rooted in the folk mind to be counteracted by the rabbis. Even lucid thinkers of the Middle Ages were caught by these baneful superstitions, including Jehuda ha Levi, Crescas, and Nahmanides, the mystic.⁵ Only a small group fought against this offshoot of fear and superstition, among them Saadia, Maimonides and his school, Ibn Ezra, Gersonides, and Juda Ibn Balag. To Maimonides the demons mentioned in Mishnah and Talmud are only figurative expressions for physical plagues. He considers the belief in demons equivalent to a belief in pagan deities. "Many pious Israelites," he says,⁶ "believe in the reality of demons and witches, thinking that they should not be made the object of worship and regard, for the reason that the Torah has prohibited it. But they fail to see that the Law commands us to banish all these things from sight, because they are but falsehood and deceit, as is the whole idolatry with which they are intrinsically connected."

¹ B. B. 16 a.

² De Gigantibus, 2-4.

³ Sifra Lev. XVI, 8; Yoma, 67 b.

⁴ See the Ethiopic "Adam and Eve"; C. Bezold, *Die Schatzhoehle*, p. 18; comp. Gen. R. XXVI.

⁵ See D. Cassel: *Cuzari*, p. 402 note.

⁶ *Morch* III, 29-37, 46; Ibn Ezra to Job I, 6; comp. Finkelscherer: *Maimunis' Stellung zum Aberglauben*, 1894, p. 40-51.

6. This sound view was disseminated by the rationalistic school in its contest with the Cabbalah, and has exerted a wholesome influence upon modern Judaism. Thus Satan is rejected by Jewish doctrine, while Luther and Calvin, the Reformers of the Christian Church, still believed in him. Milton's "Paradise Lost" placed him in the very foreground of Christian belief, and the leaders of the Protestant Churches, up to the present, accord him a prominent place in their scheme of salvation, as the opponent and counterpart of God. In his work on Christian dogmatics, David Friedrich Strauss observes acutely: "The whole (Christian) idea of the Messiah and his kingdom must necessarily have as its counterpart a kingdom of demons with a personal ruler at its head; without this it is no more possible than the north pole of the magnet would be without a south pole. If Christ has come to destroy the works of the Devil, there would be no need for him to come, unless there were a Devil. On the other hand, if the Devil is to be considered merely the personification of evil, then a Christ who would be only the personification of the ideal, but not a real personality, would suffice equally."¹ At present Christian theologians and even philosophers have recourse to Platonic and Buddhist ideas, that evil is implanted in the world from which humanity must free itself, and they thus present Christianity as the *religion of redemption par excellence*.² Over against this, Judaism still maintains that there is no radical or primitive evil in the world. No power exists which is intrinsically hostile to God, and from which man must be redeemed. According to the Jewish conception, the goodness and glory of God fill both heaven and earth, while holiness penetrates all of life, bringing matter and flesh within the realm of the divine. Evil is but the con-

¹ *Christliche Glaubenslehre*, II, 18.

² Eucken, *D. Wahrheitsgehalt d. Religion*, p. 384, 402; Bousset, *Wesen d. Rel.*, p. 239.

trast of good, as shade is but the contrast of light. Evil can be overcome by each individual, as he realizes his own solemn duty and the divine will. Its only existence is in the field of morality, where it is a test of man's freedom and power. Evil is within man, and against it he is to wage the battles of life, until his victory signalizes the triumph of the divine in his own nature.¹

¹ See H. Cohen: *Ethik des reinen Willens*, 282 f., 341 f., 428 f., 593: "Eine Macht des Bösen gibt es nur im Mythos." "Dieser Mythos führt folgerichtig zum mythologischen Gottmenschen." M. Joel, in his article, "Der Mosaismus und das Heidentum," in *J. B. j. Gesch. u. Lit.*, 1904, p. 49-66, ascribes the belief in demons to Greek influence. He holds that the prophetic teaching of God's unity was the best bulwark against demonology and mysticism.

CHAPTER XXXII

GOD AND THE INTERMEDIARY POWERS

1. In addition to the angels who carried out God's will in the universe, the Biblical and post-Biblical literature recognizes other divine powers which mediate between Him and the world of man. The more a seer or thinker became conscious of the spirituality and transcendency of God, the more he felt the gulf between the infinite Spirit and the world of the senses. In order to bridge this gap, the Deity was replaced by one of His manifestations which could appear and act in a world circumscribed by space and time.¹ As we found in prophecy the direct revelation of God giving way to a mediating angel, so either "the Glory" or "the Name" of JHVH takes the place of God himself. That is, instead of God's own being, His reflected radiance or the power invested in His name descends from on high. The rabbis kept the direct revelation of God for the hallowed past or the desired future, but at the same time they needed a suitable term for the presence of God; they therefore coined the word *Shekinah* — "the divine Condescension" or "Presence" — to be used instead of the Deity himself. Thus the verse of the Psalm:² "God standeth in the congregation of God," is translated by the Targum, "The divine Presence (*Shekinah*) resteth upon

¹ See Dillmann, l. c., 341-351; Weber, l. c., 177-190; Bousset, l. c., 336, 346; Davidson, l. c., 36-38, 115-129; Schechter, *Aspects*, p. 21-45; Schmiedl, l. c., 35-48; J. E., art. Holy Spirit; Logos; Memra; Metatron; Name of God; *Shekinah*; *Enc. Rel. and Eth.*, I, 308-312.

² Ps. LXXXII, 1.