

A Few Kind Words for the Devil

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The Devil is the recipient of much abuse, most of which is deserved. However, there are times and situations in which he is the scapegoat (Azazel) and sorely misunderstood. Fundamentalists fight him loudly at every turn. Medievalists blamed him for everything they feared in themselves. So it might be worth while to take a closer look at this enemy (grab him by the tail) and perhaps understand him better, even though he may prove unlikeable. Though he has many names (Satan, Samael, and Asmodeus, to name a few) and manifold guises in all religions, the orientation here will be psychiatric and Jewish (not synonymous).

Introduction

Mary, a seventeen-year-old single Caucasian girl, was admitted to the psychiatric service with a five-year history of withdrawal and currently "possessed by the devil." Her parents and grandparents belonged to a Free Methodist-derived denomination. Her paternal grandmother, with whom Mary was very close, gave her a Bible when she was a child and told her she must believe everything in it or she would go to hell. *Mary began her withdrawal shortly after her grandmother's death.* Mary's father was ill intermittently and her mother became the breadwinner. There were several mixed siblings.

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Mary encountered high school and sexual feelings about the same time. This led to sexual experimentation, overwhelming guilt, and visions of Satan. She tried to escape him by running away from home. This astounded the parents, as Mary had always been an "angelic," obedient, loving child. As time went on, she became increasingly fearful of death and, at one point, "told" Satan he could have her soul, if only he would let her live. Since then, she has been battling Satan for her "mind." Currently, she is still in the hospital in intensive therapy. The prognosis is guarded.

Although this is an actual case, disguised of course, people do present to their clergymen and therapists major and minor variations and inventions of the theme presented in this brief case report. It is also true, as in this case, that reality can contribute to a delusional system. As interested and concerned participant-observers in this conflict, the helpers view the devil in the context of value judgments and the battle is joined. Often ignored is the fact that what is good is not necessarily what is right in all cases. To compound the problem, the knowledge that the devil can have many meanings is disregarded. To name a few: the supreme spirit of evil; a cruel person; a printer's apprentice; a machine for tearing rags; an unfortunate person; what one can do to eggs or ham; etc. Also, one can have a devil of a time; give the devil his due; raise the devil; go to the devil; or let the devil take the hindmost.

Evil spirits in Jewish law and lore

The Talmud (*lamad*—to study, to teach), next to the Bible, is the most important compilation of Jewish religious and civil law. It consists of two interwoven parts: the Mishnah and the Gemara. It is the expansion of the law and the lore originally handed down orally by teachers through generations, encompassing the teachings of the years 450 B.C.E. through 200 C.E.* There are legal and nonlegal productions in the Talmud, the latter including a rich storehouse of common sense, legend, allegories, personal reflections, poems, and folklore.

*B.C.E., Before the Common Era (B.C.). C.E., the Common Era (A.D.).

It is in the framework of folklore that demonology is considered. Satans and demons abound and are given recognition. The evil force of Satan is considered to be within the individual, while demons exert their power from without. "Satan, the *Yetzer Hara* [evil impulse; i.e., sexual desire] and the Angel of Death are all one." (B.B. 16a). * Therefore, God permits Satan to exist because death and the *Yetzer* are essential to man. This observation hints that the devil can perform a service, be it for good and/or evil.

Satan fulfills three responsibilities: He seduces men, he is the accuser of men before God, and he is the instrument by which people are brought to their deaths (*ibid.*). † In regard to his first function, some scholars of the talmudic period held him accountable for the building of the golden calf and trying to seduce Abraham and then Isaac away from the purpose of the Sacrifice. In his role of accuser, he confronts God with the sins of omission and commission on the part of His people, hoping to dissuade God from mercy. In effect, he not only is damning people, but subtly chiding God, as when Israel left Egypt, Satan proclaimed, "Sovereign of the Universe! Up to now they have been worshippers of idols, and wouldst Thou divide the sea for them?" (Exod. R. 21:7).

It is true that in his role of the seducer, Satan is responsible for many evil doings. However, since he is also equated with the *Yetzer Hara* (sexual desire), that powerful inner urge, the devil merits his due. "Were it not for that impulse, a man would not build a house, marry a wife, beget children or conduct business affairs" (Gen. R. 9:7). If there were no evil impulse there

* Talmudic reference.

† An added legendary contribution by Satan, according to the Talmud (Tanchuma Noah § 13): When Noah was planting his vineyard, Satan invited himself into a partnership. Satan brought in turn a sheep, a lion, a pig, and a monkey, slaughtered each, and used their blood to soak the soil. Therefore, before a man drinks he is quiet and simple like a lamb or a sheep. Having drunk in moderation, he is strong as a lion and without equal. But imbibing more than enough makes him wallow in filth like a pig. Intoxicated, he becomes "like a monkey, dancing about, uttering obscenities before all, and ignorant of what he is doing."

would be no wrongdoing, being “good” would be without meaning, and hence no moral sense could exist.*

Satan was not without problems of his own. Not only was he subjected to abuse and derogation from the outside; he suffered with labor pains from within. Since he was God’s creation, he was subject to God’s will. He could act only with God’s permission. In the familiar story of Job, he must first obtain God’s approval to test Job. This is granted, but he cannot touch Job—only his possessions. Then Satan complains that Job has retained his faith only because the latter is physically intact. God then permits Satan to touch Job, but he must not destroy him. The rabbis saw in this that Satan must have suffered torments worse than Job’s. Satan was similar to a servant who is told by his master, “Break the cask but do not let any of the wine spill.” (Baba Bathra 16a).

Demons, as part of folklore, were of varied origins. One theory was that they were spirits without bodies. Another, that they were the souls of evil men who were being punished by God. Another, that they multiplied by cohabiting with Adam and Eve in the century after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. Still another theory held that they evolved through a series of animals—a hyena, then a bat, then a vampire, etc. Then, too, there were good and evil angels. While the belief in angels was an intense one, the talmudists attempted to shake this conviction. They insisted that a man who is righteous and God-fearing is superior to the angels (Sanh. 59b).

* From a philosophical rather than from a theological vantage point: It should be noted here that “being good” could still have meaning, in that it implies a “proper” mode of conduct; i.e., when we breathe, this is a “proper” mode of conduct in that it is an action that enables us to move towards the good (which could be extended into a discussion of the Kantian emphasis on means as opposed to the Aristotelian stress on the ends as the right way to morality). Thus, being good has meaning, but the good would be indeterminate, as there would be nothing to which it could be compared. Many philosophers note this and say we have no real knowledge to use in our comparison (how does one know what is bad?) and therefore refrain from setting up any code of ethics. At any rate, if there is no alternative to the good, we would have to say that all being is good. This view is approached by many philosophers who say, “Only that which is real exists, and only that which is true is real. Therefore, all truth is analogous to all reality, which is analogous to all being.”

The Talmud, while basically a religious treatise, practiced and preached reason as a realistic approach to life and living. This rabbinic tradition was rejected by a group, analogous to the fundamentalists, who argued that if the written Law of the Lord is perfect, there is no need for interpretation. This sect was founded in the eighth century, C.E., in Persia and was known as Karaism (followers of the Scriptures). In time, they created strict regulations to enforce the Word. Their prohibitions and restrictions insured the absence of pleasure. Intermarriage was interdicted to a most limited group, with a high rate of incest as a by-product. There are small numbers of Karaites remaining in the East and Middle East.

As with the devil, a derogatory value judgment of the Karaites would be inappropriate. They sustained and promoted Bible study. Of equal importance: Their attack on the Talmud and Rabbinic Judaism evoked a defense from the "Rabbinites." This resulted in further clarification, reasoning, and important religious and literary works. Two Rabbinite philosophers in particular, Saadiah Gaon (tenth century) and Abraham ibn Daud (twelfth century) significantly reduced the Karaite movement.

Kabbalah (tradition, acceptance) refers to a theosophical system of Jewish philosophy and religious procedure. It concerns itself with mystic cosmological and sexual concepts about God, the world, nature, and the transmigration of the soul. Many of the kabbalistic accretions were developed by free-association techniques, similar to constructions in talmudic Aggadah.¹ The work influenced many Christian philosophers and thinkers, particularly during the Renaissance.*

Kabbalah has its origins in ancient mystic religions, coming under Jewish influence through Jochanan ben Zakkai in the first century, B.C.E. The Essenes and other ascetic groups furthered mysticism as a philosophy as well as a religion. The emphasis on mysticism was heightened in the seventh to twelfth centuries, C.E. Kabbalah as such occurred in the thirteenth century

* Unfortunately, authentic and pseudo-kabbalistic works were used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (and by Hitler in modern times) to justify antisemitism and persecution. The crime: sorcery.²

based on the published works of Isaac the Blind, Nahmanides, Abulafia, and Moses de Leon. The latter's book, the *Zohar* (Splendor), is the essential work in Kabbalah.

To be able to study the mysteries in Kabbalah, one had to be emotionally mature, responsible in thought and deed, and at least thirty years of age. Generally, the secrets were handed down by special elders to select younger people. (Shades of some current schools of psychology!) If one knew and understood the mystical implications of the biblical text and the different names for God, then one had great power to perform near-miracles and to heal. Interpretation was by way of *gematria* (meanings of words through their numerical values), *notarikon* (combinations of initial letters of words to form new words), and *temurah* (transposing of a letter or letters of a word).

The above suggests that the kabbalistic system is a highly emotional one when contrasted with the reasonableness of the Talmud. This may be correct, but there is much that is worth while in the former. Kabbalah was an effort of that time to seek and know God, and, in this way, to contribute to our religious philosophical heritage. (Further, any religion, any way of life, with no emotionality and with intellect as its sole basis is as a body with bones and no flesh.)

The kabbalists felt that God was reached through ascending His "Ten Spheres" of "emanations" beginning in the last "Sphere," "Kingdom." All "emanations" evolved from God's Crown, from here to Wisdom, to God's Intelligence, to Greatness, to Power and Judgment, to Compassion and Beauty, to Eternity, to Splendor, to Foundation, and finally to Kingdom. Evil, they felt, is not an entity in itself, but is a negation of good and can be overcome by appropriate penitential and devotional measures.

All souls came into being at the time of Creation. If a particular soul remains pure throughout its contact with a body, it becomes a part of the Ten Spheres after earthly death. However, if the soul is impure or contaminated, it must wander after death from body to body until purified. (This aspect will be dealt with in applied significance shortly.)

As would be expected, demons are acknowledged in Kabbalah. Their ori-

gin hints at the talmudic theory of genesis through the sins of Adam and Eve. Blau, in his excellent volume on Jewish philosophy,³ develops this theme. The tenth sphere, Kingdom, is considered God's dwelling place. Also, here is the *Shekhinah* (Presence or Glory of God). In sexual terms, the Kabbalah implies that the *Shekhinah* is the female counterpart or consort of God. "... earth and heaven are held together by the union of God and the *Shekhinah*. But the sin of Adam broke this union, separated *Malkuth* [Kingdom] from the other *Sefiroth* [Spheres]. 'Even as the sun seeks for the moon, so does the Holy One seek for the *Shekhinah*; but He finds her not, for the sins of men separate them.' Each sin committed by any man brings into being a demon. These demons stand between God and the *Shekhinah*. God could destroy these demons if He wished to, but this would violate man's free will, which 'would be impossible without the demoniacal urge to sin.' Man is thus not merely an earthly being; he is a force in the cosmic scheme. Man's freedom of will is cosmically of such importance that God and the *Shekhinah* tolerate separation rather than infringe on human freedom." This concurs with the talmudic point of view cited above that without Satan and the evil impulse, being "good" would be without meaning. In regard to free choice, the Talmud repeatedly emphasizes man's freedom to direct his life and considers it his birthright.

Chassidism (pious) began in Poland in the eighteenth century. Its founder, Rabbi Israel, *Baal Shem Tov* (Master of the Good Name), was a kabbalist and was reputed to have performed miracles. The movement was a response to Cossack massacres, depression, and the fact that the great masses of people could find no comfort in the Talmud, as it was intellectually inaccessible to them. Rabbi Israel and his disciples reassured the illiterate that they, too, could have salvation by sincere and devoted prayer to God. Mysticism was now an equal to scholarship. The people approached their God with simple, child-like joy and prayerful songs and dances. The rabbis would enlighten and interpret the mysteries of the Kabbalah to their congregations. The latter, in turn, would revere their particular rabbi, seeing him as the greatest, cleverest, most pious rabbi of them all. The Chassidic philosophy gave the people

hope and even ecstasy where there had been only disappointment, gloom, and tragedy. They felt God's creative presence in all things, which borders on Spinoza's pantheism. The latter saw all being as one and therefore supreme. Today, there are scattered, very religious groups of adherents to Chassidism. Usually, they are recognized by their characteristic black hats, long black coats, beards and earlocks.

Out of the kabbalistic notion of the wandering impure soul and its enhancement by the Chassidim came stories concerning the struggle between good and evil. Generally, they are Faustian in type. Most recent was the play on Broadway, *The Tenth Man*. The plot usually deals with an invisible dybbuk, entering the breast of an innocent adolescent maiden. *Dybbuk* is the Yiddish word for "devil," but comes from the Hebrew root word, *dawwak*, (to cling to, to attach, to glue). This dybbuk, male and/or female, is the wicked wandering soul of some dead person seeking purification in the body of another. It may have to go through many hosts, plants, animals, or human beings. It can be exorcised only by some good and great man steeped in the Kabbalah.

The four-act play, *The Dybbuk*, written in Yiddish by Solomon Ansky Rappaport and translated by Alsberg and Katzin in 1926,⁴ is a useful representative of the dybbuk stories. A young scholar, Channon, is secretly in love with Leah, the daughter of Sender, in whose house the young man lived while going to the Academy. Channon has tried piety, hoping God will intervene and prevent Leah's marriage arrangements with another, but to no avail. He tries fasting, and delves into the Kabbalah for magic, despite his youth. This, too, is without success. He plans to deal with Satan to obtain mastery of the Kabbalah and gain heavenly powers, and thereby sins. Malnourished and heart-sick, he falls dead in Synagogue. Later, as Leah prepares for her wedding, the soul of Channon enters her breast as a dybbuk, and she is possessed (*vide ante*, the case of Mary and her withdrawal, subsequent to her grandmother's death).

The marriage ceremony is interrupted and Leah, now speaking in her voice, now in a man's voice, is taken to the great sage and kabbalist, Rabbi Azrael.

He debates in ever sterner tones with the Dybbuk. He commands the Dybbuk to identify himself and explain his presence in this innocent girl, then orders him to leave without harming her. The Dybbuk counters with admitted fear for the Rabbi, but refuses. The Rabbi offers the Dybbuk pity, protection, and solace, but leave he must. The Dybbuk is adamantly disobedient. The battle between good and evil is joined. Preparations are made for the confrontation. The Rabbi has an ominous vision and orders the wedding party to be brought to him immediately. Leah's father, Sender, is brought to trial by Channon's dead father, who accuses Sender of neglecting his vow to give his daughter (if he had one) to his son (if he had one). Thus, Sender's sin brings punishment to his daughter. The confrontation between Rabbi Azrael and the Dybbuk is awesome. The Rabbi is fair and compassionate but determined; the Dybbuk, defiant. Finally, a quorum of ten is gathered, candles are lit, shrouds are worn, the ram's horn is blown, and the climax of the exorcism, excommunication, is pronounced. The Dybbuk capitulates, begging for mercy, and prepares to leave. The Rabbi mercifully lifts the ban and prays to God to admit Channon's soul to peace. But this is not the end. Rabbi Azrael becomes frenetic over getting Leah's wedding started, but the groom's carriage has lost a wheel. As the Rabbi leaves, Leah awakens from a swoon, and is soon addressed by the now-cleansed spirit of Channon. The two recall their earlier days, when he lived in her house. They had not spoken to each other of their silent love. The scene is a most tender and poignant one:

VOICE OF CHANNON: I broke down the barriers between us—I crossed the plains of death—I defied every law of past and present time and all the ages . . . I strove against the strong and mighty and against those who know no mercy. And as my last spark of strength left me, I left your body to return to your soul.

LEAH: (Tenderly) Come back to me, my bridegroom—my husband—I will carry you, dead, in my heart—and in our dreams at night we shall rock to sleep our little children who will never be born . . . (Weeps). And sew them little clothes, and sing them lullabies—

After a moment Leah sees his form, and still in her wedding dress, merges with it. Rabbi Azrael appears and with bowed head, exclaims, "Too late!" The end that he has envisioned cannot be averted.

It is the rule in dybbuk tales that the evil spirit be treated with fairness and compassion, as well as with uncompromising strictness. All things, all creatures are children of God. Therefore, even when the righteous are victorious, they must not rejoice over their defeated enemies. This begs compassion even for Satan vanquished.

The actions of Rabbi Azrael are worthy of further mention. Here is a person, truly a man of God, with great powers; one of these is the ability to see into the future. After his first encounter with the Dybbuk, he is lost in thought. Then he looks up and says aloud, "Even though it has been thus ordained in high planes, I will reverse that destiny." He has seen that Leah will die and her soul will join the to-be-freed and cleansed soul of Channon. A righteous man bows to God's will and does not challenge Him. Yet he somewhat arrogantly assumes the role of adversary to God, as the Dybbuk was to him. He makes haste to get Leah married to her prospective groom before God can carry out His preordained plan. But, like the Dybbuk (note that both are motivated by love), he fails. "Too late!"

Messiahs or devils?

Shabbetai Tzevi was born in Turkey in 1626. He was a brilliant talmudic scholar and, while still quite young, became familiar with Kabbalah. Therein he found a prophecy that the Messiah would appear in 1648. He proclaimed himself as the Savior and promised deliverance from all suffering. Because of his charismatic personality, he attracted many Jews, including rabbis. Shabbetai traveled many lands, accumulating acclaim and always more adherents to his Shabbetaian movement. In 1666, he went to Constantinople to overthrow the Sultan. In time, the Sultan offered him the choice of execution or conversion. He chose to become a Moslem with a royal title and royal prerogatives. Believing his conversion was a messianic mission, many of his faithful also converted.

His importance rests in his profound influence on one Jacob Frank (1726-1791), a native of Poland and another false messiah and leader of the sect known as Frankists. He had little moral character and was probably a psychopath, if not actually psychotic. Shabbetai Tzevi and God were synonymous, the *Shekhinah* was mother and he, Jacob Frank, was the messiah. He attacked the Talmud and its rabbis and accused the Jews of using the blood of murdered Christians for ritual purposes. Only Kabbalah had meaning. In time, he attracted many adherents. Sexual orgies became central to his religion and sin, the route for redemption. Faced with a challenge by the Catholic Church, he converted. Before too long, his loyalty was questioned, and he was jailed for thirteen years. After release, he assumed the title of baron and lived comfortably in Germany, supported by his followers.

The history of these two men, particularly Jacob Frank, gives one pause. Both had tremendous numbers of followers who viewed them as true Messiahs, rather than true Devils. Is this a manifestation of man's need for a leader, good or bad? Or is it simply that, "if he is *my* leader he is good?" Or perhaps, "if the leader represents a projection of something inside *me*, he must be good, even if he be the devil?"

The Devil and psychiatry

At times, in the treatment setting, it is difficult to establish whether the Devil is in the person of the patient and his impulses or in the therapist and his attitudes. The patient labors resentfully under the conviction that his therapist would recommend anything and everything that is immoral. The therapist views his patient as sorely in need of exorcism, or at least an updating of the latter's archaic superego.

Bakan, in his thought-provoking book on the influence of Jewish mysticism on Freud, devotes a section to "The Devil as Suspended Superego."⁵ He suggests that Freud's many contributions reflect a metapsychological pact with the Devil.* Bakan considers *The Interpretation of Dreams* in this con-

* In no way does Bakan imply ignoble motives to Freud; the development of his thesis is fascinating and worthy of being read in the original.

nection. On the title page of Freud's classic is the motto, taken from Virgil's *Aeneid*: *Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo* ("If the gods above are no use to me, then I'll move all hell"). This is the context in which Freud saw repressed material forcing its way into dream consciousness. To quote Bakan: "The reason for the suppression is the action of forces associated with the superego. If God is identified with the superego, then the corresponding antagonistic image is the Devil, who dwells in hell. As we have indicated earlier, in the psychoanalytic relationship, the analyst is at one and the same time the representative of the superego, as well as a tolerant, understanding father figure. Now what is the Devil, psychologically? The answer is eminently simple, on one level. *The Devil is the suspended superego*. He is the permissive superego. The Devil is that part of the person which permits him to violate the precepts of the superego." (Italics are Bakan's.)

In this sense, the afflicted who feel distressed mentally and emotionally seek out a therapist, be he clergyman or psychiatrist. Culture gives these helpers the aura of authority and moral righteousness. Yet unconsciously these tormented people see their helpers as possessors of the magic (black or white) that will lift their burdens of despair. Not infrequently, they have tried prayer, magazine and newspaper articles on emotional health, and even textbooks; all to no avail. And if Heaven has not helped, they then turn to the "Devil."

Along similar lines, the Devil has an ego function in people without psychopathology. In fact, those who lack this capacity are unhappily pathological. The expression, said affectionately about a child, "He's a little devil" is a familiar one. This child has the ability to *have fun*. This same little child, who is part of every adult, retains this capacity. The difficulty arises when the adult is not on good terms with his internalized child and smothers him. This may sound like a restrictive, punitive superego, but to stop at this is to miss the point. A healthily functioning ego has the ability to regress in its own behalf. When one is creative, free and flexible in work and play, and can laugh and cry and lose oneself in sex—this is regression in the service of the ego. It may be unfortunate terminology to say it is "going to the devil"

to “laugh like the devil,” or “letting the devil take over,” but it is an ego that, in its strength, feels certain it can regress and still come back.

There are those who lack this ego strength, or who have already regressed to a point where further regression or return is not immediately possible. (Case of Mary, *vide ante*.) Seemingly, they require an exorcism of some kind, with or without the threat of anathema. A word of caution to the overly-zealous helper: This person may *need* his devil. His preoccupation with the devil may very well be serving an ego *adaptive* function for him. His impulses (devils in themselves) to hostile and/or incestuous acts may be so overwhelming that his constant threatening accuser (the devil) is all that is helping him to control himself. In this situation, the devil is not suspended superego, but rather a harsh, authoritative superego, and very necessary for that person’s psychic economy.

In normal development, the same circumstances apply, but in less intensity. The young boy (or girl) is caught up in his oedipal struggle. He would like to best his father and possess the prize, mother. Should he win, he would lose. Some boys do win mother, not necessarily overtly, but tacitly. They remain forever enmeshed with mother, and further psychosexual development is atrophied. However, if father conveys by nonverbal means that he will share everything with his son *except* mother, the boy has an ally in controlling his impulses toward mother. This is not to say that the son appreciates this at the time, but rather that he sees father as a beastly, domineering, selfish devil. As a by-product of this experience, the father (devil) helps his son build an effective superego.

The concept of devil in psychic functioning has further significance. The process is externalization of internal conflicts. One usually denies one’s own id impulses and projects them on to someone in the environment, a parent, spouse, helper, or other authority figures. In this instance, the other person is seen as devil. Inner, unconscious hostile and/or sexual feelings are imputed to the other person. By the same technique, powers of goodness and omnipotence can be attributed to others. It is usual for the child to split each parent into “good” and “bad” (God and Devil). When the child has recon-

ciled those two opposites within each person he is no longer a child, but is now mature. The basis for this splitting is to be found in the presence of impulses and defenses in each individual. Put psychiatrically, everybody has an id and a superego, mediated by the ego. Stated philosophically, each person shares the universal potential for good and/or evil and the power and prerogative to exercise each.

It is important to note that the Hebrew word *satan* (sah-tahn), does *not* mean "devil," but rather "adversary." Furthermore, there is no Hebrew equivalent for the word "Devil," an opposite in evil to God in good. The duality implied in the two opposite forces of good vs. evil is counter to the indivisibility expressed in the watchword of the Jewish faith, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One."

The ancient Hebrews were quite philosophical in grasping this extremely sophisticated metaphysical concept. God is the highest form of Being, the ultimate of existence. If there is a direct opposite to Him, this perfection of existence, it would have to be an imperfect nonbeing. This means one of two things: Either this latter being has in its imperfection some being; or, it does not exist at all, being imperfectly nonexistent, a term that is, of course, absurd. Both of these phrases contain contradictory, mutually exclusive terms, so therefore the Devil cannot be an exact antithesis of God.

The ramifications of this are immediately apparent. If the Devil, or evil, serves as a foil to propitiate the realization, understanding, or achievement of the good, this must be demonstrably possible. It is. The absurdity of two Supreme Beings, two beings, each with more power than any other being, obviates the necessity of going further into the matter. Thus, if there is a direct confrontation between Good (God) and Evil (the Devil), the Good will be the stronger power, and can then win out in the ensuing struggle. It is thus that one gains from the existence of, or a confrontation with, evil.*

* Pharaoh was considered by the scholars of antiquity to be a *satan*, an adversary of God. (According to their schema, there were numerous "satans" in biblical history; e.g., Amalek, Goliath, Haman, etc. A modern *satan* would be Hitler.) Some felt this was "unfair," as Pharaoh was a mere mortal, while God is omnipotent.

The fact that the Hebrew word *satan* means “adversary” immediately conjures up thoughts of hostile antagonism. However, there are also benign ramifications to the adversary idea. Certainly, the adversary system in trial courts is designed to make “justice triumph.” One does not develop muscles by sitting, but by working against some sort of resistance. The child who is always spared anxiety, who receives no superego support will grow up with a fragile ego. The religionist who has never grappled with the Devil and doubts cannot have a sound faith. The therapist who has never struggled with his own devils (neuroses) cannot appreciate the pain and suffering of his patient. Nor can he believe in the efficacy of the therapeutic process.*

Having come to grips with his own devils, the therapist is then in a position to be a “devil’s advocate.” This term is not used in the sense of the promoter of the faith for the Catholic Church, or one who criticizes simply to derogate. In the therapeutic situation, the therapist assumes the adversary role for the sake of clarification for himself and, more importantly, for the patient. This posture on the part of the therapist is not without trials and tribulations for him. The patient is thinking of marriage. The therapist questions the patient’s motivation, common interests, finances, etc.—all in the context of reality. The patient chooses not to hear “why” and “how” in the questions, but instead hears an interdiction. “Why the hell—” and “how the hell—” are heard as prefatory to every question, all adding up to a parental “no” to him. At this point the therapist is no longer “devil’s advocate,” but now “*the Devil*.”

Despite these hardships and struggling with devils, good and evil, the work is rewarding. It is not the altruistic being “on the side of the angels” who provides the recompense. The fact that people can work *with*, rather than for, people and share their struggles offers meaningful gratification. The clergyman, as therapist, and the specialist have the same objective for those

* Jacob wrestled throughout the night with a “man” and prevailed. He ceased fighting on the condition that he be blessed. And he was: “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for thou hast striven with God and with man, and hast prevailed.” (Gen. 32:29) *Israel* meaning: he who struggles with God.

with whom they work: emotionally comfortable persons, realistically aware of their relationship to and with the society in which they live. It was not too many years ago when clergymen of varied faiths were charged with the responsibility to function as mental health practitioners by exorcising devils. Today the technique has changed, but the principle and the challenge remain the same.

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