



## # 4: "The Devil Made You Do It."

*"I instantly opened my bag, and took out the top publication. It proved to be an early edition — only the twenty-fifth — of the famous anonymous work (believed to be by precious Miss Bellows), entitled The Serpent at Home. The design of the book — with which the worldly reader may not be acquainted — is to show how the Evil One lies in wait for us in all the most apparently innocent actions of our daily lives. The chapters best adapted to female perusal are "Satan in the Hair Brush"; "Satan behind the Looking Glass"; "Satan under the Tea Table"; "Satan out of the Window"; and many others."*

—Drusilla Clack, a character in *The Moonstone* by Wilkie Collins, 1868.

In 1970, comedian Flip Wilson popularized the character Geraldine Jones whose catch phrase "The Devil made me do it!" is often repeated to this day. Although that phrase is usually tossed off in a joking manner, the idea of satanic influence in human affairs is no laughing matter. As the ultimate bogymen, the image of a King of Hell is employed to terrify the ignorant and the weak-minded into submitting to the will of tyrants and Bible salesmen throughout Western culture.

Since the dawn of civilization in Sumer,<sup>1</sup> most religions/myths portray the evil doer as a rebel or disobedient character (angel or man) who violates some divine directive, thus assuming a combative relationship with the higher powers. Surprisingly, an exception to the bad boy as adversary is the religious book most associated with tales of horror and mayhem — the so-called "Old Testament."

Ask the typical American churchgoer: "When does the Devil first appear in the Bible?" and their most likely response will be some part of the *Genesis* story of the Garden of Eden. They will usually be surprised to learn (assuming that they are open to learning) that the Devil, as we have come to know him, is not mentioned anywhere in the Old Testament.

The book of *Genesis* speaks only of a serpent, a symbol of wisdom throughout many cultures. (Check out the Caduceus and the Staff of

Asclepius.) His role in the story is more of a quality-control officer, sent by God to evaluate the reliability of the new creations. The serpent is subtle, but honest; telling only the truth about what will happen when Adam and Eve eat of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Unfortunately, when the couples' perfidy is revealed, God takes out his fury on his poor employee as well. [See Most Insidious Lie number 2.]

### Strange Serpent

What, do you suppose, did the serpent look like *before* it was cursed to crawl on its belly? Did it have legs like a lizard? Wings, like a dragon?

Noting the serpent's wisdom and its ability to talk, some claim that its image is based on a tribal memory of reptilian extra-terrestrials who first brought civilization to primitive man. If several modern authors are to be believed, these beings are still visiting Earth rather frequently, perhaps to check up on their "children." An outrageous idea, but not any stranger than many of the stories in the Bible.

We'll try to keep an open mind.

The Satan so prominent in the book of *Job* is more of a prosecuting attorney charged with testing God's creations, he is given no power to wreak havoc on his own. Satan is mentioned, without description or comment, only two other times (*Chronicles* 21:1 and *Zechariah* 3:1-2). The

term “demons” likewise only appears twice (Deut 32:17 and Psalms 106:37) and each time seems to be simply another term for false gods that fickle Hebrews were punished for worshipping.

As time passed, and as the Jews were exposed to other religions (especially in Babylon) the tempter was seen less as an employee and more as an adversary of God. Among the Essenes and the followers of Jesus, the figure variously called Satan, Beelzebub, or Belial became a figure of central importance. The authors of *Mark* introduce the Devil into the crucial opening scene of that gospel, and go on to characterize Jesus' ministry as involving “continual struggle between God's spirit and the demons, who belong, apparently, to Satan's `kingdom' (see Mark 3:23-27).”<sup>2</sup> At the least, this was a significant deviation from mainstream Jewish tradition. To many Jews, this was blasphemy, as it implied that there was more than one God or that God was not omnipotent.

### **The Image of Evil**

From the first priests on the step pyramids beside the Euphrates river, to the fire breathing preachers in revival tents along the wide Missouri, the personification of evil has almost always been imagined as having horns. Some say these are mimics of goats, some say bulls, others claim extra-terrestrial origins. Current illustrations generally give the Devil and his minions cloven hooves; most likely based on Pan, the half-goat, half-man, Greek god of the wild. As for color, historically the Devil was thought to be black (although Chaucer thought him green). The popularity of a fiery red is fairly recent, but it could have originated with the red dragon mentioned in John's bizarre dream known as *Revelations*.

### **A Growing Monstrosity**

Over the ensuing millennia, Satan became a very definite and prominent figure in Christian dogma, with well-defined habits and intentions.

The view developed that he was God's — that is, Christianity's — immortal enemy. As such, he was immensely useful to all who could profit from claiming to fight against him. Immense fortunes have been collected by devious organizations from the trembling masses in hopes their contributions might keep the Devil at bay.

Satan's mission began to be seen as trying to mislead folks into denying or perverting Christian morals and practices. And he did far more than attempt to persuade: “The Devil frequently engaged in those sexual acts that were forbidden to men and women and, in some accounts, he is described as having a forked penis, so that he could commit fornication and sodomy at the same time.”<sup>3</sup>

A corollary to this change in the Devil's role — from aide to opposition — was a change in view of the sinner from one who could not resist temptation to one who chose to be in league with Satan, *i.e.*, actually was in opposition to God. As this idea developed further, people began to view their enemies as part of Satan's army. This often escalated into grand conspiracy theories in which anyone who disagreed with the prevailing view was considered a dangerous enemy manipulated by the Devil. Killing heretics (that is, those who disagreed with you) was therefore not only justified, it was seen as a service to God.

This view is very much extant in today's milieu. “The idea of a tangible satanic force that must be battled out in the world is familiar to tens of millions of fundamentalist and evangelical Christians. At various times, the group said to embody this Evil has been identified as pagans, Jews, Muslims, Catholics, Mormons, and communists. These days they're homosexuals, liberals, and pornographers.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Spirits' View**

Here are a few quotes from those who are most likely to have met the Devil, if he did exist.

“Satan is a legend, a story, a fantasy which describes and gives substance to the negative powers of the mind.”<sup>5</sup>

"There is no such being as the Devil or Satan or whatever name you give to him. I always liked `Beelzebub. Satan or the Devil is an invention of man. ... Some religions use it to frighten people into being good, which is self-defeating of itself."<sup>6</sup>

"The bindings of ignorance, or of the lesser good, may as well be called Satan, or Lucifer. Whatever name you give it, it is still ignorance. It is still the lesser good."<sup>7</sup>

"I do not think there is anything corresponding to the Devil of orthodoxy."<sup>8</sup>

"There is no evil except that which we create, for I have seen no signs of a devil on this side of the veil. We are our own devils, with our thoughts and subsequent deeds."<sup>9</sup>

"The idea that a King of Evil exists, whose direct function is to oppose the King of Heaven, is stupid; it is primitive and even barbaric. The Devil as a solitary individual does not exist, but an evil soul might be called a devil, and in that case there are many devils."<sup>10</sup>

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Today, reasonable and well-informed people realize that there is no dreadful being forever plotting to ensnare the unwary in webs of sin and dissolution. The Dark Side of "The Force" is ignorance; but, as Walter M. Miller, Jr. has so eloquently pointed out:

*Ignorance is king. Many would not profit by his abdication. Many enrich themselves by means of his dark monarchy. They are his Court, and in his name they defraud and govern, enrich themselves and perpetuate their power.*<sup>11</sup>

And so, there is no Devil. We have only ourselves to blame.

### **But There Are Demons**

In later Judaism and Christianity, various lesser demons were described as the members of the Devil's staff of subordinates. Not only were Satan's chief lieutenants given names, the exact number of his army of demons was declared in the Talmud to be 7,405,926.<sup>12</sup>

While religions are way off target regarding the Devil Himself, their view on His minions is somewhat more aligned with reality.

Dying has little or no effect on personalities. People who are compassionate, tolerant, and joyful in life will be kind and playful spirits in the next. Likewise, disoriented, disaffected, or dissatisfied souls will remain so after their physical demise. Of course, they can and do change, grow, and improve their situation; but there are, and have been, so many nasty people on Earth that the number of nasty spirits is immense. It should come as no surprise that many of them do not have the best interests of terrestrial humans at heart.

Here is what a few denizens of the astral plane have to say on the matter:

"Billions of mediocre souls are closest to your Earth. The attraction Earth exerts upon these souls is amazing and comparable to a magnet."<sup>13</sup>

"The heavens above your head now are literally swarming with souls who long to take a hand in the business of Earth, souls who cannot let go, who find the habit of managing other people's affairs a fascinating habit, as enthralling as that of tobacco, or opium."<sup>14</sup>

"There are many who do not progress for hundreds and sometimes thousands of years who are still filled with the desires of Earth even when they have passed to the world of spirit."<sup>15</sup>

"A number of spirits do live and spend most of their time near the Earth, but they are the very unprogressed and find their pleasures in mingling with mortals."<sup>16</sup>

"Countless multitudes of insane, diseased, and ignorant spirits wander around in all directions in the circles closest to the Earth's crust."<sup>17</sup>

"The lower astral planes also contain people who have been alcoholics or drug addicts, who find these cravings still with them in the astral bodies. They stay near the Earth to be near alco-

holics or drug addicts who are still in the physical body, in order to participate vicariously in the sensations which alcohol and drugs give.”<sup>18</sup>

“Drunks on this side hover around the Earth souls who drink too much, lusting after the pleasures of alcoholism and unable to break the bond of habit which binds them to physical body.”<sup>19</sup>

“There *are* weak, malicious spirits here, who have never got beyond an elementary development and who are only capable of mischievous activities. Normally they cannot reach the consciousness of men but when emotional disturbances accompany development they are attracted and will attach themselves so as to influence the person in wrong ways and to accentuate the suffering of both mind and body.”<sup>20</sup>

“I became acquainted with different persons who were endeavouring to continue their physical life. ... some even penetrated to the Earth again. There they caused as much disturbance as they could evilly devise by joining with those of a like mind who were still physical beings. This explains perhaps, why such incomprehensible things are sometimes done by humans who are not capable of controlling their own inclinations.”<sup>21</sup>

Just as you cannot rightfully claim that “the devil made you do it,” so trying to shift the blame to nasty spirits cannot relieve you of responsibility for your actions. In order for a discarnate spirit to influence your mind, he or she must be invited in — either by taking (or suffering) actions that weaken your natural defenses or consciously by attempting to contact the dead without proper training or reasonable precautions.

### Using the Talking (Ouija<sup>22</sup>) Board

Of all the diviner's devices, the talking board is the most popular. Perhaps this is because its low cost and ease of use appealed to

End Notes

many who wouldn't think of buying a crystal ball or learning to read tarot cards. Also, using the board is a social thing requiring at least one person and usually two people to touch the traveler and another to copy down the messages being spelled out. Before the advent of horror movies on late-night television, many young folks sought answers to burning questions (“Will I marry a handsome man?” “Does Frankie love me?”) from the board. This proved especially thrilling on dark and stormy nights amid flickering candles.

Unfortunately, not all encounters with the powers behind the board have been so innocent or harmless. Many people claim that playing with a talking board can open portals to other dimensions, letting in immoral or amoral spirits who revel in encouraging nasty deeds and may even try to possess the naive planchette pusher. The recommendations made for dealing with such interlopers range from prayer to envisioning white auras to trashing the board altogether.

Nevertheless, the talking board is hugely important because several of the best mediums and channelers employed it to make their initial contact with the spirit realms.

This author would, therefore, advise those trying out the talking board to exercise caution and common sense. Any messages coming through the traveler should be evaluated in the same manner as would commentary or advice received from any other stranger. As the Bible commands, “Do not trust any and every spirit, test the spirits to see whether they are from God.”<sup>23</sup>



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- <sup>1</sup> Some 4,000 years ago, the first known civilization sprang up in Sumer, on the plains where the Euphrates and Tigris rivers meet in what is now Iraq. Seemingly from nowhere, great cities appeared with planned streets, irrigation systems, and lush public gardens.
- <sup>2</sup> Pagels, Elaine, *The Origins of Satan*, 1995, p. xvii.
- <sup>3</sup> Hefner, Hugh, "The Playboy Philosophy, part 1," *Playboy*, December 1962, p.63.
- <sup>4</sup> Klein, Marty, *America's War on Sex*, 2012, p. 28.
- <sup>5</sup> Barham, Martha J. and James T. Greene, *Bridging Two Worlds*, 1981, p. 200.
- <sup>6</sup> Homewood, Harry, *Thavis Is Here*, 1978, p. 86.
- <sup>7</sup> Putnam, Allen, ed., *Flashes of Light from the Spirit-Land*, 1872, p. 255.
- <sup>8</sup> Thibault, Henry, ed., *Letters from the Other Side*, 1919, p.110.
- <sup>9</sup> Montgomery, Ruth, *A World Beyond*, 1971, p. 64.
- <sup>10</sup> Borgia, Anthony, *Life in the World Unseen*, 1954, p. 59.
- <sup>11</sup> Miller, Jr., Walter M, *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, 1964, p. 214.
- <sup>12</sup> 7,405,926 is composed of four prime numbers multiplied together ( $2 \times 3 \times 11^2 \times 101^2$ ).
- <sup>13</sup> Wetzl, Joseph, translator, *The Bridge Across the River*, written in 1915, published in German in 1950, English translation published in 1973, p. 46.
- <sup>14</sup> Barker, Elsa, *Letters from the Afterlife* [a.k.a. *Letters from a Living Dead Man*], 1914, p. 247.
- <sup>15</sup> Austen, A.W. ed., *Teachings of Silver Birch*, 1938, p. 109.
- <sup>16</sup> Stringfellow, A., *Leslie's Letters to His Mother* — [as quoted in *The Afterlife of Leslie Stringfellow* by Stephen Chism, 2005], 1926, p. 102.
- <sup>17</sup> Xavier, Francisco Candido (Chico), *Nosso Lar: Life in the Spirit World*, 1944, p. 41.
- <sup>18</sup> Taylor, Ruth, *Witness from Beyond*, 1975, p. 59.
- <sup>19</sup> Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 126.
- <sup>20</sup> Sherwood, Jane, *The Country Beyond*, 1969, p. 132.
- <sup>21</sup> Burbidge, A.H., *The Shadows Lifted from Death*, circa. 1941, p. 146.
- <sup>22</sup> Boards covered with letters and numbers that could be pointed to with a small triangular table known as a "planchette" or "traveler" were often used by spirit seekers during the early 1880s. On February 10, 1891, Elijah J. Bond was granted the first patent on such a board. His business partner, Charles Kennard gave their version the name "Ouija," which he falsely believed was Egyptian for "luck." Parker Brothers bought the rights to the name in 1966, so I use the generic "talking board" from here on.
- <sup>23</sup> 1 John, 4:1.