

**THE DEVIL, HIS  
ORIGIN, GREATNESS  
AND DECADENCE**

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The Devil, his origin, greatness and decadence by Albert Réville

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THE DEVIL



# THE DEVIL HIS

ORIGIN GREATNESS AND

DECADENCE

FROM THE FRENCH OF THE

REVEREND ALBERT RÉVILLE DD



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EGYPTIAN DEVIL.



ASSYRIAN DEVIL.



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFATORY

### NOTES.



ALTHOUGH the appearance of this essay in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* must have brought it under the notice of a large number of educated Englishmen, there remain not a few to whom a translation may be serviceable. Of these, there are some who regard belief in the personality of the devil as an essential of true religion; there are others who have already come to the conclusion that such belief makes faith in our Heavenly Father's perfect wisdom, and man's free-will, impos-



sible,\* and that this form of superstition not only plies the weak with unworthy motives of conduct, but is a far slighter check upon the misbehaviour of depraved persons than is commonly assumed by theologians; and there are, doubtless, some who, not having experienced in themselves, nor observed in others, its injurious effects, regard the matter with indifference.

To those who thoughtfully reject the dark belief, this interesting essay requires no comment; but among such as hold it upon "Scriptural grounds," there may be some who are not too prejudiced to bear with the translator while, in no carping spirit, he ventures to ask, through the following questions, whether Scripture authorizes as distinctly as it is generally supposed to do, a doctrine which reason condemns as based upon no evidence, and as a fruitful source of mischief.

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\* Martin Luther writes: "The human will is like a beast of burden. If God mounts it, it wishes and goes as God wills: if Satan mounts it, it wishes and goes as Satan wills. Nor can it choose the rider it would prefer, or betake itself to him, but it is the riders who contend for its possession."

Do Moses and the older Prophets appear to have so much as heard of the devil?

Is not the Old Testament *satan* a common noun, meaning an adversary, a hindering influence? (1 Chron. xxi. 1; Psalm cix. 6). Is not, for instance, the Hebrew word translated *adversary* in the narrative of Balaam (applied there to the "Angel of the Lord"), the word which is translated elsewhere Satan? (Numbers xxii. 22).

[NOTE.—As the account of the Fall (Genesis iii.) is regarded by many as containing a mention of the Devil, we may be allowed to remark (apart from any question as to whether the episode is mythical, allegorical, or a simple record of facts) that, however general may be the notion, which Milton's grand imaginings have done much towards establishing, that the serpent was an incarnation of the Evil One, there is nothing in the narrative to support it. "The serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field." What is there here to show that the woman was surprised by any extraordinary display of subtlety on the part of the serpent, or that the animal was the mere instrument of an arch-fiend? Indeed, the curse pronounced upon the serpent race is inconsistent with such a supposition. S. Paul, in referring to the temptation of Eve (2 Cor. xi. 3), says nothing of the Devil's part in it; the serpent is not even a *satan*, but simply *the serpent*.]

Did not the Jews derive many of their notions of devils and hells, so firmly held by the Pharisees of Christ's time, from their long intercourse with the Persians?

Have not our translators of the New Testament, perplexed by the ambiguity of the Greek idiom, sometimes erred by their arbitrary suppression of the Greek article? [Christ, for instance, is made to say, "Satan cometh," "Satan hath bound," "I beheld Satan," &c., instead of *the Satan*.]

Is it not open to question whether, where Christ's words seem to confirm the notion of a personal Satan, he is doing more than accommodate his language to the popular mode of expressing the power of evil?

When Christ declares that one of his disciples is a *devil*, and when he addresses another as *Satan*, does he not use the word in its sense of *adversary*; and have these expressions any value in supporting the assertion that he taught the personality of the devil?