



Arthur Edward Waite
**DEVIL-WORSHIP IN
FRANCE**
THE QUESTION OF LUCIFER

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Devil-Worship in France: The Question of Lucifer

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Contact: info@e-artnow.org

EAN: 4066338120359

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Preface

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The term Modern Satanism is not intended to signify the development of some new aspect of old doctrine concerning demonology, or some new argument for the personification of the evil principle in universal nature. It is intended to signify the alleged revival, or, at least, the reappearance to some extent in public, of a *cultus diabolicus*, or formal religion of the devil, the existence of which, in the middle ages, is registered by the known facts of the Black Sabbath, a department, however, of historical research, to which full justice yet remains to be done. By the hypothesis, such a religion may assume one of two forms; it may be a worship of the evil principle as such, namely, a conscious attempt on the part of human minds to identify themselves with that principle, or it may be the worship of a power which is regarded as evil by other religions, from which view the worshippers in question dissent. The necessity for this distinction I shall make apparent in the first chapter of this book. A religion of the darkness, subsisting under each of these distinctive forms, is said to be in practice at the present moment, and to be characterised, as it was in the past, by the strong evidence of miracles,—in other words, by transcendental phenomena of a very extraordinary kind, connecting in a direct manner with what is generically termed Black Magic. Now, Black Magic in the past may have been imposture reinforced by delusion, and to state that it is recurring at the present day does not commit anyone to an opinion upon its veridical origin. To say, also, that the existence of modern diabolism has passed from the region

of rumour into that of exhaustive and detailed statement, is to record a matter of fact, and I must add that the evidence in hand, whatever its ultimate value, can be regarded lightly by those only who are unacquainted with its extent and character. This evidence is, broadly, of three kinds:—(a) The testimony of independent men of letters, who would seem to have come in contact therewith; (b) the testimony volunteered by former initiates of such secret associations as are dedicated to a *cultus diabolicus*; (c) the testimony of certain writers, claiming special sources of information, and defending some affected interests of the Roman Catholic Church.

My purpose in this book is to distinguish, so far as may be possible, what is true from what is false in the evidence, and I have undertaken the task, firstly, because modern mystics are accused, *en masse*, of being concerned in this cultus; secondly, because the existence of modern Satanism has given opportunity to a conspiracy of falsehood which is wide in its ramifications, and serious on account of its source; thirdly, because the question itself has awakened considerable interest both within and without transcendental circles, and it is desirable to replace hazy and exaggerated notions by a clear and formal statement.

I have connected the new diabolism with France in my title, because the evidence in each of its kinds has been filed by French writers, and we have no other source of information. So far as that evidence is sound, we have to thank France for producing it; but, on the other hand, should it prove that a whole city of invention has been constructed, "with all its spires and gateways," upon a meagre basis of fact, it is just that French imagination should have full credit for the decorative art which has adorned this Question of Lucifer.

The plan of my work had been sketched, and a number of chapters written, when I found myself to some extent preceded by a writer well known to occultists under the pseudonym of Papus, who has quite recently published a small brochure, entitled *Le Diable et L'Occultisme*, which is a brief defence of transcendentalists against the accusations in connection with Satanism. I gladly yield to M. Papus the priority in time, which was possible to a well-informed gentleman, at the centre of the conspiracy. His little work, however, does not claim to be either a review or a criticism, and does not therefore, in any sense, cover the ground which I have travelled. It is an exposition and exoneration of his own school of mystic thought, which is that of the Martinists, and I have mentioned it in this connection in its proper place.

Chapter I

Satanism in the Nineteenth Century

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If a short time ago that ultimate and universal source of reference, the person of average intelligence, had been asked concerning Modern Diabolism, or the Question of Lucifer,—What it is? Who are its disciples? Where is it practised? And why?—he would have replied, possibly with some asperity:—“The question of Lucifer! There is no question of Lucifer. Modern Diabolism! There is no modern Diabolism.” And all the advanced people and all the strong minds would have extolled the average intelligence, whereupon the matter would have been closed hermetically, without disquieting and unwelcome investigations like the present.

The Great Teacher of Christianity beheld Lucifer fall from heaven like lightning, and, in a different sense, the modern world has witnessed a similar spectacle. Assuredly the demon of Milton has been cast down from the sky of theology, and, except in a few centres of extreme doctrinal concentration, there is no place found for him. The apostles of material philosophy have in a manner searched the universe, and have produced—well, the material philosophy, and therein is no question of Lucifer. At the opposite pole of thought there is, let us say, the spiritualist, in possession of many instruments superior, at least by the hypothesis, to the search-lights of science, through which he receives the messages of the spheres and establishes a partial

acquaintance with an order which is not of this world; but in that order also there appears to be no question of Lucifer, though vexed questions there are without number concerning “unprogressed spirits,” to say nothing of the elementary. Between these poles there is the flux and reflux of multitudinous opinions; but, except at the centres mentioned, there is still no question of Lucifer; it has been shelved or dropped.

The revival of mystical philosophy, and, moreover, of transcendental experiment, which is prosecuted in secret to a far greater extent than the public can possibly be aware, has, however, set many old oracles chattering, and they are more voluble at the present moment than the great Dodonian grove. As might be expected, they whisper occasionally of deeds done in the darkness which look weird when exposed to the day. The terms Satanism, Luciferianism, Diabolism, and their equivalents, have been buzzed frequently, though with some indistinctness, of late, and in accents that indicate the existence of a living terror—people do not quite know of what kind—rather than an exploded superstition. To be plain, the Question of Lucifer has reappeared, and in a manner which must be eminently disconcerting to the average intelligence and the advanced and strong in mind. It has reappeared not as a speculative inquiry into the possibility of a personal embodiment of evil operating mysteriously, but after a wholly spiritual manner, for the propagation of the second death; we are asked to acknowledge that there is a visible and tangible manifestation of the descending hierarchy taking place at the close of a century which has denied that there is any prince of darkness.

Now there are some subjects which impress one at first sight as unserious, but we come to regard them differently

when we find that they are being taken seriously. We have been accustomed, with some show of reason, to connect the idea of devil-worship with barbarous rites obtaining among savage nations, to regard it, in fact, as a suitable complement of the fetish. It seems hypothetically quite impossible that there can be any person, much less any society or class of persons, who, at this day, and in London, Paris, or New York, adore the evil principle. Hence, to say that there is Black Magic actively in function at the present moment; that there is a living cultus of Lucifer; that Black Masses are celebrated, and involve revolting profanations of the Catholic Eucharist; that the devil appears personally; that he possesses his church, his ritual, his sacraments; that men, women, and children dedicate themselves to his service, or are so devoted by their sponsors; that there are people, assumed to be sane, who would die in the peace of Lucifer; that there are those also who regard his region of eternal fire—a variety unknown to the late Mr Charles Marvin—as the true abode of beatitude—to say all this will not enhance the credibility or establish the intelligence of the speaker.

But this improbable development of Satanism is just what is being earnestly asserted, and the affirmations made are being taken in some quarters *au grand sérieux*. They are not a growth of to-day or precisely of yesterday; they have been more or less heard for some years, but their prominence at the moment is due to increasing insistence, pretension to scrupulous exactitude, abundant detail, and demonstrative evidence. Reports, furthermore, have quite recently come to hand from two exceedingly circumstantial and exhaustive witnesses, and these have created distinctly a fresh departure. Books have multiplied, periodicals have been founded, the Church is taking action, even a legal

process has been instituted. The centre of this literature is at Paris, but the report of it has crossed the Channel, and has passed into the English press. As it is affirmed, therefore, that a cultus of Lucifer exists, and that the men and women who are engaged in it are neither ignorant nor especially mad, nor yet belonging to the lowest strata of society, it is worth while to investigate the matter, and some profit is possible, whatever the issue.

If the devil be actually among us, then for the sake of much which has seemed crass in orthodox religion, thus completely exonerated; for the sake of the fantastic in fiction and the lurid in legend, thus unexpectedly actualised; and, further, as it may be, for the sake of our own souls, we shall do well to know of it. If Abaddon, Apollyon, and the Lord of Flies are to be understood literally; above all, if they are liable to confront us *in propria persona* between Free Mason's Hall and Duke Street, or between Duke Street and Avenue Road, then the sooner we can arrange our reconciliation with the one Church which has consistently and invariably taught the one full-grown, virile doctrine of devils, and has the *bonâ-fide* recipes for knowing, avoiding, and at need of exorcising them, why the better will it be, more especially if we have had previously any leanings towards the conception of an universal order not pivoting on perdition.

If, on the other hand, what is said be of the category of Ananias, as distinguished from what alchemists call the Code of Truth, it will be well also to know that some portions of the old orthodoxies still wait for their deliverance from the bonds of scepticism, that the actual is to be discriminated from the fantastic by the old test, namely, its comparative stupidity, and that we may still create our universe about any pivot that may please us.

I am writing ostensibly for transcendentalists, of whom I am one; it is as a student of transcendentalism that I have been led to examine this modern mystery, equipped as it is with such portentous phenomena. Diabolism is, of course, a transcendental question, and black magic is connected with white by the same antinomy that connects light and darkness. Moreover, we mystics are all to some extent accused by the accusations which are preferred in the matter of modern diabolism, and this is another reason for investigating and making known the result. At the same time, the general question has many aspects of interest for that large class which would demur to be termed transcendental, but confesses to being curious.

The earliest rumour which I have been able to recall in England concerning existing occult practices to which a questionable purpose might be attributed, appeared in a well-known psychological journal some few years since, and was derived from a continental source, being an account of a certain society then existing in Paris, which was devoted to magical practices and in possession of a secret ritual for the evocation of planetary angels; it was an association of well-placed persons, denying any connection with spiritualism, and pretending to an acquaintance with more effectual thaumaturgic processes than those which obtain at séances. The account passed unchallenged, for in the absence of more explicit information, it seemed scarcely worth while to draw attention to the true character of the claim. The secret ritual in question could not have been unknown to specialists in magical literature, and was certainly to myself among these; as a fact, it was one of those numerous clavicles of the goëtic art which used to circulate surreptitiously in manuscript some two centuries ago. There is no doubt that the planetary spirits with which

the document was concerned were devils in the intention of its author, and must have been evoked as such, supposing that the process was practised. The French association was not therefore in possession of a secret source of knowledge, but as impositions of this kind are to be *à priori* expected in such cases by transcendentalists of any experience, I for one refrained from entering any protest at the time.

Much about the same period it became evident that a marked change had passed over certain aspects of thought in “the most enlightened city of the world,” and that among the *jeunesse dorée*, in particular, there was a strong revulsion against paramount material philosophy; an epoch of transcendental and mystic feeling was, in fact, beginning. Old associations, having transcendental objects, were in course of revival, or were coming into renewed prominence. Martinists, Gnostics, Kabbalists, and a score of orders or fraternities of which we vaguely hear about the period of the French Revolution, began to manifest great activity; periodicals of a mystical tendency—not spiritualistic, not neo-theosophical, but Hermetic, Kabbalistic, and theurgic—were established, and met with success; books which had grievously weighted the shelves of their publishers for something like a quarter of a century were suddenly in demand, and students of distinction on this side of the channel were attracted towards the new centre. The interest was intelligible to professed mystics; the doctrine of transcendentalism has never had but one adversary, which is the density of the intellectual subject, and wherever the subject clarifies, there is idealism in philosophy and mysticism in religion. Moreover, on the part of mystics, especially here in England, the way of that revival had been prepared carefully, and there could be no astonishment that it came, and none, too, that it was accompanied, as it is

accompanied almost invariably, by much that does not belong to it in the way of transcendental phenomena. When, therefore, the rumours of Black Magic, diabolism, and the abuse of occult forces began to circulate, there was little difficulty in attributing some foundation to the report.

A distinguished man of letters, M. Huysman, who has passed out of Zolaism in the direction of transcendental religion, is, in a certain sense, the discoverer of modern Satanism. Under the thinnest disguise of fiction, he gives in his romance of *La Bas*, an incredible and untranslatable picture of sorcery, sacrilege, black magic, and nameless abominations, secretly practised in Paris. Possessing a brilliant reputation, commanding a wide audience, and with a psychological interest attaching to his own personality, which more than literary excellence infuses a contagious element into private views and impressions, he has given currency to the Question of Lucifer, has promoted it from obscurity into prominence, and has made it the vogue of the moment. It is true that, by his vocation of novelist, he is suspected of inventing his facts, and Dr "Papus," president of the influential Martinist group in French occultism, states quite plainly that the doors of the mystic fraternities have been closed in his face, so that he can know nothing, and his opinions are consequently indifferent. I have weighed these points carefully, but unless the mystic fraternities are connected with diabolism, which Papus would most rightly deny, the exclusion does not remove the opportunity of first-hand knowledge concerning the practice of Satanism, and, "brilliant imagination" apart, M. Huysman has proved quite recently that he is in mortal earnest by his preface to a historical treatise on "Satanism and Magic," the work of a literary disciple, Jules Bois. In a criticism, which for general soberness and lucidity does not leave much to be desired,

he there affirms that a number of persons, not specially distinguished from the rest of the world by the mark of the beast in their foreheads, are “devoted in secret to the operations of Black Magic, communicate or seek to communicate with Spirits of Darkness, for the attainment of ambition, the accomplishment of revenge, the satisfaction of their passions, or some other form of ill-doing.” He affirms also that there are facts which cannot be concealed and from which only one deduction can be made, namely, that the existence of Satanism is undeniable.

To understand the first of these facts I must explain that the attempt to form a partnership with the lost angels of orthodox theology, which attempt constitutes Black Magic, has, in Europe at least, been invariably connected with sacrilege. By the hypothesis of demonology, Satan is the enemy of Christ, and to please Satan the sorcerer must outrage Christ, especially in his sacraments. The facts are as follow:—(a) continuous, systematic, and wholesale robberies of consecrated hosts from Catholic Churches, and this not as a consequence of importing the vessels of the sanctuary, which are often of trifling value and often left behind. The intention of the robbery is therefore to possess the hosts, and their future profanation is the only possible object. Now, before it can be worth while to profane the Eucharist, one must believe in the Real Presence, and this is acknowledged by only two classes, the many who love Christ and some few who hate Him. But He is not profaned, at least not intentionally, by His lovers; hence the sacrilege is committed by His enemies in chief, namely, practisers of Black Magic. It is difficult, I think, to escape from that position; and I should add that sacramental outrages of this astonishing kind, however deeply they may be deplored by the Church, are concealed rather than paraded, and as it is

difficult to get at the facts, it may be inferred that they are not exaggerated, at least by the Church; (b) The occasional perpetration of certain outrageous crimes, including murder and other abominations, in which an element of Black Magic has been elicited by legal tribunals. But these are too isolated in place and too infrequent in time to be evidence for Satanic associations or indications of a prevalent practice. They may therefore be released from the custody of the present inquiry to come up for judgment when called on; (c) The existence of a society of Palladists, or professors of certain doctrines termed Palladism, as demonstrated, *inter alia*, by the publication of a periodical review in its interests.

M. Huysman's facts, therefore, resolve into acts of sacrilege, indicating associations existing for the purpose of sacrilege, which purpose must, however, be regarded as a means and not an end, and the end in question is to enter into communication with devils. Independently of M. Huysman, I believe there is no doubt about the sacrilege. It is a matter of notoriety that in 1894 two ciboria, containing one hundred consecrated hosts, were carried off by an old woman from the cathedral of Notre Dame under circumstances which indicate that the vessels were not the objects of the larceny. Similar depredations are said to have increased in an extraordinary manner during recent years, and have occurred in all parts of France. No less than thirteen churches belonging to the one diocese of Orleans were despoiled in the space of twelve months, and in the diocese of Lyons the archbishop recommended his clergy to transform the tabernacles into strong boxes. The departments of Aude, Isère, Tarn, Gard, Nièvre, Loiret, Yonne, Haute-Garonne, Somme, Le Nord, and the Dauphiny have been in turn the scene of outrage. Nor are the

abominations in question confined to France: Rome, Liguria, Salerno have also suffered, while so far off as the Island of Mauritius a peculiarly revolting instance occurred in 1895.

I am not able to say that the personal researches of the French novelist have proceeded beyond the statistics of sacrilege, which, however, he has collected carefully, and these in themselves constitute a strong presumption. M. Huysman is exhaustive in fiction and reticent in essay-writing, yet he gives us to understand explicitly that the infamous Canon Docre of *La Bas* is actually living in Belgium, that he is the leader of a “demoniac clan,” and, like the Count de St Germain, is in frequent terror of the possibilities of the life to come. An interviewer has represented M. Huysman as stating that his information was derived from a person who was himself a Satanist, but the revelations disturbed the sect, and the communication ceased, though the author had originally been welcomed “as one of their own.” But it is clear to my own mind that for his descriptions of the orgies which take place at the assemblies of modern black magicians, M. Huysman is mainly indebted to documents which have been placed in his hands by existing disciples of the illuminé Eugene Vintras, and the “Dr Johannes” of *La Bas*. Vintras was the founder of a singular thaumaturgic sect, incorporating the aspirations of the Saviours of Louis XVII.; he obtained some notoriety about the year 1860, and an account of his claims and miracles will be found in Éliphas Lévi’s *Histoire de la Magie*, in the same writer’s *Clef des Grands Mystères*, and in Jules Bois’ *Petites Religions de Paris*. He left a number of manuscripts behind him, recounting his life-long combats with the priests of black magic—a series of fervid narratives which savour strongly of hallucination, but highly picturesque, and in some quarters accepted quite seriously.

In like manner, concerning the existence of Satanic associations, and especially the Palladium, M. Huysman admittedly derives his knowledge from published sources. We may take it, therefore, that he speaks from an accidental and extrinsic acquaintance, and he is therefore insufficient in himself to create a question of Satanism; he indicates rather than establishes that there is a question, and to learn its scope and nature we must have recourse to the witnesses who claim to have seen for themselves. These are of two kinds, namely, the spy and the seceder—the witness who claims to have investigated the subject at first hand with a view to its exposure, and those who have come forward to say that they once were worshippers of Lucifer, worshippers of Satan, operators of Black Magic, or were at least connected with associations which exist for these purposes, who have now, however, suspended communication, and are stating what they know. In the first class we find only Doctor Bataille; in the second, Diana Vaughan, Jean Kostka, Domenico Margiotta, and Leo Taxil.

Finally, we have, as stated in the preface, some testimony from writers representing the interests of the Latin Church, in a special manner, and speaking with the authority of that Church. The most important of these is the late Archbishop Meurin. At the same time, M. Huysman apart—who occupies much the same quasi-religious position as that which attached a fleeting interest to the personality of Mr W. H. Mallock—all writers and all witnesses are, or assume to be, at the present time, convinced and zealous Roman Catholics.

I have already stated that the purpose of Black Magic is simply and obviously to communicate with devils, and if we interrogate our sources of knowledge as to the object of such communication, it must be admitted that the response

is vague. Perhaps the object will best be defined as the reinforcement of human ability by diabolical power and intelligence for the operation of evil along the lines of individual desire and ambition. For the fulfilment of what is good man aspires towards God, and to fulfil evil he attempts to conspire with Satan.

It must, however, be observed that modern devil-worship, as exposed by its French experts, has two aspects, corresponding to the distinction already laid down in my preface. There is (*a*) devil-worship pure and simple, being an attempt to communicate with evil spirits, admitting that they are evil; (*b*) the cultus of Lucifer, star of the morning, as distinguished from Satan, on the hypothesis that he is a good spirit. It will be seen very readily that the essence of diabolism is wanting in the second division, namely, the Satanic intention, so that it belongs really to another category, though the classification may be accepted for the moment to prevent dispute at the beginning of a somewhat complex inquiry. The first division is, in any case, Satanism proper, and its adepts are termed Satanists; those of the second division are, on the other hand, Luciferians, Palladists, &c. The two orders are further distinguished as unorganised and as organised diabolism. The cultus of Satan is supposed to be mainly practised by isolated persons or small and obscure groups; that of Lucifer is centralised in at least one great and widespread institution—in other words, the first is rare and sporadic, the second a prevalent practice. We accordingly hear little of the one, while the testimonies which have been collected are concerned exclusively with the other. It is possible, in fact, to dismiss Satanism of the primary division in a few words, because materials are wanting for its history. It is founded on orthodox Christianity; it acknowledges that the devil is a

lost angel, but it affirms that the God of the Christians has deceived His believers, has betrayed the cause of humanity, has exacted the suppression of the nature with which He Himself has endowed it; they have therefore abandoned a cruel and tyrannical Master, and have gone over in despair to His enemy.

Satanism of the second division, its principles and its origin, will be described in the second chapter.