Introduction

Setting the Stage

The Birth of a Character

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Sympathy for the Devil

The character of Satan is problematic; he is the "weak place of the popular religion, the vulnerable belly of the crocodile."[1] Current popular culture makes Satan a subject of its attention. Films featuring the devil are successful blockbusters, books on the occult sell well, and Satan appears in various music genres, ranging from American folk to heavy metal. Outside popular culture, however, and in particular in the theological discourse, there is little "Sympathy for the Devil."[2] The idea of Satan cannot be adequately expressed and discussed in terms of theology. The Christian system of monotheism does not allow a systematic and theological approach to the existence of Satan. In a dualistic worldview, the figure of Satan might have its own system of thoughts and doctrines; indeed, the Gnostics developed their own idea of a system of good and evil in which the personified evil played an essential role. Orthodox Christianity, however, has always denied a dualistic approach to cosmology and avoids elaborating a divine antagonist. Satan refers to experiences of evil, pain, and suffering. Most systematic definitions of Satan or the devil in the tradition of Christian theology come to the conclusion that Satan is a metaphor for the experience of relational evil and temptation, the willful denial of God, the attempt to deny the divine world order. This study approaches Satan as a literary figure, against the

1. Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Essay on the Devil and Devils," 265.
2. The opening track of Jagger and Richards, *Beggars Banquet*.

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imagistic or now cinematic dimension of Satan. With the preponderance of visual imagery in our late modern period, why is it that the literary Satan keeps emerging? And what can the literary figure of Satan contribute to the understanding of evil? I argue that the literary is the only means by which Satan can survive, and that as a result of the changing literary (and cultural, philosophical, and theological) landscape and our changing perceptions of evil as we move into the twenty-first century, the satanic character must also change.

Satanic figures exist in the oral and written traditions of many cultures. Although varying in appearance and role many attributes are repeated in a great variety of religious myths due to syncretism or mutual influence during cultural developments. For this study, I will focus on the "Christian Satan," that is the concept of Satan developed in the system of Christian theology and modified through folklore and story in the wider context of Western Europe.[3]

The contemporary systematic theology of the Christian churches largely seeks to avoid any mention of Satan as a person:

> Any careless talk of a "persona of evil" reduces—as some examples from the history of piety account for alarmingly—the trans-individual power of evil to a scary or ridiculous "divine" antagonist.[4]

According to this theological approach personifying Satan can lead to simplifications of the dilemma of evil. The quote highlights that the problem of the definition of Satan lies in the terminology of the discourse, semantically and ontologically. Asking the question "Does Satan *really* exist?" inevitably assumes an empirical existence that requires proof through scientific process. There are, it seems, only two possible ways of addressing the issue of Satan for contemporary Christian theology. One is to interpret the satanic figure as a mere symbol for the temptations of the world, the other is to

3. This study will only very marginally refer to the influences of "personified evils" in other cultures and religions. The complex discussion of Satan's presence in the pastoral or liturgical reality of the Christian churches can only be touched upon since such an analysis would go beyond the scope of this thesis and refers to many areas outwith the literary perspective taken here. See here, for example, a study on the contemporary talk of the devil in German churches: Leimgruber, *Kein Abschied vom Teufel.*

4. "Eine unbedachte Rede von der Person des Bösen (Teufel) reduziert zu leicht—wie manche Phänomene der Frömmigkeitsgeschichte erschreckend belegen—die . . . überindividuelle Macht des Bösen auf die (grausige oder lächerliche) Figur eines 'göttlichen' Gegenspielers" (own translation). Schneider, *Handbuch der Dogmatik*, 1, 233.

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assert the personal existence of Satan. Satan as the face of evil, however, evokes interest and fascination and cannot be dismissed.[5]

The catechism of the Catholic Church from 1993 asserts the personal aspect of evil:

> Evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (*dia-bolos*) is the one who "throws himself across" God's plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ.[6]

We find ourselves in a situation where the talk of Satan is theologically and pastorally difficult, but the interest in his personal existence unbroken. A number of studies focus on Satan and his purpose in cultural discourse: Satan has for a long time been of interest for biblical scholars, systematic theologians, anthropologists, sociologists, and philosophers.[7] I suggest that approaching him as a narrative figure could create a new blueprint for an academic discourse on Satan. His realm then, his dwelling place, is therefore not theology as such, but literature and art. It is only here that Satan is given a face and a story:

> All art depends on opposition between God and the devil, reason and energy. The true poet (the good poet) is necessarily the partisan of energy, rebellion, and desire, and is opposed to passivity, obedience, and the authority of reason, laws, and institutions.[8]

Satan's first appearance as a serpent in the Garden of Eden encapsulates the idea this study will investigate further: Satan's essence resides in the story; it is through narrative his character is understood, but it is also his character that drives the story forward. Before its identity was shaped

5. In his article on new approaches to the faces of evil, Stefan Orth observes a growing interest in the theological and philosophical debate around evil and the devil ("Antlitzlos und unbesprechbar?").

6. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part 4, Section 2, Article 3.vii. 2851.

7. The standard work in English on the history of Satan in the Jewish and Christian traditions is Jeffrey Russell's edition in 5 volumes (1977–2006). The most recent biography of Satan has been written by Henry Ansgar Kelly in 2006: *Satan: A Biography.* On the topic of Satan in literature, I refer to *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (1989), published by Neil Forsyth who also more recently wrote *The Satanic Epic* (2003). Another recent publication is *The Devil as Muse* by Fred Parker (2011). Jürgen Bründl's *Masken des Bösen* focuses on the dogmatics of the devil (2000), while Ute Leimgruber's *Kein Abschied vom Teufel. Eine Untersuchung zur gegenwärtigen Rede vom Teufel im Volk Gottes* examines pastoral and liturgical aspects of the contemporary talk on Satan (2004).

8. Ostriker, "Dancing at the Devil's Party," 580.

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by Jewish and Christian theologians, the role of the tempter is referred to as that of *nachash,* translated by the Septuagint as "serpent" and later associated with Satan.[9] It is the force that enters into the innocent state of Eden to tempt and promote disharmony. When reading the Bible chronologically, following the Christian canon of the Scripture, we encounter the serpent in Genesis 3:1 as the first real character of the narrative.

> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?"[10]

Following the biblical text, the reader learns that the serpent is a creation of God, that it is subtle or crafty, and that it intends to challenge Eve to transgress the divine order. Christian theology has connected the serpent of Genesis 3 with Satan, the great tempter and enemy of humankind.[11] The Augustinian reading of Genesis 3 established that the logic of Eden is complicated by the appearance of Satan and identified the fall of humankind as the origin of all sin. The text gives us no explanation for the motivation of the serpent, but the reader understands the destructive potential of its opening question. Satan sets out to challenge the existence of humankind in Eden, and at the same time, his appearance develops the story. In the Hebrew original the terms נחשׁ *nachash* (serpent; related: hiss, sting, to hiss and whisper as in enchantment, to entice, or to seduce) and ערום *arum* (subtle, crafty, using craft for defense)[12] are attributed to the serpent. The characters of the man and the woman, however, remain undeveloped. Yet the serpent with its specific characteristics is therefore recognizable as a (literary) character.

The story of the fall exhibits the pattern of transgression from innocence to self-awareness; Satan plays an acutely emancipatory role in

9. In the ancient Near East the serpent symbolized life, death, wisdom, nature, chaos, and fertility. It was only later, in post-biblical thought, that the serpent became identified as Satan or one of Satan's minions. The snake plays a prominent role in the literature and cults of the ancient world, echoes of which are found in Israel's religion: "A serpent features in the epic of Gilgamesch and robs Enkidu of immortality. The creature's ability to shed its old skin led to the widespread belief that it had learnt the secret of renewing its youth. Furthermore, the serpent was associated with the fertility cult—with the worship of Astarte and with Baal, who was often iconographically represented in serpent form" (Hayter, *The New Eve in Christ*, 104).

10. Gen 3:1.

11. In chapter 3, I will discuss the development of the satanic figure and also the connection between the serpent and Satan.

12. For an exegesis of Gen 3:1, please see Robbins, *Genesis 1–3 in the History of Exegesis*, and Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*. The adjective also means "more naked"; the same root that is used in the word that describes Adam and Eve's situation after the fall.

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the story of the fall. He encourages Eve to eat from the forbidden tree and when she and Adam do so, they see and understand: "Then the eyes of both were opened and they knew that they were naked."[13] This transgression, later interpreted as original sin, can be seen as an innate part of the human condition that enables a free and conscious decision of the person.[14] This is where the literary perspective becomes the central viewpoint. The idea that human beings need to face themselves, and accept their inner fears and weaknesses before they are able to become fully conscious of their own identity is a common narrative arc. First published in 1667, it was John Milton's seventeenth-century epic poem *Paradise Lost* that gave the serpent of Genesis 3 a face and developed the text into a character study of Satan, weaving together the Christian tradition and myths from over 1,500 years. It was a study that would influence the image of Satan in literature and art immensely over the next four centuries.

> As to the devil, he owes everything to Milton. Dante and Tasso present us with a very gross idea of him: Milton divested him of a sting, hoofs, and horns; clothes him with the sublime grandeur of a graceful but tremendous spirit.[15]

In his revolutionary nature Milton's Satan is a role model for the Romantics; he is also regarded as the inspiration behind many later works. And it is this revolutionary aspect of Satan's character, his urging of human beings to gain knowledge and to transcend boundaries, that to date appears to have no place in theological debate.

This central aspect of the conflict of good and evil, natural versus social existence within a human being, is addressed through literary renditions that go back to the biblical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. The biblical references to Satan are ambiguous. The Old Testament only speaks of the Satan in terms of the adversary; the New Testament refers to demons, the tempter in the desert, and the great dragon, "the ancient serpent called the devil or Satan,"[16] but Satan in the New Testament is not a single entity. He only takes his form through creative human imagination. Satan is referred to in different narratives and used as an umbrella term that brings together medical, religious, and mystical experiences. The images and characterizations of

13. Gen 3:7.

14. As Paul Ricoeur confirms: "Henceforth the evil infinite of human desire—always something else, always something more—which animates the movement of civilizations, the appetite for pleasure, for possessions, for power, for knowledge—seems to constitute the reality of man" (*The Symbolism of Evil*, 254).

15. Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Essay on the Devil and Devils," 264–75.

16. Rev 12:9.

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Satan derive from narratives, gathered throughout centuries. They have been influenced by ancient mythology, by cultural models, and by spiritual experiences. There is no authoritative body of text that we can refer to when we speak of Satan. It is all in the story of human imagination, the story of the archenemy, the opponent, the fiend. In theological terms, Satan is only *accepted* as tempter, evil doer, or dark force in every human life, never *believed in*. Talking about the creation of Satan essentially requires a definition of his existence. Without initiating an ontological discussion on the meaning of the term "being" it is necessary to think about this question. If one wants to take narrative and literature seriously, the only possible answer is: Yes, Satan does exist. "Literature is either the essential or nothing," says Georges Bataille in *Literature and Evil*.[17] For the purpose of this work, I have to assume that Satan does exist through literature and that his presence in narratives is real.

Satan as a Literary Character

While he was writing *Doctor Faustus* between 1943 and 1947, Thomas Mann had a companion at his side: a black poodle called Nico. Is it a coincidence that Thomas Mann had a black poodle accompanying him during his process of writing his version of the old Faust myth? Or was it maybe Mephistopheles himself, appearing to Thomas Mann and inspiring or even enabling him to complete the book that he later called his "Lebensbeichte," because the characters of Serenus Zeitbloom and Adrian Leverkühn resemble the authors in various ways?

The devil inspires authors, poets, artists, and musicians—his true nature in art seems to be creative, even though he is usually associated with destruction. If we want to believe William Blake, the true poet is of the devil's party without knowing it. The various accounts of the devil in literature and art would certainly promote the theory that Satan himself is working on the side of the artist. While the biblical canon leaves us with many open questions about Satan, the literary canon gives more than enough definitions and interpretations of the devil. The devil is the master of the game of illusion, he wears different masks, comes in different disguises—he sometimes appears as a man, sometimes as a woman, sometimes he looks at us as an animal, and sometimes from the mirror. Generally, the devil has inspired the creativity of human beings more than any other character that finds its roots in the Scriptures.

17. Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, ix.

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We will see in the following chapters that Satan does not have a being of his own. His nature is parasitic, his existence defined by negative terms, and he has no dwelling place of his own, but uses human beings as temporary hosts. His existence is manifested in his actions; we understand evil through the evildoer and Satan's existence becomes immanent in human relationships that are influenced by the idea of mimetic desire and revenge. We do not understand Satan in his ontological existence, but through his expressions. His character is approached through art; we understand his being through stories and myths. The "traditional" faces of Satan are known to us through folk narratives, mythology, and proverbs and find their sources in biblical and pre-biblical narratives. Satan is not a theological character—attempts to formalize his existence in a theological framework have failed in a similar fashion to any attempt to portray God in narrative. Satan's dwelling place is the narrative, the story, this is his kingdom. One of Satan's many names, given to him in the Scriptures, is the "prince of this world"—he exists in our narratives and through our narratives. He only takes his form through human creative imagination.

The relationship between Satan and literature is symbiotic: Satan can only exist through literature and literature needs Satan to keep the story alive. This relationship develops its own dynamic: once created, the figure of Satan becomes independent and eludes any attempt at abstract definition. It seems that at times, the writer or narrator loses control, needing to admit that the satanic character escaped the creative parent to act out the ascribed character traits without restraint. One might argue this is the case with any literary figure—and indeed with any creation: the creator can set the seed, can draft and plan the creature, but once it comes to life, he can merely be a spectator. The same goes for the satanic figure in story and narrative, but there is something more to it than to any other literary figure, as lively and present he or she might be: if we create Satan, we play with the fire—we evoke the expression of evil and the presence of the eternal denier. "*Mal' den Teufel nicht an die Wand*" is an old German proverb that translates as "Do not paint the devil on the wall" or "Speak of the devil and the devil shows up." This warning refers to old beliefs in the invocation of the devil. The temptation to call upon him is strong, particularly amongst artists. To call him or to create him is easy, but it is certainly more difficult to be rid of him again. The solution lies again in the narrative: in the Brother Grimm's fairy tale, to know the name of the demon *Rumpelstiltskin* saves the child of the miller's daughter. Knowing the name gives power and control, and ultimately allows one to defeat the enemy.

The figure of Satan has constantly changed in the traditions of Western art and literature, but has always played a role. He first appears in our

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tradition in the Hebrew Bible, most poignantly in Genesis and the book of Job, and he then plays his role in the New Testament. After his narrative premier, Satan became a bit reclusive and indeed, until the thirteenth century, he was defined as "an obscure force subject to divine omnipotence"[18] and had not yet developed characteristics. The faces given to him in popular beliefs and myths were versatile, strongly influenced by regional traditions and mixed with the world of magic and sorcery. It was only with scholasticism, the political and ideological development at the end of the Middle Ages, and the opening of the world with the urge to explain and systemize that Satan became a face with clear features, a face that has influenced Western culture and art until today. The biography of Satan was written by the church fathers who tried to incorporate various figures of opposition and different tales into one coherent system of theology and mythology: "On the face of it, the serpent of one tale had little to do with the rebel of a second, the tyrant of a third, the tempter of a fourth, the lustful voyeur of a fifth, or the mighty dragon of a sixth."[19]

We are dealing with at least two main narrative strands that we need to consider when discussing at the story of Satan. Having identified Satan as the opponent or the adversary, we encounter Satan in an *exterior* and an *interior* battle—the former being represented in the cosmic battle of the book of Revelation, the latter being represented in the temptation in the wilderness. This work is interested most in the personal struggle with the opponent, the post-Cartesian Satan. It is not the devil of the Middle Ages who led the cosmic battle, but the one who emerges post Enlightenment. It is the Satan who whispers in human ears—the one who offers knowledge, the evil motivation in us that is described in Paul's letter to the Romans:

> We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.[20]

18. Muchembled, *A History of the Devil*, 12.
19. Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic*, 5.
20. Rom 7.

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It was Milton who introduced the aspect of the internal struggle into the narrative of Satan's rebellious combat. *Paradise Lost* is arguably the first work of literature that shows concern for the inner struggle of the adversary and acts as a character study of the leader of the rebellion. It is this "inner dragon" that we are mainly concerned with here, but that distinction finds its origins much later in the story.

Narrative and Metanarrative

> So, theologically redundant, I was passed into the hands of folklore.[21]

Spufford's statement confirms that the key to understanding Satan's existence lies in the narrative. Without doubt, Satan has been an immensely popular subject for Western literature throughout the centuries. However, where do we begin without becoming entangled in the multiple strands of the devil's literary career? Since the purpose is not to create an anthology, it seems reasonable to select the text according to certain themes and topics that are relevant to the discussion. The method applied to the selected texts in this work is a juxtaposition of theological and philosophical ideas within literary texts. The particular selection of primary texts is thus necessarily subjective, partial, and incomplete.

Initially this study was inspired by Woland, the devil in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* set in 1930s Russia. He is undoubtedly one of the key satanic figures in modern literature; Mephisto in Goethe's *Faust* and Satan in Milton's *Paradise Lost* also belong to the core canon of satanic characters. But alongside these older, well-known, and valued characters, there are some new images of the "old enemy" that are worthy of consideration, since they help shed some light on the ever-transient figure of Satan in contemporary thought whilst reflecting the nature of a postmodern society. The chosen texts for this work are all novels by European or Northern American authors and portray the figure of Satan in recent and contemporary fiction. They illustrate a consistency in the assignment of certain satanic attributes that give witness to a rich symbolic tradition in the depiction of Satan.

The novel as a literary genre is the most appropriate for the subject of Satan. First of all, the novel is a fictional narrative and clearly marked as that. Second, the novel is character driven and has a developmental aspect, and therefore provides the best dwelling place for the satanic, which is constantly changing, dynamic, and open for interpretation. Third, the novel provides

21. Spufford, *The Vintage Book of the Devil*, 11.

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intimate reading situations. As is seen later, Satan thrives on the personal and relational aspect of evil and the novel requires an intimate relationship between author and reader and at the same time offers an insight into a character's life that goes beyond the descriptive. The term "interdisciplinary" in the context of theology and literature does not simply imply that the story illustrates religious morals, but rather refers to the mutual influence and active interrelation between the two. One cannot engage with theology without understanding text and narrative. Investigating the relation between the two disciplines is more than referring to the tradition of religious texts, songs, and theological abstracts. *Novels* that deal with religious imagery use them not only to "freight their stories with vestiges of a once powerful and compelling past, earnestly or ironically," but they are "asking questions of the nature of religion itself, and rewriting religious understanding out of the cultural interchange between what has been, what is presently, and what can be in the future, an interchange which works across manifold and overlapping spheres of cultural interest and expression."[22] The interdisciplinary approach can be seen as an attempt to write a non-foundational[23] theology in relation to the problem of evil. Traditionally, theology offers a systematic approach to the content of faith, while literature is often regarded as dangerous, subversive, and chaotic.[24] In a world that accepts the death of God and preaches the downfall of institutionalized religion, it seems difficult to approach the question of evil with the traditional theological methodology. For many theological questions, and especially for questions relating to evil, an interdisciplinary approach offers an alternative to systematic theology. Any work in theology and literature tries to facilitate the "understanding of the nature of theology through literature, or even theology itself as poetry of faith."[25]

For those working in the field of theology and religion, the fundamental shift in the transition to modernity in Western culture, including the disappearance of God, is regarded as a "theological seachange that is perceived in literature long before it is even acknowledged or articulated by the theologians themselves. Theology arises from the corpse of organized religion."[26] It is still theology, but disconnected from any ecclesial tradition

22. Hass, "The Future of English Literature and Theology," 849.

23. The term "antifoundational" describes any theology that does not build its theory around an unquestionable foundation. I use the term non-foundational to suggest an alternative to a systematic theology concerned with the construct of a rational system. (See also Mills, "The Pneumatological Ekklesia.")

24. Jasper, "The Study of Literature and Theology," 24.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., 25.

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and therefore without the necessity of a system of salvation. For those involved in the field of theology and literature, reading a play, a story, or a novel is a necessary step towards religious understanding. When it comes to the question of the existence of evil, the answer cannot be found in an onto-theological explanation, but needs to be searched for in the field of imagination, expression, and phenomenology.

I argue that evil cannot be understood in its being, but in its expression. German theologian Dorothee Sölle referred to this concept as *realization*: a worldly correlation of what has been given or promised in the language of religion.[27] The form of expression is manifold and includes all forms of visual and expressive art; this work, however, focuses on narrative and literature, the spoken and written word. Historically, the dialogue between religion and literature as an academic discipline has its beginning in the 1940s and 1950s. T. S. Eliot's essay *Religion and Literature* (1935) was one of the first systematic approaches to the subject. The relationship between the two, however, is older and can be either approached from a historical or an abstract point of view:

> Where theology of all sorts, Lutheran, Tridentine, Islamic, Calvinist and, one is tempted to say, Marxist, Freudian or "structuralist," has always differed from literature is in the authority it claims for its ultimate source or sources. "Literature" must surely remain oblique. It has always probed the meaning of human experience with some imaginative vision of how it should be evaluated and, if necessary and possible, changed.[28]

The translations of the Scriptures into the vernacular have acted as a stepping stone between text and theology. But for theology, dealing with text has always been the primary point of reference:

> A serious commitment to literary critical method may, sometimes paradoxically, lead us back to truths which theology has forgotten or has failed to articulate; . . . the forms of literature and art can often quite spontaneously illuminate in startling ways the divine work of formation and redemption; and . . . theology, critically and rigorously pursued, in its turn, continues to offer a systematic and necessary reminder of the things of ultimate concern in literature and literary criticism.[29]

27. Sölle, *Realization*, 29.
28. Levi, "The Relationship between Literature and Theology," 17.
29. Jasper, "The Limits of Formalism and the Theology of Hope," 9.

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The traditional academic discipline of theology is still very much concerned with a certain religion or even denomination. Any interdisciplinary approach to theology and literature offers a new way of exercising theology that is more open to creativity and less restricted by frameworks of institutions and traditions. When it comes to addressing the big questions of theology on the background of modern and postmodern thought, it seems important not to be restricted by rigid and inflexible dogmatic systems but to use the full potential of theology, which is in its deepest nature inquisitive.

Despite the interdisciplinary approach, this work is situated in and feels committed to Christian theology. It attempts to retell Satan's story through literature, not to explain or justify the existence of evil, but to allow the expression of the "Unspeakable" and therefore defeat the "deathly wordlessness" of pain and suffering. But logos had never been able to provide human beings with the sense of significance that they seem to require. It had been myth that had given structure and meaning to life, yet as modernization progressed and logos achieved such spectacular results, mythology was increasingly discredited.[30] In a study concerned with the relation between literature and theology, the introduction of the philosophical terms of μύθος and λόγος appears supportive of the discussion. Both terms come from Greek philosophy and have been transported into the world of Christian religion and narrative. The words have been interpreted in different ways and have been used to characterize opposite or conflicting approaches in religion, literature, and science. This investigation applies them to describe the problems associated with the satanic character in theology. The term μύθος originates from the Indo-European root *mudh* (to think, to reflect) and initially defined thought in the sense of the content of a speech or conversation. In early Greek philosophy, the term referred to a story or narrative. During the period of Attic Greek, the term μύθος was used to describe stories about gods. Only with Aristotle did the term μύθος become equivalent to fiction: for Aristotle, μύθος is imitation. The term λόγος was introduced into Western philosophy around 540 BCE by Heraclitus, referring in his usage to the basic concepts of all things. In the philosophy of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, the term λόγος described the ability of human beings to use their reason and the knowledge of the world. Christian theology develops around the idea of the λόγος. It follows the logos theology that has been defined in the first councils of the church, which has its foundation in the prologue of the Gospel of John.[31]

30. Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, 122.

31. "Christianity must always remember that it is the religion of the Logos. It is faith in the 'Creator Spiritus', in the Creator Spirit, from which proceeds everything that exists. Today, this should be precisely its philosophical strength, in so far as the problem

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It was not until Plato and Aristotle that the definitions of μύθος and λόγος were separated. Until then both had been used in a complementary fashion:

> There was, therefore, a contradiction in Western thought. Greek *logos* seemed to oppose mythology, but philosophers continued to use myth, either seeing it as the primitive forerunner of rational thought or regarding it as indispensable to religious discourse.[32]

Christianity, similar to Judaism and Islam, believes in a God who has played an active role in world history. It is due to the uneasy attitude towards myth in the Western world that theologians have tried to make their religions conform to the rational standards of science:

> Western modernity was the child of logos. It was founded on a different economic basis. . . . The heroes of Western modernity would be technological or scientific geniuses of logos, not the spiritual geniuses inspired by mythos. . . . Unlike myth, logos must correspond to facts; it is essentially practical; it is the mode of thought we use when we want to get something done; it constantly looks ahead to achieve a greater control over our environment or to discover something fresh.[33]

The dualism of "myth" and "reason" has been problematic, especially since the nineteenth century, when myth was seen as an obsolete mode of thought. The rational critique of myth begun by the pre-Socratics and furthered by Euhemerus (ca. 300 BCE) was readily accepted by Christians until it came home to roost with the contrast between the mythical Christ and the historical Jesus drawn by theologians in the nineteenth century.[34] In

is whether the world comes from the irrational, and reason is not, therefore, other than a 'sub-product', on occasion even harmful of its development or whether the world comes from reason, and is, as a consequence, its criterion and goal. The Christian faith inclines toward this second thesis, thus having, from the purely philosophical point of view, really good cards to play, despite the fact that many today consider only the first thesis as the only modern and rational one par excellence. However, a reason that springs from the irrational, and that is, in the final analysis, itself irrational, does not constitute a solution for our problems. Only creative reason, which in the crucified God is manifested as love, can really show us the way. In the so necessary dialogue between secularists and Catholics, we Christians must be very careful to remain faithful to this fundamental line: to live a faith that comes from the 'Logos', from creative reason, and that, because of this, is also open to all that is truly rational" (Ratzinger, "Cardinal Ratzinger on Europe's Crisis of Culture").

32. Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, 102–3.
33. Ibid., 121.
34. Olshewsky, "Between Science and Religion," 244.

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the history of Christian theology, it was mainly the work of David Friedrich Strauß in the nineteenth century and then Rudolf Bultmann in the twentieth century that asked for a complete demythologizing of the New Testament and consequently of the Christian faith.[35] Bultmann argued for an existential, i.e., anthropological understanding of the myth instead of a cosmological reading of it.[36]

In postmodern thought, myth has experienced a revival. Many thinkers rejected the opposition of myth and reason or science, arguing that human beings are myth-making creatures, and that myth carries as much truth as empirical or rational science:

> If it is written and read with serious attention, a novel, like a myth or any great work of art, can become an initiation that helps us to make a painful rite of passage from one phase of life, one state of mind, to another. A novel, like a myth, teaches us to see the world differently; it shows us how to look into our own hearts and to see our world from a perspective that goes beyond our own self-interest. If professional religious leaders cannot instruct us in mythical lore, our artists and creative writers can perhaps step into this priestly role and bring fresh insight to our lost and damaged world.[37]

Generally, it is acknowledged that the study of religion should not be an entirely rational exercise, as it concerns the study of "experiences that are obscure and ineffable, because they are beyond speech, and relate to the inner rather than the external word."[38]

Satan is a mythical figure: Almost all characterizations of him do not come from biblical sources, but from ancient, pre-medieval, and medieval mythology.[39] Satan's birthplace is shrouded in myth; his material form has been created through narrative and story. Could we then argue that Jesus

35. See Strauß, *Das Leben Jesu*, and Bultmann, "Neues Testament und Mythologie," 15–48.

36. "The actual sense of the mythos is not to give an objective worldview, but it is an expression of how man understands himself in his world. The mythos needs to be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically or better existentially." Own translation of "Der eigentliche Sinn des Mythos ist nicht der, ein objektives Weltbild zu geben; vielmehr spricht sich in ihm aus, wie sich der Mensch selbst in seiner Welt versteht; der Mythos will nicht kosmologisch, sondern anthropologisch—besser: existential interpretiert werden" (Bultmann, "Neues Testament und Mythologie," 22).

37. Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth*, 149

38. Ibid., 109. In Greek Orthodox Christianity, theology was only valid if pursued together with prayer and liturgy.

39. Cf. Part One, chapter 2.

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Christ is λόγος and Satan is μύθος? One claims the authority of a canon of Scripture and the other is the creation of human imagination? The cosmological fight in Revelation 19–20 could suggest this; the vision describes the faithful and true rider on a white horse, whose name is Word of God and he defeats the Beast, traditionally associated with Satan, and throws it into the lake of fire. However, the answer is not as straightforward as that, since this division can only work in an already existing concept of thought and the rider in the vision is also part of the myth. For many, the story of Jesus Christ is as much myth as the existence of Satan. However, the hesitation and difficulties Christian theologians have in approaching the subject of Satan outside the language of myth shows how little the figure of Satan has to do with any rational model of thought or belief. This study highlights how difficult it has been for Christian theology to incorporate Satan into a systematic concept of faith. Like any mythical figure, Satan develops his greatest power *in the story*, and not in interpretation. His power lies in the symbolism of myth and the retelling of it. Humans are myth-making creatures and Satan is a powerful myth, conveying a great deal about the nature of evil in the context of the individual and the community. The Satanic myth is retold because it carries some truth about the reality of evil that is most effectively expressed in narrative.

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