

Passion and Apathie, glory and shame,
Vain wisdom all, and false Philosophie."
--John Milton, Paradise Lost, ii, 562-65

I, IGNOTUM PER IGNOTIUS

Diabolus is passé and outgrown.
My kingdom is secure, my self unknown.

Truth is my favorite emissary now
In all its forms, unfinished, well-adorned,
And pious pulpits hung with symbolized silk.
I have no need of sophists, atheists,
False prophets and their babbling. I was born
From mutant atoms and the womb of woman
In labor through the centuries of science
And civilizing. Progress is my strength.
Prosperity for some at any length.

I had a hundred native sires whose realms
Were overthrown as Odin, Ares, Thor,
And bumbling Mulciber--best known as Mammon--
Not even Milton knew the rest-- (just think
Of how his epics would have bulged had I
Emerged to tantalize and plague his pen
With my conception's hieroglyphs): They merged,
They all became one traveling salesman-god
Who never thought his wedding rape of Mortal
Mind would bear a thing but vitriol
And violence, a misbegotten heir
Without a crown. My father went his way
Assured of amnesty from Belial,
Imagining his thrones infallible.

I made my mother find and slay my sire,
The clumsy satrap, strutting with his sword
And swilling blood by day-- no match for her,
Her battering ram of reason and religion.
No matter that convulsive cults still bow
Before his sometimes-ghosts-- the throngs perform
Their rituals for me. The masses pay
Me homage, human sacrifice, the scale
So grand the Devil almost died of envy--
An easy victim of my poison kiss
Of practicality. He hadn't dreamed
Of any foe outside the host of heaven.
Thus robbed of might he writhes in toxic torpor.
The hordes, enlightened now, deny him all
Existence, bury him in mythic dust.
The fires of Pandemonium are doused.