



Merlin

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The Birth of Merlin

THE devil was furious and enraged when our Lord had been in hell and had taken out Adam and Eve and others at his pleasure.

And when the demons saw this, they had great fear and great amazement. They gathered together and said: “Who is this one who is surprising and destroying us, so much so that our powers cannot hold him back, nor can we stand against him in any way, but he does everything he likes? We didn’t think that any man could be born of a woman, but that he would

be one of us; and he who is destroying us, how was he born, since we knew no earthly delight in him?”

Another enemy responded and said, “He has destroyed what we thought would be our greatest advantage. Don’t you remember how the prophets said that God would come to earth to save the sinners of Adam and Eve, and we mocked them for saying that, and we inflicted the most severe punishment on them of any people. It seemed to us that it hardly bothered them at all, but they comforted those who were sinners, saying that one would come to deliver them from their bondage and suffering.

“For a long time, they have spoken about Him, and now He has come and taken from us the power to control them. You know that He baptizes them in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and after that, we have no power over them unless they turn back to us by their evil deeds. In this way, He has taken away our power, and even more, He has left His ministers on earth to save them from us every day, as long as they repent and give up their sinful ways and do what they teach, which is out of His great love for humanity and great tenderness. He came down to earth to be born of a woman to save humanity. We have tried Him in every way we could, and when we tried Him, we found no sin in Him. Yet, He was willing to die to save humanity, because He loved humanity so much, and He was willing to suffer great pain to have them back and take them away from our power. Therefore, we should work with great diligence to regain what He has taken away from us in such a way that they may not repent or speak with those who might obtain pardon for them and turn them back to our power.”

In this way, the devils held a great council and said that those who had caused them the most trouble were the ones who told news of His coming to earth: “And they have done us great harm and hindered us, and the more they told about His coming, the more we became angry and upset; and as it seemed, He hastened to come to deliver them from our danger. [But] how could we have a man of our kind who could speak and have our knowledge and skill, and have the same understanding of things that have been done and said, and of things that have passed, and who could be present on earth with the others? For we knew well that such a one could greatly help us deceive His people, just as the prophets deceived us and told us that we would never be able to have been. In the same way, such a one could tell all things that had been done and said, both of what had passed and of things that were to come and be believed by many

people if He were to believe him.” Then they all answered and said that it would be well if such a man could be found, for he would be believed by everyone about everything he said.

Another enemy responded and said, “I have the power to make a woman conceive and bear a child, and I have one who will do everything I want.” And so he undertook this plan, to find a man who would carry out their intentions. They were very foolish when they thought that our Lord would not find out about their scheme and their plan. Thus they left this meeting and agreed to this conclusion; and this enemy who had taken on this plan did not delay but rushed to the woman who was doing his bidding as quickly as he could.

When the older sister realized her sister was gone, she immediately went to the holy man who had taught her the right faith, feeling heavy and sorrowful, making a great commotion and showing her grief. And when this good man saw her so sorrowful, he felt great pity and said to her, “Bless you and commend you to God, for I see you are greatly afraid.” And she replied, “I have good reason to be, for I have lost my sister, who has become a prostitute.” When the good man heard this, he was greatly shocked and said, “The devil is working hard against you, and he won’t stop until he has deceived you, but God will be your help.”

“A sir,” she said, “how can I protect myself from his deceit? For there’s nothing I value more than that he should never have power over me.” The holy man replied, “If you follow my advice, he will never deceive you.” “Absolutely,” she said, “I’ll gladly follow your advice.” “Then,” he said, “don’t you believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that these three are one God in the Trinity, and that God came down to earth and became human for the redemption of humanity, for those who steadfastly believe in Him and keep His commandments?” She replied, “Exactly as you say, I believe. And truly, I pray that God will be my protector and help.

“Now then,” he said, “I beg of you and command you to keep yourself from falling into great anger or wrath, for the devil works most effectively in both men and women when they are in a state of great anger and turmoil. May you yield to the graces of our Lord and all the saints; and at all times, when you go to bed or get up, bless yourself in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and make the sign of the cross on yourself, remembering that He suffered His passion on the cross to save us from the pains of hell. And if you do this, you will have no fear of the devil’s

power. And wherever you sleep at night, make sure you have a light, because the devil hates all light and clarity, and will not come near it.”

The holy man taught the young woman, who was deeply afraid of the devil’s tricks. So she returned home, feeling stable in her faith, humble before God, and compassionate towards the poor people who came to her and said: “It’s no wonder you’re greatly afraid of the suffering that has befallen your father, mother, brother, and sisters. But take good advice and be comforted, because you are rich and have a great inheritance. Therefore, every worthy person will be glad to have you.

She replied, “Lord, keep me in your service, as you know I desperately need it.”

She endured well for two years, so the devil couldn’t deceive her or make her do evil. And he saw that he couldn’t make her forget what the holy man had taught her, no matter how angry she became. Then, on a Saturday evening, her sister came to torment her and make her angry, trying to get her to fall into sin. When her sister arrived, it was late at night, and she brought a large group of prostitutes with her. When she saw her sister, she was furious and said, “Dear sister, as long as you continue to lead such a life, you shouldn’t come here, because you’re causing me a lot of trouble, which I don’t need.

She replied, as if the devil was with her, that she would do even worse and claimed she was worse than she was. She also said she loved the holy man, and if the truth were known, she would be worthy of being punished. When her sister heard this, she grabbed her by the shoulders and pushed her out the door. The other woman, seeking revenge, had the prostitutes who had come with her attack her sister and beat her badly. So with great effort, she managed to escape from them and fled into her chamber, locked the door, and barred it to keep out the harlots who had come with her.

She stayed alone in her room, lying on her bed fully dressed and crying softly from sorrow. When the devil saw that she was angry and isolated, and that it was dark, he was pleased. She remembered the misfortune of her father, mother, brother, and sisters, and she wept bitterly when she thought about all of them. As a result, there was great sorrow and great anger in her heart. And when the devil saw that she had forgotten what the holy man had taught her, he thought that she was outside of God’s grace and her master’s favor.

“Now I could easily put our man with her.”

This demon, who had the power to make a woman conceive, was already there beside her while she was sleeping.

When she became pregnant, she woke up, and as she was waking, she thought about the holy man, and with that, she blessed herself and said, “Saint Mary, what has happened to me, for I have been deceived since I lay here. Now gracious Lady, pray to your dear Son that He have mercy on me and protect my body from the enemy’s torment.

And then she got up and searched for him who was supposed to have done it, thinking she would find him there, and she ran to the door and found it locked in the same way she had locked it herself. And then she searched the entire room but couldn’t find him anywhere. Then she thought it was the enemy who had tricked her, and she was overcome with great sorrow and cried out to the Lord, begging Him not to let her be shamed in this world.

As soon as it was daylight, the devil took the other sister away, because he had fully achieved his purpose. And when they were all gone, she came out of her room sorrowful and preoccupied and called for her servant and soon sent for two women. And when they arrived, she immediately went to her confessor. And the good man saw her coming; he said, “You look like you’re in great need, because I see you’re very frightened.

“I should be terrified, for I’ve never felt such a thing happen to any woman before. That’s why I’ve come to seek your advice, because I’ve heard you say that no matter how great the offense, if someone is truly sorry and confesses, they can receive forgiveness and be absolved immediately. Sir, I have sinned, and I’m well aware that I’ve been deceived by the devil.

“She told me how her sister came to her house, and everything that happened, as you’ve heard, and how she fell asleep in her bed, with her door locked and barred, and how her great sorrow made her forget her happiness. She said, ‘When I woke up, I found myself confused and my innocence lost. Sir, I searched my room and found my door locked, and I couldn’t find any living creature who could have done such a thing to me. Since I’ve sinned in this way, I cry out for God’s mercy, and yours, and that I may receive such penance that I won’t lose eternal life.’

The holy man listened carefully to her confession, but he didn't believe a word she said, for he had never heard anything like it before. He said to her, "You're possessed by the devil. How can I absolve you or assign you penance for things that I'm convinced you're lying about, since no woman has ever lost her virginity without knowing who and how it happened, or at least feeling the man who did it? And you expect me to believe this incredible story you're telling me?" She replied, "As I've said, God is my only hope in my greatest need." The holy man said, "If what you've told me is true, it will be clear to both of us within a short time. You've disobeyed the command I gave you, so I order you to fast on Saturdays for as long as you live, eating only once a day. And as for the immorality you've confessed to – which I don't believe – you should do penance for the rest of your life if you're willing to accept the punishment I'll assign." She responded, "You can't accuse me of anything I won't gladly accept."

The holy man said, "You've come seeking guidance from the Church and the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bought us with His precious blood and bitter death. And I see that you have a genuine remorse in your heart, just as you say with your words, and you're willing to give up all lust and sin, except for the one sin that no one can escape in their sleep."

She agreed, on the condition that he would promise God that she would be saved and not condemned for that sin. She took on the penance he assigned her with a good heart, weeping bitterly as she was truly repentant. And this good man absolved her and gave her his blessing, and restored her to the love of God in the best way he could; he brought her to the holy water and made her drink in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and he sprinkled the water on her and told her to remember what he had instructed her to do. "And whenever you need anything, come back to me again."

And he taught her to pray to God. He also made her focus on her good deeds, charity, and prayers, so she would do them.

After that, the young woman returned home and lived a holy life. When the devil realized he had lost her and didn't know what she was doing or saying, he became angry.

She stayed like that for a while, until the pregnancy was no longer hidden, and her belly began to grow noticeably. The people noticed that she was pregnant, and those who were her friends asked her who the father was. She replied, "God be my help, I don't know who it is." They said, "How

can this be? Have you had so many men that you don't know who the father is?

And she replied, "God grant me deliverance if every man, my conscience, had to do with me in such a manner." And those who heard this blessed them for their amazement, and said it could never be so, either of her or of anyone else - "but you're just trying to excuse him for what he's done. But truly, it's a great pity for you, because as soon as the judges find out, you'll be done for."

When she heard this, she was deeply shocked and said, "God, please keep my soul safe, I've never seen anyone do this to me, nor have I ever known them." The women who heard her talking thought she was crazy and untrustworthy, and they whispered to each other, saying that her beauty was completely wasted, since it was lost on someone like that. When she heard this, she remembered her confessor and went to him, telling him what the women had said. The good man was surprised and asked if she had been keeping her penance well. "Yes, without fail," she replied. He asked her, "Has something like this ever happened to you before?"

"Absolutely, sir," she said, "never before or after." And when the good man heard this, he was amazed and wrote down the day and night, just as she had told him, and said, "You're absolutely certain, aren't you, that when this child is born, I'll know if you've been deceiving me. I have faith in God that if what you've said is true, you won't be punished for it. But you should be very afraid, because as soon as the judges find out, they'll accuse you of coveting your lands and inheritance, and they'll take action against you. But when you're taken, send me word, and I'll come to help and comfort you in any way I can. And be assured that God will help you, if you're the kind of person you claim to be."

And then he said, "Go home to your house and don't worry. And take care, be of good comfort and live a good life, because that leads to a good ending for both men and women."

And so she left and went to her own house, living a holy life, until the judges ordered her to be taken and brought before them. And as soon as she was arrested, she sent for the good hermit who had always been her comfort. He came as quickly as he could. When he arrived, he found that the judges had brought her before them. The judges called him to them and told him the answer she had given them, that she had never known a

man. “And do you really believe,” they said, “that any woman could have a child without a man’s company?”

The good man answered and said, “I won’t tell you everything I think, but this much I’ll say to you: if you follow my advice, you won’t put her on trial while she’s pregnant until she’s given birth, because the child hasn’t deserved death.” The judges said, “We’ll do as you advise.”

The holy hermit said, “If you follow my advice, you’ll put her in a secure tower under good guard, where she’ll have no control over herself; and with her, you’ll put two women to help her at her delivery time, in such a way that they can’t leave. And so she’ll be left there until she’s given birth and then let her be kept until she’s strong enough to take care of herself. And then, if you see nothing else wrong with her than what you see now, then do what you think is right. This is my advice, and if you don’t follow it, I won’t be able to help you.”

And just as the good man had planned, it happened. She was locked in a strong tower with two women, the wisest they knew about such matters, and they made a window for her to look out from. When this was done, the good man spoke to them from below and said to the young woman, “When you have a child, have it baptized as soon as you can. And when you’re brought back to court, let me know.”

They stayed in the tower for a while until she gave birth to a son, as God had planned. When he was born, he had the cunning and intelligence of the devil, just like his father. But the devil’s plan was thwarted by the Lord, thanks to the mother’s repentance and her turning to God’s mercy and the teachings of the church. She had put her faith in God’s plan, and the Lord would not let that be taken away from Him. As a result, the devil was foiled in his plan to use the child’s abilities to know everything that had been done and would be done, both past and future. The Lord, who knows everything, saw the mother’s repentance and that it was not her will that had led to this, and He chose to take the child under His protection. However, He gave the child the freedom to choose his own path, and if he chose to serve God, he would be rewarded, and if he chose to serve the devil, that would be his choice as well.

This child was born, and the women were frightened by its appearance, as it looked rougher than any other child they had ever seen. They showed it to the mother, and when she saw it, she was frightened and said, “This

child is making me very anxious.” The women replied, “It’s doing the same to us.” The mother said, “Let’s take it outside to the window so it can be baptized.” And they did so.

“What should we name it?” “I want it to be named after my father,” she said.

They lowered it down by a rope from the tower window and told the people below that it should be baptized and named after the good man who was the child’s grandfather. And so it was baptized Merlyn and handed over to the women at the window to the mother. There was no other woman who dared to care for it, as it was so frightening to look at, and so the mother was allowed to care for it until it was ten months old. By then, it seemed to be two years old or more. When it was a year old, the women said to the mother, “Lady, we can no longer stay here with our friends. We’ll leave, as we’ve been here for a long time.” Then she said, “As soon as you leave, I’ll face judgment.”

They said, “We can’t stay here anymore, so we can’t do anything about it.” Then she wept and begged them to wait a while, and they agreed. As they leaned in to look out the window at her, crying, she took the child in her arms and said, “Dear son, for your sake, I’ll endure death, and I don’t deserve it. There’s no one who knows the truth, except God. And I won’t be believed, so I’ll be wrongly put to death.”

As she made this lament, the child looked at her and said, “Mother, don’t be afraid, you’ll never be sentenced to death because of me.”

When the mother heard this answer, she suddenly jumped up and the child fell out of her arms and cried. The women at the window thought she was about to kill the child and suddenly asked her, “Why did the child make that cry? Are you going to kill it?” And she replied, “I never thought so, but it was a wonder that it said to me.” They said, “It said you’ll never die for him.” Then they said, “We’ll hear it say something else.”

They took the child and tried to comfort it, asking it to speak to them. But no matter what they did, they couldn’t get a single word out of it until the mother said to the women, “Threaten me and say I’ll be burned,” because she was eager for the women to hear it speak. The women said to the mother, “Truly, it’s a great shame and pity that your beautiful body will be burned for such a foul creature. It would have been better if he had never been born.”

“Absolutely not,” he said, “you’re lying, and my mother made you say that.”

And when they heard this, they were shocked and said, “Absolutely, this can’t be a child, but it must be the devil who knew this and said it.” Then they asked him many questions, but he wouldn’t say another word, except, “Leave me alone and be at peace, for you are more sinful than my mother.” And when they heard this, they were amazed and said, “This can’t be kept a secret, and it shouldn’t be, so we’ll tell the people about it right away.”

They went to the window and called out to the people, telling them about the incredible story of the child, which eventually reached the judges. They were shocked by the news and decided it was time to take action against the mother. They sent a message to the bailiff, ordering that within forty days she would be brought before them to face judgment.

When the mother of Merlin learned that her day of reckoning had arrived, she was filled with great fear and sent word to her good hermit, her confessor. She spent eight days or more in contemplation, waiting for the time when she would be burned at the stake. When she thought about her own death, she was overcome with great sorrow and grief.

The child was wandering around the tower, watching his mother weeping, and he laughed and was joyful. The women who were watching said, “You don’t seem to care at all about your mother’s great sorrow, that this week she will be burned for you.”

To this, the child replied, “Dear mother, don’t be afraid, for as long as I live, no one will be brave enough to put you to death, except for God, who is all-powerful.”

When the women heard this, they said, “This child will be a wise and remarkable person.”

On the day set for the event, the women were taken out of the tower, and she held her son in her arms. The judges arrived and called the two women into a meeting, asking if it was true that the child had spoken those words. They replied that they had indeed heard him. The judges said that if he could save his mother, he must be knowledgeable about many things. The good hermit had come to comfort the mother. One of the judges turned to her and said, “Lady, prepare yourself, for you will soon suffer the martyrdom of death.”

She asked to speak with her confessor, and they granted her permission. They went into a room and left her child outside, and the crowd began to speculate about it with many questions, but he gave no answer.

The mother spoke with her confessor, sobbing pitifully. When she had finished saying what she wanted to say, the good man asked if her child was speaking, and she said, "Yes." "Indeed," said the good man, "there will be wonders from this."

Then they came out before the judges. The girl was in her cloak, with a mantle wrapped around her, and found her son outside the room, took him in her arms, and stood still. The judges questioned her: "Who was the father of the child?" And she replied, "I know I'm going to my death, and may God have mercy and pity on my soul, for I never knew the father, nor ever saw him, nor did I ever have any knowledge of any man on earth, which is why I had this child."

The judge said, "We can't believe that what you're saying is true."

Then the judges separated them and called over the other women and said, "Ladies, is it ever possible for a woman to become pregnant without a man's involvement?"

And they replied, "No woman can become pregnant without a man's help." The judge then turned to the young woman and told her what the women had said: "And therefore, it's only fair that we punish you."

Then Merlin sprang out of his mother's arms, angry, and said to the judge, "It's not right that she should die, for she doesn't deserve it. And if we were to punish all those who commit adultery outside of their marriages, many would deserve to be burned. And as for the charge against my mother, she's innocent. If you're friends with that good man, ask him to tell the truth."

Then the judges examined the good hermit and asked him if it was true, and he said, "Yes," as he had learned; and he told them that she had been deceived in her sleep, and that "she never told him who did the deed, nor did I see him, so I take all responsibility for her before God. Nevertheless, I've never heard of such a miracle, except for this one."

The child then said, "You have the hour and time written down that I was conceived, and that's how you can know if my mother told the truth." The good man replied, "You speak the truth, and I don't know how you could know this." Then the women who had told the hour of the child's

birth were called, and it was found that the good man's writing was true. And the judge said, "Despite that, she should not be acquitted."

The child grew angry and said, "I know more about my father than you do, and my mother knows more about your mother than you do mine." The judge grew angry and said, "If you can say anything about my mother, say it." The child replied, "I could say so much about your mother that she has deserved death more than my mother has, if that's what you think. Let my mother be at peace, not knowing what you're accusing her of." Then the judge became extremely angry and said, "If you can do that, then you've saved your mother from burning, but be aware that if you can't prove this about her, I'll burn both you and your mother together." "That will never happen while I'm alive," said Merlin, "you'll never have power over my mother." This was Merlin's defense of his mother.

Merlin took the judge apart and said, "Your mother will soon tell him everything I've said, and when he hears this, he'll run away out of fear of you. And the devil, whom he has always served, will lead him to a body of water to drown himself. And so you'll prove that I know things that are yet to come." "If that's true," the judge replied, "I'll never doubt you." This counsel ended, and Merlin went before the people, and the judge said, "I'm glad I've saved my mother from burning because of good reason: And let it be known to all of you that never has anyone been seen so wise." And they responded, "Praise the Lord that she's safe from death."

Merlin delivered his mother and stayed with the judge. The judge then sent three men with his mother to verify if the child had spoken the truth. As soon as the judge's mother returned, she told the person the astonishing thing she had heard. When he heard that, he was so shocked that he couldn't say a word, assuming that as soon as the judge arrived, he would kill him. So he quickly left the town and ran to a river, thinking it would be better to drown himself than to be shamed to death in front of the people by the judge. Thus, the devil led him astray, and he jumped into the river and drowned himself. Those who had been sent with the lady witnessed this. When they returned, they told the judge, and they were amazed, and they told Merlin what had happened.

And Merlin spoke up. "I beg of you," he said, "tell Brother Blaise, my mother's confessor." The judge told the good man the astonishing story that had happened to the boy. Then Merlin, his mother, Brother Blaise, and the judge went to the place where they wanted to go.

Brother Blaise was a noble and clever clerk, and he listened intently as Merlin spoke wisely, considering his age, which was only two and a half years old. He was amazed at the depth of Merlin's knowledge and asked him many questions. Merlin said, "The more you test me, the more you will find. But trust me and believe what I say, and I will easily teach you to have the love of Jesus Christ and eternal life."

Brother Blaise replied, "I've heard you speak, and I'm convinced that you're the son of the devil. Therefore, I doubt you deeply, fearing that you might deceive and trick me."

"It's a custom," said Merlin, "that all clever people go to all extremes, both good and bad, just as I've told you that I was conceived by the devil. So you've heard me say that God has given me the ability to know things that are to come. And know this well: it's God's will that I should know it, because He wanted the devil to lose his influence over me. But I haven't lost the knowledge of their plans, and I hold onto it because I should be aware of them. But they won't benefit from it, because they've lost their labor from now on, since they put me in a vessel worthy of my dignity, which shouldn't belong to them. But if they had put me in an evil woman, I wouldn't have had the power to know what God had planned. Therefore, listen to what I'm telling you. And I'll tell you such things that you wouldn't believe any creature could say to you. And so, make a book, and those who read this book should be kept from sin."

Blaise answered and said, "I'll gladly write the book, but I implore you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that you have no power to deceive me or make me do something that would displease God."

"All these things," Merlin said, "will not hinder you in body or soul, for I will never make you do anything that goes against the will of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Then tell me what you want, and from now on I'll do it gladly."

"What I want you to get is ink and parchment and anything else you need for writing, and then I'll tell you a story. Blaise gathered all the things he needed to write with, and when he was ready, Merlin began to tell the story of Jesus Christ and Joseph of Arimathea, as if they had been killed; and of Peter and the other disciples, as if they had departed; and the fate of Joseph and all the others. And then he told him that when all these things were done, the devils took counsel on how they had lost their

power over men and women. And how the prophets had thwarted their plan, and how they agreed to find a man who would have their wit and mind to deceive the people. “And you’ve heard from my mother, and also from others, the trouble they went through to conceive me. But through their foolishness, they all lost their efforts.”

Merlin devised this book and had Blaise write it, which caused him such great wonder that he wouldn’t tell anyone about it. He always thought his stories were good, and that’s why he listened to them eagerly. Meanwhile, as they were discussing this matter, Merlin came to Blaise and said, “You’ll have a lot of trouble making this, and I’ll have even more.” Blaise asked, “How?” Merlin replied, “I’ll be sent to search for something in the west, and those who come to look for me have agreed that they’ll kill me. But when they come and hear me speak, they’ll lose their desire to kill me. And I’ll go with them. You, on the other hand, will go to the places where those who possess the Holy Vessel are. And from now on, your book will be heard gladly. And if you want to know the lives of the kings of Great Britain before Christianity, look at *The Story of the Britons*, a book that Master Martin translated from Latin. But this matter remains.