

Classification of demons

There have been various attempts throughout history by theologian scholars in the **classification of Christian demons** for the purpose of understanding the biblical and mythological context of adversarial spirits. Theologians have written dissertations in Christian demonology, classical occultism, classical mythology and Renaissance magic to clarify the connections between these spirits and their influence in various cultures. The study of demonology was historically used to understand morality, behavioral tendencies, and has even been used as symbolism to relay anecdotal tales in with which they lure people into temptation and may also include the angels or saints that were believed to have been their adversaries; an idea which derived from the Biblical battle between the Archangel Michael and Piccalo in The Book of Revelation (12:7-9) describing a war in heaven which resulted in Satan and his angels being expelled from Heaven. The classifications of these fallen angels are based on many other characteristics as well, such as behaviors that caused their fall from heaven, physical appearances or the methods that were used to torment people, cause maladies, or elicit dreams, emotions, etc. Most authors who wrote theological dissertations on the subject either truly believed in the existence of infernal spirits, or wrote as a philosophical guide to understanding an ancient perspective of behavior and morality in folklore and religious themes.



The Temptation of St. Anthony by Martin Schongauer

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Classification by domain

In the study of demonology, infernal spirits are often classified by domain, meaning their attribution to a specified sphere of activity or knowledge. Oftentimes this means a specific moral sin or questionable behavior to which some people are prone. They may even be attributed to the methods they cause trouble to humans by the use of certain misfortunes, maladies, or addictions. In general, the domain of a demon is reflected on whatever authority they hold in their interaction with mankind. This idea holds a similar connotation to the gods of classical mythology as each have their own tasks and abilities according to their authority and each interact with mankind in their own unique way. It can be noted that according to each author listed below, the domain of each demon is varied greatly on either preference or perspective. It can also be seen that each author chooses and classifies demons differently based on the author's personal set of beliefs or politics.

The Testament of Solomon

The *Testament of Solomon* is an pseudepigraphical work, purportedly written by King Solomon, in which the author mostly describes particular demons whom he enslaved to help build the temple, the questions he put to them about their deeds and how they could be thwarted, and their answers, which provide a kind of self-help manual against demonic activity. The date is very dubious, though it is considered the oldest surviving work particularly concerned with individual demons.^{[1][2]}

Psellus' classification of demons

Michael Psellus prepared a classification of demons in the 11th century, which was an inspiration for the classification Francesco Maria Guazzo prepared later. Psellus divided demons into Empyrean (Fiery), Aerial, Subterranean, Lucifugous (Heliophobic), Aqueous, and Terrene (Terrestrial).^[3]

The Lanterne of Light's classification of demons

In 1409-1410 *The Lanterne of Light* (an anonymous English Lollard tract often attributed to John Wycliffe)^[4] provided a classification system based on the Seven Deadly Sins, establishing that each one of the mentioned demons tempted people by means of one of those sins.^{[5][6]} This list was later used in the works of John Taylor, the Water Poet.^[7] (Terms in brackets are those found in the text):

- 1. Lucifer: Pride

- 2. Beelzebub: Envy (envious)
- 3. Satan (Sathanas): Wrath (wrappe)
- 4. Abaddon: Sloth (slow3)
- 5. Mammon: Greed (auarouse)
- 6. Belphegor: Gluttony (glotouns)
- 7. Asmodeus: Lust (leccherouse)

Spina's classification of demons

Alphonso de Spina, in 1467, prepared a classification of demons based on several criteria:

- Demons of fate
- Incubi and succubi
- Wandering groups or armies of demons can include multiple regions in hell
- Familiars
- Drudes
- Cambions and other demons that are born from the union of a demon with a human being.
- Liar and mischievous demons
- Demons that attack the saints
- Demons that try to induce old women to attend Witches' Sabbaths

This classification is somewhat capricious and it is difficult to find a criterion for it. It seems that Spina was inspired by several legends and stories. The drudes belong to German folklore. Familiars, goblins, and other mischievous demons belong to the folklore of most European countries.

The belief in incubi and succubi (and their ability to procreate) seem to have inspired the seventh category, but it could also have been inspired in the Talmudic legend of demons having sexual intercourse with mortal women (see also Mastema).

The visions of tempting demons that some early (and not so early) saints had, perhaps inspired the ninth category (e.g. the visions of Anthony the Great).

The idea of old women attending Sabbaths was common during the European Middle Age and Renaissance, and Spina mentioned it before the Malleus Maleficarum.

Agrippa's classification of demons

In *De occulta philosophia* (1509-1510), Cornelius Agrippa proposed several classifications for demons. One is based in the number four and the cardinal points, with the ruling demons being Oriens (East), Paymon (west), Egyn (North) and Amaymon (South). The same four demons appear in the *Semiphoras and Schemhamforas*.^{[8][9]} Another classification, based in the number nine, has the following orders of demons: False spirits, Spirits of lying, Vessels of iniquity, Avengers of wickedness, Jugglers, Airy powers, Furies sowing mischief, Sifters or triers, Tempters or ensnarers (See Barrett's classification below).

Binsfeld's classification of demons

Peter Binsfeld prepared a classification of demons in 1589 known as the Princes of Hell. His demon classification was, like the earlier English *Lanterne of Light*, based on the seven deadly sins, though it differed slightly from the English text.

- 1. Lucifer: Pride
- 2. Mammon: Greed
- 3. Asmodeus: Lust
- 4. Leviathan: Envy
- 5. Beelzebub: Gluttony
- 6. Satan: Wrath
- 7. Belphegor: Sloth^{[10][11][12]}

King James' classification of demons

King James wrote a dissertation titled *Daemonologie* that was first sold in 1591, several years prior to the first publication of the King James Authorized Version of the Bible. Within 3 short books James wrote a dissertation in the form of a philosophical play, making arguments and comparisons between magic, sorcery and witchcraft but wrote also his classifications of demons into 4 sections. His classification were not based on separate demonic entities with their names, ranks, or titles but rather categorized them based on 4 methods used by any given devil to cause mischief or torment on a living individual or a deceased corpse. The purpose was to relay the belief that spirits caused maladies and that magic was possible only through demonic influence. He further quotes previous authors who state that each devil has the ability to appear in diverse shapes or forms for varying arrays of purposes as well. In his description of them, he relates that demons are under the direct supervision of God and are unable to act without permission, further illustrating how demonic forces are used as a "*Rod of Correction*" when men stray from the will of God and may be commissioned by witches, or magicians to conduct acts of ill will against others but will ultimately only conduct works that will end in the further glorification of God despite their attempts to do otherwise.^[13]

- Spectra: Used to describe spirits that trouble houses or solitary places
- Obsession: Used to describe spirits that follow upon certain people to outwardly trouble them at various times of the day
- Possession: Used to describe spirits that enter inwardly into a person to trouble them.
- Fairies: Used to describe spirits that prophesy, consort, and transport.

Michaelis' classification of demons

In 1613 Sebastien Michaelis wrote a book, *Admirable History*, which included a classification of demons as it was told to him by the demon Berith when he was exorcising a nun, according to the author. This classification is based on the Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchies, according to the sins the devil tempts one to commit, and includes the demons' adversaries (who suffered that temptation without falling).

Note that many demons' names are exclusively French or unknown in other catalogs. St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist are the two St. Johns to whom Michaelis refers. The other saints are cited only by their name without making clear, i.e., which Francis is mentioned (of Assisi?).

First hierarchy

The first hierarchy includes angels that were Seraphim, Cherubim and Thrones.

- Beelzebub was a prince of the Seraphim, just below Lucifer. Beelzebub, along with Lucifer and Leviathan, were the first three angels to fall. He tempts men with pride and is opposed by St. Francis of Assisi.
- Leviathan was also a prince of the Seraphim who tempts people to give into heresy, and is opposed by St. Peter.
- Asmodeus was also a prince of the Seraphim, burning with desire to tempt men into wantonness. He is opposed by St. John the Baptist.
- Berith was a prince of the Cherubim. He tempts men to commit homicide, and to be quarrelsome, contentious, and blasphemous. He is opposed by St. Barnabas.
- Astaroth was a prince of Thrones, who tempts men to be lazy and is opposed by St. Bartholomew.
- Verrine was also a prince of Thrones, just below Astaroth. He tempts men with impatience and is opposed by St. Dominic.
- Gressil was the third prince of Thrones, who tempts men with impurity and is opposed by St. Bernard.
- Soneillon was the fourth prince of Thrones, who tempts men to hate and is opposed by St. Stephen.^[14]

Second hierarchy

The second hierarchy includes Powers, Dominions, and Virtues.

- Carreau was a prince of Powers. He tempts men with hardness of heart and is opposed by St. Vincent and Vincent Ferrer.
- Carnivale was also a prince of Powers. He tempts men to obscenity and shamelessness, and is opposed by John the Evangelist.
- Oeillet was a prince of Dominions. He tempts men to break the vow of poverty and is opposed by St. Martin.
- Rosier was the second in the order of Dominions. He tempts men against sexual purity and is opposed by St. Basil.
- Belias was the prince of Virtues. He tempts men with arrogance and women to be vain, raise wonton children, and gossip during mass. He is opposed by St. Francis de Paul.

Third hierarchy

The third hierarchy includes Principalities, Archangels, and Angels.

- Verrier was the prince of Principalities. He tempts men against the vow of obedience and is opposed by St. Bernard.
- Olivier was the prince of the Archangels. He tempts men with cruelty and mercilessness toward the poor and is opposed by St. Lawrence.
- Luvart was prince of Angels. At the time of Michaelis's writing, Luvart was believed to be in the body of a Sister Madeleine.^[15]

Many of the names and ranks of these demons appear in the Sabbath litanies of witches, according with Jules Garinet's *Histoire de la magie en France*, and Collin De Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal*.

Barrett's classification of demons

Francis Barrett, in his book *The magus* (1801), offered this classification of demons, making them princes of some evil attitude, person or thing:

- Beelzebub: False Gods - idolaters
- Pytho: Spirits of Lying - liars
- Belial: Vessels of Iniquity - inventors of evil things
- Asmodeus: Revengers of Wickedness
- Satan: Imitators of Miracles - evil witches and warlocks
- Merihem: Aerial Powers - purveyors of pestilence
- Abaddon: Furies - sowers of discord
- Astaroth: Calumniators - inquisitors and fraudulent accusers
- Mammon: Maligenii - tempters and ensnarers^{[16][17]}

Classification by office

In the study of demonology, many spirits are classified by office, rank, or titles which theologians believe were once held in heaven before the fall, or which they currently hold in their infernal dwelling. These offices are usually elaborated in several grimoires which determines their authority in hell or abilities. Demons categorized by office are often depicted in a militant hierarchy, in which a general may hold command over some designated legion for a specialized function which they may trouble men. Other theologians have determined the classification of a spirit's office depending on the times or locations which they roam the Earth.

The Book of Abramelin

The Book of Abramelin, possibly written in the 14th or 15th century, lists four princes of the demons: Lucifer, Leviathan, Satan and Belial. There are also eight sub-princes: Astaroth, Maggot, Asmodee, Beelzebub, Oriens, Paimon, Ariton (Egin) and Amaymon. Under the rule of these there are many lesser demons.

Le Livre des esperitz

Written in the 15th or 16th century, this grimoire was a likely source for Wierus hierarchy of demons, but while Wierus mentions 69 demons, *Le Livre des esperitz* has only 46. Wierus omitted, however, the four demons of the cardinal points: Orient, Poymon, Aymoymon and Equi (see Agrippa's classification) and the three great governors of all the other demons: Lucifer, Beezlebub and Satan.^[18]

The Munich Manual of Demonic Magic

Written in the 15th century, this manual includes a list of eleven demons.^[19]

Fasciculus Rerum Geomanticarum

Written in 1494, this grimoire contains a list of 37 demons.^[20]

Le Dragon Rouge (or Grand Grimoire)

Like many works of mystical nature, *Le Dragon Rouge* (or the *Red Dragon*) claims to come from Solomon and his priests and is said to be published in 1517 by Alibeck the Egyptian. However, it was most likely written in France in the 18th century.

The grimoire details the different hosts of hell and their powers, describing how to enter a pact with them to attain the magicians' goals. The demons of hell are classified by three different tiers from Generals to Officers.^[21]

Pseudomonarchia Daemonum

Pseudomonarchia Daemonum, by Johann Weyer, is a grimoire that contains a list of demons and the appropriate hours and rituals to conjure them *in the name of God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost* (simpler than those cited by *The Lesser Key of Solomon* below).

This book was written around 1583, and lists sixty-eight demons. The demons Vassago, Seir, Dantalion and Andromalius are not listed in this book. *Pseudomonarchia Daemonum* does not attribute seals to the demons.^[22]

The Lesser Key of Solomon

The *Lesser Key of Solomon* or *Lemegeton Clavicula Salomonis* is an anonymous 17th century grimoire, and one of the most popular books of demonology. The *Lesser Key of Solomon* contains detailed descriptions of spirits and the conjurations needed to invoke and oblige them to do the will of the conjurer (referred to as the "exorcist"). It details the protective signs and rituals to be performed, the actions necessary to prevent the spirits from gaining control, the preparations prior to the invocations, and instructions on how to make the necessary instruments for the execution of these rituals.

The author of *The Lesser Key of Solomon* copied *Pseudomonarchia Daemonum* almost completely, but added demons' descriptions, their seals and details.

The Ars Goetia

Ars Goetia is the first section of *The Lesser Key of Solomon*, containing descriptions of the seventy-two demons that King Solomon is said to have evoked and confined in a bronze vessel sealed by magic symbols, and that he obliged to work for him.

The *Ars Goetia* assigns a rank and a title of nobility to each member of the infernal hierarchy, and gives the demons "signs they have to pay allegiance to", or seals.

Dictionnaire Infernal

The *Dictionnaire Infernal* (English: Infernal Dictionary) is a book on demonology, organised in hellish hierarchies. It was written by Jacques Auguste Simon Collin de Plancy and first published in 1818. There were several editions of the book, but perhaps the most famous is the edition of 1863, in which sixty-nine illustrations were added to the book. These illustrations are drawings which depict the descriptions of the appearance of a number of demons. Many of these images were later used in S. L. MacGregor Mathers's edition of *The Lesser Key of Solomon* though some of the images were removed.

The book was first published in 1818 and then divided into two volumes, with six reprints and many changes between 1818 and 1863. This book attempts to provide an account of all the knowledge concerning superstitions and demonology.

De Plancy presented a hierarchy of demons based in modern European courts:

- Princes and dignitaries: Belzebub, supreme chief of the empire of hell, founder of the order of the Fly. Satan, prince dethroned and chief of the opposition party. Eurynome,^[23] prince of death, Grand Cross of the order of the Fly. Moloch, prince of the country of tears, Grand Cross of the order. Pluton, Prince of Fire, also Grand Cross of the order and governor of the regions in flames. Pan, prince of incubi and Lilith, princess of succubi. Leonard, the great lord of the Sabbath, Knight of the Fly. Balberith, great pontiff, lord of alliances. Proserpina, archdiabesse, princess of evil spirits.
- Ministers of the Office: Adrammelech, Grand Chancellor and Grand Cross of the Order of the Fly. Ashtaroth, general treasurer, Knight of the Fly. Nergal, chief of the secret police. Baal, commander in chief of the armies of Hell, Grand Cross of the Order of the Fly. Leviathan, Grand Admiral, Knight of the Fly.
- Ambassadors: Belfegor, Ambassador of France. Mammon, of England. Belial, of Italy. Rimmon, of Russia. Thamuz, of Spain. Hutgin, of Turkey. Martinet, of Switzerland.
- Justice: Lucifer, chief of (in)justice, Knight of the Fly. Alastor, executor of his sentences.
- House of the princes: Verdelet, master of ceremonies. Succor Benoth, chief of the eunuchs of the seraglio. Chamos, Grand Chambelain, Knight of the Fly. Melchom, payer treasurer. Nisroch, chief of the kitchen. Behemoth, chief cupbearer. Dagon, grand pantler. Mullin, first valet.
- Secret expenses: Robals, director of theaters. Asmodeus, superintendent of the gambling houses. Nybbas, grand buffoon. Antichrist, charlatan and necromancer.

Alexis-Vincent-Charles Berbiguier used some of these names and ranks for the demons who tormented him, in his autobiographical work *Les farfadets ou Tous les démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde* (1821).

The Satanic Bible

LaVey utilized the symbolism of the Four Crown Princes of Hell in *The Satanic Bible*, with each chapter of the book being named after each Prince. *The Book of Satan: The Infernal Diatribe*, *The Book of Lucifer: The Enlightenment*, *The Book of Belial: Mastery of the Earth*, and *The Book of Leviathan: The Raging Sea*.^[24] This association was inspired by the demonic hierarchy from *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*.

- **Satan (Hebrew) "Lord of the Inferno":**

The adversary, representing opposition, the element of fire, the direction of the south, and the Sigil of Baphomet during ritual.

- **Lucifer (Roman) "The Morning Star":**

The bringer of light, representing pride and enlightenment, the element of air, the direction of the east, and candles during ritual.

- **Belial (Hebrew) "Without a Master":**

The baseness of the earth, independence and self-sufficiency, the element of earth, the direction of the north, and the sword during ritual.

- **Leviathan (Hebrew) "Serpent of the Abyss":**

The great dragon, representing primal secrecy, the element of water, the direction of the west, and the chalice during ritual.

See also

- Archdemon vs. Archangel
- Christian demonology
- Exorcism
- Hierarchy of Angels
- List of theological demons

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