

❖ INTRODUCTION ❖

Dealing with evil has occupied center stage in human affairs since our earliest times. Destruction, chaos, decay, and the ultimate darkness of death have often overshadowed the presence of goodness and light. Human beings have dealt with evil in three principal ways: by meeting it head on in battle, by warding it off before it strikes, and by trying to avoid it altogether through denial.

The how and why of evil have been debated and discussed for centuries in religion, folklore, philosophy, art, literature, and pop culture, all of which attempt to explain why bad things happen, especially to good people. When evil strikes the wicked, we see it as the deserved consequence of evildoing. When evil strikes the righteous, we look for satisfactory explanations, often in vain. Everyone feels the touch of evil at some point in life, regardless of his or her moral striving.

In myth, religion, and folklore the forces of both good and evil are personified. In the pantheons of deities there are gods and goddesses of benevolence and malevolence, and though some are mostly evil, they are seldom completely evil. Their job is to tear things down via disaster, ruination, disease, illness, and death. They are an essential part of the eternal cycle of life, death, and rebirth. Human beings, understandably, seek to avoid these torments as much as possible.

Monotheism creates a sharper polarization between good and evil. The one Creator is all-good but permits evil to exist under the direction of an archfiend. We console ourselves with the explanation that evil serves to test and demonstrate our moral fiber and spiritual worthi-

ness. Our fate in the afterlife—eternal heaven or eternal hell—hangs in the balance.

In Christianity, Satan, the Devil, is the thoroughly evil counterpart to the all-good God. Concepts of the Devil developed over centuries, evolving from the neutral adversary, *satan*, of Hebrew lore, and the once-good angel Lucifer, who chose pride and fell from grace. Every army needs a wholly evil enemy, and Satan obliges Christianity in that sense.

Demons, the lower agents of evil, have many guises and operate under many names and with many purposes. In the pagan view, they are a part of the natural order, entities of moral ambivalence who mostly deceive and interfere. In the Christian view, they are evil—fallen angels who, as Lucifer did, chose pride over obedience to God and were cast out of heaven. They are doomed to eternal hell and serve the Devil, making unending assaults on human beings in an attempt to subvert souls to the Devil's domain.

Outside monotheism, demons have a long history of interfering in the affairs of the physical world and the lives of people, though not always with the goal of subverting souls. They act as tricksters and create annoying disturbances. More seriously, they cause illnesses, insanity, disasters, and bad luck. Some hold long-standing grudges against humanity. The djinn of Arabian lore, for example, say they were the original inhabitants of Earth and were evicted by God in favor of humans. They want their homeland returned, and some of them carry out guerrilla warfare and terrorism against humans to that end.

Whatever the guises, names, and agendas, demonic forces are constantly at play in the world. Thanks to the exaggerations of film and fiction, many Christians think, for example, that demonic attacks occur in the form of hideous beings assaulting people, possessing them, and making green slime run down walls and stairs. While such events do happen, they are relatively rare among all the ways the demonic forces operate. Evil is insidious, a Trojan horse that destroys from within, degrading people's thoughts, intentions, and will to lead the righteous life. Evil often operates through people, in the murder, mayhem, oppression, and violence people wreak on one another.

Several years ago, in my introduction to my *Encyclopedia of Angels*, I affirmed my belief in angels. I also believe in demons. One does not exist without the other. I have had personal experience of both. In my years of researching the paranormal, I have been puzzled by people who adamantly insist that demons do not exist. They readily believe in angels and other representatives of the forces of light and good, but they deny malevolent beings. They would rather not know anything about the demonic in order not to "dignify" it. Some of them naively think that if they do not believe in demons, they will not be bothered by them. "See no evil" means to them "avoiding all evil." Ignorance is their protection.

Ignorance, however, is no protection. Ignorance breeds fear, and fear is evil's greatest weapon. One of the things I have found to be true in my paranormal research, investigation, and personal experience is that what you fear will find you. Demons are the front lines of evil. Denying their existence only makes human beings easier targets.

Consequently, it is important to be informed about demons and evil. One conquers an enemy by knowing it inside and out. To know evil does not mean to embrace it, champion it, or glorify it.

Information shines a powerful light, and it is important that we shine that light into the darkness. My purpose in writing this encyclopedia is to provide one of those lights. The content is not intended to validate any particular religious view. Rather, I have explored numerous avenues of thought on the demonic. There is much diversity but also some common threads and themes. Some common themes, for example, concern the origins and fate of evil. The world in its original state was pristine, perfect, and good. The forces of evil entered the world, often through the actions of humans. Since then, the forces of evil have been having their day, wreaking havoc. At some point, good will vanquish evil, and perfection will be restored. Meanwhile, there are many ways to counter evil, to minimize its impact in the world.

The lore about demons is rich and varied, and the stories of human dealings with demons are colorful and mesmerizing. All of my encyclopedias emphasize the Western tradition, with the inclusion of some cross-

cultural entries for comparison. In this volume, I have included entries on many individual demons, including the heavyweights of hell; types and classes of demons; demonized pagan deities; examples of demonic and spirit possessions and exorcisms; expressions of the demonic in folklore, literature, and film; and personalities who have influenced our views on the demonic.

The early church fathers of Christianity tackled the questions of the origins of evil, the existence of the Devil, and the operations of demons, but "demonology" as a study of the demonic did not gel until about the 15th century. By then, the Inquisition, established by the Roman Catholic Church to suppress heresy, was gathering momentum. For the next several centuries, religious and nonsecular authorities on demons wrote with great conviction on the diabolical and the relationship between witchcraft and demons. Thousands of people were accused of witchcraft, which automatically meant being in league with the Devil in order to harm people and destroy everything good. There was little or no evidence to support the claims, but public fears of the demonic were easily warped to believe in wild nights of demonic orgies and blasphemous activities. Some of these ideas linger today, as adherents to Wicca well know.

One demonic activity that fascinates people most is possession. Beliefs about possession are universal and ancient, such as possession by the *zar* of Middle Eastern lore and the *kitsune* of Japanese lore, who demand attention and gifts. Everywhere in the ancient world, possessing demons caused illness and insanity. Jesus gained attention for his ability to heal these conditions by expelling the demons.

The evolution of the Devil in Christianity narrowed the focus on possession; it became the instrument of the Devil's subversion of souls, turning people away from God and the church. The Catholic Church developed formal rites of exorcism to combat this evil.

The Protestant Reformation in the early 1500s was followed in Europe by a period in which Catholics and Protestants used possession as one of their battlegrounds on which to demonstrate religious superiority and sway the faithful. Some of the most famous possession cases on record concerned the alleged possession of nuns—such as at Loudun and Louviers, France—who put on displays of writhing, contorting, shouting obscenities, and other outrageous behavior, all for huge audiences. The exorcisms were more like circus acts than religious proceedings. Sexual repression, revenge, and outright fraud were part of many of these cases, though there were some genuine possessions.

Genuine demonic possession, from a Christian perspective, still exists today. It is rare relative to other forms of demonic interference; however, both religious and lay authorities on the subject say it is on the increase. In the field of lay paranormal investigation, media attention on the demonic has prompted individuals to call themselves

“demonologists” and offer their services, sometimes for a fee. Few of them are demonologists in the truest sense of the word. Regardless of religious perspective, becoming a spiritual warrior against evil is a calling, not a profession, occupation, or job description. Real exorcists and deliverance ministers know that battling evil on its own turf is perilous and rarely glamorous.

Outside religion, demons play roles in occultism and magic. They are one of numerous types of entities with whom adepts can traffic. They are conjured, controlled, and assigned tasks. In magical lore, some demons have

good dispositions and some do not. They offer humans gifts of wealth, knowledge, power, and pleasure—but always at a price. The greatest price is one’s soul.

The Encyclopedia of Demons and Demonology is intended to open further avenues of inquiry on the subject of the dark side. In many respects, it is far more important to be informed about demons than it is about angels. The demonic are masters of deceit and disguise. If you know little or nothing about them, how will you recognize them?

—Rosemary Ellen Guiley