

I fell the whole distance, and it's only right that I show it to you!" At that, the Devil casts himself into Hell with a dreadful shriek. This anecdote, which James says he found in a book, *The Miracles of the Saints*, clearly comes from a time when the Devil was indeed thought to be in Hell.

Among the stories that James includes in the Legend of the founder of his own Order, St. Dominic, is the following. One night when Dominic is in Bologna, praying in his group's church, the Devil appears to him in the guise of a Friar. Dominic, thinking he is one of his Brethren, nods at him, indicating that he should go off to his rest along with the others, but the Devil mocks him by nodding back at him. Dominic, wondering who it could be that is treating his orders so flippantly, lights a candle to take a good look at him. He immediately recognizes the Evil Spirit, and reproaches him vehemently. The Devil reproaches him right back for breaking the rule of silence! Dominic says, "I'm in charge here and I can speak when I want to!" He then commands the Demon to tell him how he tempts the Friars when they are singing the Divine Office.

Devil: "I make them sleep too long and get up late, so they miss the Office, and I give them impure thoughts."

Dominic (taking him to the dining-hall): "What about here?"

Devil (jumping about the tables): "More and less! More and less! More and less!"

Dominic: "What's that mean?"

Devil: "I tempt some of the Friars to eat too much, and so they sin by gluttony, and others I tempt to eat too little, so they become weak in the service of God and the observance of the Rule."

Dominic (leading him to the parlor): "What about here?"

Devil (flapping his tongue about): "Blah, blah, blah, blah!"

Dominic: "What's that all about!"

Devil: "This place belongs entirely to me! When the Friars come here to talk, I tempt them to chatter all at the same time,

confusing each other with idle words, and never waiting to hear what the others are saying."

Dominic: "All right, into the chapter room!"

Devil: "Oh, no, I'll never go in there! That place is cursed, a Hell! That is where I lose everything that I gain elsewhere! When I've caused a Friar to sin by some negligence, he quickly comes to this blasted place and purges himself of his fault, admitting it before all! Here they are admonished, here they confess, here they're accused, here they're whipped, here they are absolved! So all my great successes before turn into bad losses here!"

With that, the Devil vanishes (GL 113).

You get the idea of this book. The theorizing is generally pretty low-brow, and the Devil comes across as the opposite of fearsome. James reinforces the confidence that his readers should have in such stories by occasionally questioning the authenticity of some accounts and declaring them apocryphal – thus giving the seal of his authority to all of his other accounts.

James's popular view of the Diabolical, which, I repeat, was also embedded in the Liturgy, should always be kept in mind as we encounter more high-faluting theories. To remind ourselves of this perspective, I will continue to cite the *Golden Legend* from time to time.

10.3 SATAN'S LAST ASSIGNMENT: SUPERINTENDENT OF HELL AND PUNISHER – RIGHT NOW! – OF DAMNED SOULS

We are not quite finished with the invention of important items in Satan's Life. A late addition to his *Curriculum Vitae* – very late, it will turn out – is that he has been placed in charge of administering the punishments of Hell, especially for the souls of wicked mortals whose mortality caught up with them. And I mean right away, not at the End of Time, after the Last Judgment.

Origen's allegorical interpretation of Satan as Lucifer embraces only Lucifer's prideful ascent and his fall from Heaven, limited to verses 12 to 14 of Isaiah's chapter 14 (see **chap. 9.1**). It included the idea of a fall, but not the fall described in the subsequent verses of Isaiah: "Now thou shalt go down to the Realm of Hades," and so on. In Origen's view, and in the view of those who followed his reasoning, this passage of Isaiah applies to Satan only selectively. It suddenly leaves the allegorical at this point and carries only a literal meaning, referring to the humiliation to be suffered in Hell by the King of Babylon.

In the Old Testament, the Underworld is "the Abyss," *Sheol* in Hebrew.⁴ It is not a place of punishment, but simply the final destination of all souls, good and bad, who after their death continue to exist in a kind of comatose half-life. No one is in charge except for a personification of *Sheol*, that is, "Old Lady Abyss." In the Greek Bible, she becomes Hades, a masculine figure – "Old Man Hell" – and, as we have seen, Hades often has Death as a partner. Death is masculine in Hebrew and Greek, but, as we have just seen in the Legend of St. Bartholomew, feminine in Latin.

In the first Christian centuries, the Devil has no role as the guardian or punisher of souls in the Underworld at the time of Christ's death. The Watery Abyss, home of the Old Testament Sea Monsters, is not identified with *Sheol*. Think of Leviathan in Job 3.8 (Ketos – that is, Cetos, Whale – in the Septuagint); Tannin in Job 7.12 (Dragon in Greek); and Rahab in Job 26.12 (Whale again). We discussed them as forerunners of the Great Red Dragon of the Apocalypse (**chap. 6.2**). Nowadays one often hears of theologians claiming that early Baptismal rites were visualized as involving a descent into a Diabolical or Demonic world of water. Not so; that's the work of our old friend, Johnny Retrofit.

⁴ For early ideas of the Underworld, see R. H. Charles, *Eschatology: The Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity* (1899, 2nd edn. 1913), reprinted with Introduction by George Wesley Buchanan (New York: Schocken, 1963).

Also distinct from *Sheol* is the Fiery Abyss where the lustful Watcher Angels are to be cast at the end of the World, according to the *Book of Enoch* (10.13), or the Bottomless Abyss where the Dragon-Devil will be detained for a thousand years (Rev. 20.2–3), or the final Lake of Fire. The fire "prepared for Devil and his Angels" (Matt. 25.41) is also in the future, and is perhaps to be used by Devil as punisher of Men, as in the *Book of the Similitudes in Enoch*, which we studied above (**chap. 4.2**).

In the New Testament, as we have seen, Satan has a function of punishing or disciplining men, specifically wayward Christians, in 1 Corinthians 5.5 and 1 Timothy 1.20 (**chap. 3.1** and **5.1**). But that was when Satan was still functioning as an Angel, in God's employ, not in his post-Originic role as the rebel Lucifer.

In the Book of Revelation we have seen various personnel of various Underworlds. Hades actually surfaces to the Upperworld, to accompany Death-on-the-Pale-Horse (Rev. 6.8), and Abaddon a.k.a. Apollyon is in charge of the Bottomless Abyss (Rev. 9.1–11). A terrible Beast comes up from the Bottomless Abyss (Rev. 11.7), and another from the Sea (Rev. 13.1). Death and Hades eventually give up their dead, and the wicked souls among them – those whose names are not written in the Book of Life – are thrown into the Lake of Fire, along with Satan, and Death and Hades themselves (Rev. 20.10–15) (**chap. 6.2**). In other words, Death and Hades have been custodians of all the dead, in the Realm of the Dead. They have not served as punishers of the wicked dead, who will receive their punishment at the End of Time. In fact, it is the Son of Man who holds the Keys of Death and Hades (Rev. 1.18).

But this is not the whole picture of Revelation, for we find that, after John reports on the reign of terror assigned to Death and Hades, he tells of seeing "under the Altar" the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the Word of God and the testimony they had given (Rev. 6.9). These are Christian Martyrs, like those who were being accused by Satan before his ouster from Heaven (Rev. 12.10).

Jesus Himself in the Gospel of Luke tells a parable in which He depicts a just man, Lazarus, as being carried immediately after death by Angels to a place of repose, Abraham's bosom, while the self-indulgent rich man, "Dives," goes to Hades, where he suffers the torments of fire (Luke 16.19-31). Hades here sounds like a place. Earlier, when Luke referred to Hades, recording Jesus speaking on the fate of Capernaum (Luke 10.15), he used the genitive, "of Hades," meaning "[the Realm or Place] of Hades"; but there he was simply quoting Isaiah 14.15 (see **chap. 9.1** above). Here, Hades is within shouting distance of Lazarus, but Lazarus tells Dives, "Between you and us a great chasm has been fixed" (Luke 16.26).

The first sign of ideas about a rosier fate for good people and a harsher fate for bad people after they die – that is, rosier and harsher than just being stuck in the Abyss – is seen in the Book of Daniel. There, at the beginning of chapter 12, we are told that in the future, Michael, the Protector of Israel, will rise up, and after a period of great anguish, those whose names are written in the Book will be delivered. And "many of those who sleep in the dust of the Earth will awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12.2). This is the new teaching of the resurrection of the body, fostered in Palestine by the Pharisees, as opposed to the more traditional Sadducees, who, as we see in the Gospels, rejected any such new-fangled notions.

Meanwhile, some of the Jews across the way, over in Alexandria and elsewhere in Egypt, adopted a different view, drawing on the Greek notion of the immortality of the soul. Listen to what the Book of Wisdom says, right after the familiar passage that asserts that Death entered the World through the envy of a *diabolos* (Wisdom 2.24; see **chap. 3.4**): "But the spirits of the just are in the Hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them" (Wis. 3.1). Nevertheless, Wisdom still talks about "the Kingdom of Hades" (1.14) and "the recesses of powerless Hades" (17.14).

Alexandria was still capable of producing a vision of the Other-world worthy of the apparitions of John the Divine in the Book of

Revelation. Let's take a look at a pseudepigraph called the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, which was composed some time between the first century BC and the second century AD (OTP 1), written in Greek by a Hellenistic Jew, probably in Egypt. It has a Satan-figure, who acts as the Accuser. He is described as a horrific Angel with hair of lionesses and women, bear-like teeth, and serpentine body (*Apoc. Zeph.* 6.8). He functions "upon the Earth," or "over the Earth," and his Angels write down the sins of Men. Then his Angels sit at the Gate of Heaven and inform him (the Accuser), so that he may accuse each man when he goes down out of the World (3.8-9).

Zephaniah is one of the men who are confronted by the Accuser, amidst the fires of the Realm of Hades (which seem uncomfortably close to the Gate of Heaven!). But the person in charge of the Realm of Hades is not Hades himself, nor is it the Accuser. Rather, it is a glorious Angel, Eremiel, who presides over the Abyss and Hades (*Apoc. Zeph.* 6.15). Eremiel definitely distances the Accuser from the Abyss, for he identifies him as "the one who accuses men in the Presence of the Lord" (6.17).

By the fourth century there had developed the idea that during the three days (actually, it was only a day and a half) between His death and His resurrection, Christ went *ad inferos*, that is, "to the lower ones," to visit the inhabitants of the Lower Place (*Infernus* or *Infernium*), and to rescue the souls of the virtuous and bring them to Heaven.

This doctrine appears in the credal formulas of Arians by mid-fourth-century, and then in the Creed reported by Rufinus from his native Aquileia (Rufinus, you recall, was the champion and translator of Origen; see **chap. 9.1**). It appeared most prominently in the so-called "Apostles' Creed" – which of course wasn't really composed by the Twelve Apostles. The English translation of the pertinent article of that Creed is, "He descended into Hell, the third day He rose again from the dead." That is, He arose *a mortuis*, "from among the dead people."

An early inspiration for this notion may have been the mysterious passages in the First Epistle of Peter studied above (**chap. 5.5**). After Christ was put to death, He went to preach to the spirits of the dead who were in prison, especially those who had been disobedient in the time of Noah; they, like everyone, had been judged in the flesh, but now they were to be enabled to live in the spirit, like God (1 Peter 3.19–20, 4.6). Jesus then ascended to Heaven, and Angels, Powers, and Forces were subject to Him (3.22).

Perhaps the latter tradition is to be found in its infancy in the Eucharistic formula in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus of Rome, which, as we saw above (**chap. 9.3**), comes from the beginning of the third century – the same time that Origen was inventing the Satanic Lucifer. Here, before repeating the words of consecration over the bread, the celebrant says that “Christ willingly gave Himself over to his Passion in order to destroy Death and break the chains of the Devil and trample upon *Infernus* [Hell personified], bringing light to the just and setting a boundary [to Hell?], and making resurrection manifest.”

One of the most popular elaborations of Christ’s rescue of the good souls from the Underworld, later known as the Harrowing (that is, “Plundering”) of Hell, was the *Descensus ad Inferos* added in the sixth century to the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus* (NTA 1). After putting Christ to death, Satan hastens “below” to give instructions to Hades to make sure that he makes Him secure:

Satan, the heir of Darkness, came and said to Hades, “O insatiable devourer of all, listen to my words. There is one of the race of the Jews, Jesus by name, who calls Himself the Son of God. But he is only a man, and at our instigation the Jews crucified him. And now that he is dead, be prepared, so that we may secure him here. I know that he is only a man because I heard him saying, ‘My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.’”
(*Gos. Nico. 20.1*)

Hades responds (I’m paraphrasing), “Whoa, hold on! He said this only to mock you. A little while ago I devoured a man called Lazarus, and

someone ripped him out of my guts with a mere word. It must be this Jesus! Don’t let him in! – I’m sure he’s coming here to take away all the dead!”

But it’s too late. Sure enough, a great thunderous Voice shouts out the words of Psalm 23.7 (Septuagint version): “Lift up your Gates, you Rulers! And you, Eon-Gates, get lifted! The King of Glory is on His way in!” Hades, in a panic, tells Satan to go out and stop Him if he can, and out he goes. Then Hades tells his own Demons to hurry and bar the gates. The Human captives mock Hades, especially David, who says that those words of the Psalm were his prophecy of this very moment.

The Voice comes again, “Lift up the Gates!” Hades, pretending not to know who it is, says, “Who is it?” The Angels with Jesus answer (following the words of the Psalm), “The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in Battle!”

The Gates are shattered, and Jesus comes in, in a blaze of glory that lights up the whole place. Now Hades asks in earnest, “Who are you! Are you Jesus? Our Chief Ruler Satan told us about you, that by your cross and death you would inherit the whole World.”

Wait a minute – did we miss something? Satan said no such thing to Hades. And, by the way, where *is* Satan? He was supposed to try to hold Jesus off.

Ah, here he is! – Jesus grabs him by the head and hands him over to the Angels, telling them: “Fetter his hands and feet and neck and mouth!” Then Jesus says to Hades, “Take him and hold him fast until my second coming!”

Hades takes charge of Satan and delivers a bitter tirade against him, calling him Beelzebub, and blaming him for this fiasco. Hades resents losing all of his “holdings,” but at the same time he says that Satan has lost them, too. Hades promises that he will give Satan a hard time, by visiting “evils” upon him.

Jesus leads out all of the people there, beginning with Adam, and leads them to “Paradise,” leaving Hades’s domain empty. It soon becomes clear, however, that it’s only the righteous souls that Jesus

has rescued, but there is no mention of Cain and other wicked souls and their fate.

We notice that Jesus has no grudge against Hades – probably because he's not real! The upshot of the story, for our purposes, is that Satan is not in charge of Hell, and once he is consigned to Hell for the "duration," he is in a state that would make it impossible for him to carry on any Satanic shenanigans.

Still, even though Satan is not in charge of Hell, Hades thinks of him as his Ruler, and of his captives as somehow belonging to Satan as well. Maybe Satan is the Overlord of the Underlord.

As we shall see, there are various gradations of the belief that Satan was bound in Hell, some of them contradictory. That is, it seems that some persons believe that he is simultaneously bound and still able to roam about like a lion, as St. Peter says, looking for victims (1 Peter 5.8; see **chap. 5.5** above). One source for the binding of Satan is, of course, Revelation 20.2–3, which says that he is to be bound for a thousand years (see **chap. 6.2**).

But another popular source is the Beelzebub episode in the Gospels, beginning with Mark. We recall (see **chap. 4.1**) that when Jesus was accused of casting out Demons with the aid of the Chief Demon Beelzebub, He responded with five mini-parables, beginning with the absurdity of a satan casting out a satan, and ending with the example of the "strong man's house": in order to burglarize it, you first need to tie up the owner (Mark 3.23–27).

Later on, Beelzebub was identified with Satan, and all five examples were read as dealing with Satan and his Kingdom, and the *Oikia tou Ischurou*, "Dwelling of the Strong One," was identified as the World, and the *Ischuros* himself as Satan (**chap. 9.2**). Then, eventually, Satan's *Oikia* was seen to be Hell. In both cases, "the Plunderer of the Goods of the Strong One" is none other than Jesus, and, when the Dwelling is interpreted as Hell, the Goods are the souls of the Dead being held captive by Satan, as in the *Descensus ad Inferos*. Except,

as we have noted, Satan doesn't really live in Hell until he's tied up and left there.

So, where are we? It's getting pretty late in the day, and we still don't have anyone supervising the torments of Hell except Hades, who would have been consistently recognized as a nonentity, a mere personification.

To tell you the truth, I'm stumped. I haven't been able to pinpoint when Satan was given his last commission, of running Hell. It seems that the question is usually fudged, by having "Demons" in general be the operatives responsible for tormenting souls. Remember, even in the *Descensus ad Inferos*, Hades is said to have Demons who work for him, at least as custodians, if not as tormentors.

Well, while I continue to look for more evidence of medieval ideas on this point – I'll make it a research project for the future – let's move on to the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. Lombard was a theologian who taught in Paris, and he finished his treatise shortly before he died in 1160. Its title means, basically, "Quotations from the Fathers of the Church." It became the standard text after it was approved at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, and it was customary for doctoral students in theology to write a commentary on it.

When Lombard deals with Satan and the other Fallen Angels, he doesn't go back to his standard Fathers, Augustine, Jerome, Hilary of Poitiers, and so on, but silently relies on a theologian of his own century, namely Hugh of St. Victor, another Parisian, who died in 1142; Lombard draws on his *Summa Sententiarum* 2.3–4 (PL 176:82–85).

All the views of Lombard that follow come from Book 2 of the *Sentences*, Distinction 6 (PL 192:662–64). Soon after the creation of the Angels, Peter says, some of them turned towards their Creator, while others turned away from Him and against Him, and, of course, fell from Heaven. Among the latter group was the one who had hitherto been the greatest of all Angels, Lucifer, and other higher Angels, as

well as lesser Angels, fell with him. This event is documented in the Book of Revelation, which reads: "The Dragon falling from Heaven drew with him a third part of the Stars." (Actually, Revelation says that the Dragon with his tail cast down a third of the Stars [12.4], and then he and his Angels got into a fight with Michael and his Angels, and Dragon's Angels were cast out along with him [12.7-9], with no mention of rank or number. See **chap. 6.2.**)

These Fallen Angels were not allowed to dwell on the Earth along with Human Beings, lest their pestilential influence be too oppressive against us. Rather they were forced to live in the Foggy Air (*Aer Caliginosus*) above the Earth. This is also the perspective of the *Golden Legend's* account of the Archangel Michael (*GL* 145). According to this, the great battle between Michael and the Dragon, that is, Lucifer, described in the Book of Revelation, took place at the very beginning, and the Devil and his hordes were forced down to the Lower Air. They are as innumerable as the specks of dust seen floating in the air, and they regularly descend from the Air to Earth to tempt Men. But James also cites Gregory the Great as saying that the battle depicted in Revelation is Michael's coming fight with Antichrist. Furthermore, the same account refers to Michael's constant battling with Demons to prevent them from doing too much damage on Earth.

Lombard goes on to say that it is likely that some of these Fallen Angels, who are now Demons, descend every day to Hell, taking with them the souls of the wicked who have just died, and it may be that these Demons take turns with other Demons who are in the Upper World, to keep the souls in a state of confinement and to administer torments. There are some who believe that Lucifer has been bound in Hell from the time that he was defeated by Christ in the Desert, or at the time of His Passion. Others, however, believe that he was buried in Hell from the time of his original fall – thereby bypassing the Foggy Air – because of the magnitude of his sin.

But whether or not Lucifer is presently detained in Hell, Lombard continues, we can easily believe that he does not now have

as much power to tempt us as he will have in the future, in the time of the Antichrist, when he will be released from any such detention upon his person or powers and allowed to wreak maximum havoc. Finally, Lombard cites via Hugh the opinion of Origen that Demons whose temptations are resisted by Saints have their power of tempting removed or reduced.

Thus far Lombard. But it is all very frustrating: why can't the man make up his mind? We go to theology books to be told what's what, not what may or might be what. It's quite clear that Lombard doesn't know what to think. People in the next century, the age of the great Scholastics, will not be so wishy-washy. They tend to come to a definite decision on every point under discussion, as we shall see in the following chapter when dealing with the theology of Thomas Aquinas.

Let's summarize. Satan may or may not be tied down in Hell. If he is, that means that he's not in charge of Hell, right? No, not necessarily. Notice that his fellow Angels are the prison-guards and tormentors. So it would only make sense that they would take their orders from Satan, whether he is still roaming about in his virtually omnipresent way in the Upper World, or whether he is in chains in Hell. For, unless his mouth is clamped shut, as in the *Descensus ad Inferos*, he could still be the CEO of Evil, Inc.

To show that this latter picture is not just a fantasy on my part, let me cite some Old English interpretations of Genesis.⁵ In *Genesis B*, an Anglo-Saxon poem based in turn on a (lost) Old Saxon poem, Satan with all of his Angels has been cast into a fiery Hell. He loudly maintains that they have been robbed of Heaven, where they will be replaced with humans. Satan himself is bound in fetters, feet and hands and neck. He knows that God has done this because He is aware that Satan would make trouble for Adam if he were free. Let's listen a bit to what he says:

⁵ For Modern English translations, see *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, ed. and tr. S. A. J. Bradley (Everyman's Library, London: Dent, 1982).

Is thaes aenga styde ungelic swithe

Tham othrum ham the we aer cuthon!

Oops! That English is *really* Old, isn't it? We'll modernize it a bit, while observing the rules of alliteration:

This desolate place is different by far

From that other home that ere we knew! –

High in Heaven-Realm, handed me by my Lord –

Though we by the All-Ruler to own it were not allowed,

Or our Realm to broaden. But right He has not done

To have felled us into the fiery depths,

Into this hot Hell, Heaven-Realm taken away –

Which now He has marked with Mankind

To settle. That is of sorrow most to me,

That Adam shall, of Earth being made,

Move in upon my mighty throne,

Being in bliss! – while we bear this torment,

Harm in this Hell! Oh, oh, had I my hands to use,

And for one time could wend out of here,

Be gone for a winter's hour, then with this army, I—

But binding me about are bands of iron,

Ropes around me, I am reft of power!

(356–72)

But then he calls for a volunteer to go to Adam and Eve in his place, and that is what happens, with terrible results for Mankind.

In another poem, *Christ and Satan*, Satan and his hordes are indeed thrust into Hell after their original sin, and Satan is chained there, while the others who fell with him rebuke him. But it turns out that Satan and the others can fly out occasionally, while bearing the shackles of their torments with them. At the Harrowing of Hell, Jesus imposes greater bonds of punishment on Satan and the other Fiends and thrusts them deeper into Hell.

The poet Cynewulf, by contrast, in *Christ II*, has Satan and his Host hurled down to Hell only after Christ's death on the Cross, at

the Harrowing of Hell. Satan is bound then with fiery fetters, and he lies there still. But in another poem, *Elene*, about St. Helen and her unearthing of the True Cross, Cynewulf shows that the Devil is still very much at large in the World. The Devil himself explains that Christ has often shut him up in Hell, and the implication is that He will continue to do so. In *Iuliana*, Cynewulf follows the account that the *Golden Legend* later adopted (see above): the King of Hell-Dwellers seems to stay in Hell while sending his minions to Earth to do his dirty work. But Cynewulf greatly expands the Demon's account of his exploits and has him take credit for many of the major events during the life of Christ. His successes may even have started with Adam, but a leaf of the poem has been lost at the beginning of his confession. In the non-Cynewulfian *Andreas*, the Devil is bound in fetters of fire, but he can still move about on his evil business, taking his fetters with him.

The upshot is that, even though the theologians were reluctant to pronounce on Satan's status in Hell, the poets were not.