THE DEVIL IN LEGEND AND LITERATURE

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THE DEVIL IN LEGEND AND LITERATURE

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One of the most fascinating characters of literature is the devil. His sphere is not limited to strictly religious subjects; he has appeared in folklore and in secular literature. Although he represents the powers of evil, he is surprisingly popular. He is a colorful, and sometimes even a comic, character. Even though he is associated with a popular concept of Christianity, he is actually a composite of many gods and demons of the pre-Christian world. The purpose of this paper is to trace some of the accepted characteristics of the devil to their origins through the study of folklore and ancient religions. For even the most sophisticated devil of literature is basically a creation of folklore. The most original thing most authors do is to choose the evil they want their devil to represent.

For this discussion, I have chosen four devils. Three are the creations of the master writers: Dante Alighieri, John Milton, and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. The fourth is a creation of oral tradition; he is the main character of several Mexican folk tales, some of which were told to me by high school students. There are many similarities between the literary devils and the devil of modern Mexican folklore.¹

¹Note: The term Modern Mexican Folklore indicates the oral literature of those persons of Mexican-Indian descent living on both sides of the Rio Grande River. Most of the stories come from the United States; a few were gathered in Mexico.
All of them take many characteristics from popular medieval folklore and ancient pagan religions. To distinguish between them, I have called each by the name most often used by his creator. Thus the name Satan will refer to the proud angel of Milton's *Paradise Lost*; Dis is the three-headed monster of Dante's *Divine Comedy*; Mephistopheles is Goethe's sardonic devil of *Faust*; and Diablo is the dark-dressed stranger known to Texas Mexicans. Since Diablo is probably a stranger to most Anglo-Americans, I have included in the Appendix the stories to which I refer in the following chapters.

This study is divided into five chapters, each discussing a different characteristic of the devils. The first chapter will discuss the principal form taken by each devil and trace its beginnings through folklore. Satan, the fallen angel, is a creation of Judaism; the monster Dis resembles several Northern gods; Mephistopheles fits the medieval folk description of the Evil One; and Diablo has one feature of an ancient Babylonian demon. Three animals which are associated with these devils are discussed in Chapter II. The raven and the dog are related to the Christian devil because they were companions of some pagan gods. The serpent was the form of an early god. These animals provide companions for the devil in popular folk tales; sometimes they are the form in which he traveled among mankind. The third chapter will deal with the power allotted to these devils. In all cases it is represented as being ultimately controlled by God. Magic figures widely
in stories of the devil. This includes both the black magic used by the devil and the white magic, such as holy objects and charms, used against him. The devil's powers in the world of magic are greater than those he has in any other field.

The age in which he was created determines the evil that the devil represents. This is reflected by the fact that each of the four devils, although based on the same Biblical character, serves a different purpose. These purposes will be discussed in the last chapter.

Two terms should perhaps be explained here. Many of the folk beliefs under discussion, while held by a great many Christians in medieval Europe, were never approved by the church, nor were they in keeping with the teachings of Christ. Although they formed a part of the Christian religion for many people (especially the uneducated masses), they should not be considered as a part of the actual, approved Christian doctrine. To distinguish these folk beliefs from approved doctrine, I have labeled them as "popular Christianity" or applied the adjective "popular Christian" to them. These terms will indicate that the beliefs were accepted by a great many people, even by some of the clergy, but not by the church itself. Uneducated peoples the world over have a tendency to accept literally the details of stories told to illustrate spiritual truths. Early Christian teachers sometimes used dramatic incidents to illustrate the ideas of their faith. Their followers accepted these incidents, believed them literally, and
added some of their own. These stories tended to be picture esque and fantastic and, in some cases, no longer reflected any moral teaching. These became the folklore of Christianity.

Part of this folklore came from the pagan religions which were driven out (sometimes by the help of a sword) by the new faith. The many people who accepted the new religion were incapable of understanding it except in concepts of a familiar faith. So the superstitions, festivals, and deities of the pagan world found a place in the Christian world. This blending of pagan and Christian practices has led many critics to accuse the Christian faith of superstition and ignorance. These critics must have accepted the folklore as comprising the whole of Christianity, thereby ignoring the spiritual truths involved. Since the devil is a creation of this folklore, most of the material in this study will be designated by the terms mentioned above.

By studying the devil through the medium of this folklore, I believe I can better understand the devils used in formal literature. Folklorist Theodor H. Gaster explained the relationship between folklore and literature in his definition of folklore.

Folklore is that part of a people's culture which is preserved, consciously or unconsciously, in beliefs and practices, customs and observances of general currency; in myths, legends, and tales of common acceptance; and in arts and crafts which express the temper and genius of a group rather than an individual. Because it is a depository of popular traditions and an integral
element of the popular climate, folklore serves as a constant source and frame of reference for more formal literature and art; but it is distinct therefrom in that it is essentially of the people, and for the people.2

This relationship between the devils of literature and those of folklore will be discussed throughout the paper. I hope to show the extent to which the authors borrowed from the folk picture of the devil. Following Gaster's idea, I believe the devil will emerge as a creation of, by, for, and against the people.

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CHAPTER I

PRINCIPAL FORMS OF THE FOUR DEVILS

The physical form of the Devil is fairly well crystalized in the popular mind. When he is mentioned, there usually comes to mind a creature with a leering smile, two short horns, and a strangely pointed tail. He carries a pitchfork, and his feet are those of an animal. His color may be either black or red. Otherwise he much resembles a human being. To the Christian world this strange creature is the personification of the powers of evil.

To understand the modern conception of Satan, as well as that used by the authors under discussion, one might do well to consider a brief history of him. The history of the Devil is also the history of God—of man's attempts to discover and explain the mysteries of life. The earliest form of devotion in which man participated was the worship of mutable spirits. To the savage, the world was controlled by various spirits, many of them hostile to man. The greatest and most practical art of life was that of appeasing those spirits, or making some arrangements with them so human society could have security. Although the primitives recognized some good spirits, they were less likely to pay tribute to them. If the god was already beneficent, why waste time inducing
him to be good to man? There were too many evil gods to be conciliated to waste time or sacrifices on a good god.¹

Since primitive man believed that the gods were localized, that is, that each spot of nature had its own spirit, it was only a step to the idea that these local gods attached themselves to a certain family, or even to a tribe. In this way, Yahweh became the special divinity of the Hebrew tribes. The Hebrews believed other gods existed, but these gods were often in opposition to Yahweh (the people who worshipped them were enemies of the Hebrews). Thus the Hebrews thought of other gods as evil spirits who willed their destruction, while Yahweh was concerned with their safety.¹ The Christians later were to think of Satan as an ever-present force, constantly leading them astray.¹ The Hebrews were not bothered so much by these first devils. They were conscious of them only when their enemies defeated them in battle, or when they themselves were sternly rebuked by their prophets for turning to worship these gods.² Whatever occurred, fortunate or unfortunate, Yahweh was responsible for it. The idea of one definite personality of evil did not formulate in the Jewish mind


until a series of wars drove them to live as captives among the Assyrians, the Babylonians, and the Persians.

As the Hebrew religion grew and its prophets formed a more definite picture of Yahweh, they pictured him as a god of love and mercy. It became increasingly difficult to explain why this merciful god would allow the evil and suffering that was obviously very much present in the world. The Persians had already met this problem in their religion, and had solved it with the theory of dualism as found in the teachings of Zoroastrianism. According to this theory, god is not responsible for evil. This is the work of a certain Ahriman, who is god's co-equal and great enemy. Thus the entire world is merely a stage for a great spiritual battle between the great god and his enemy.3

The Jews adopted this explanation; and even though Satan (whose name means "the enemy") is mentioned very few times in the Old Testament, his growth can be traced even there. In the Book of Job Satan appears as a member of God's court. His special assignment seems to be that of public accuser.4 In the Book of Zechariah he appears as the prosecutor in the arraignment of Joshua before the heavenly throne. Here he is not submissive to God as he had been in the episode of Job.5

4John Fiske, Myths and Myth-Makers (Boston, 1872), p. 123.
The history of King David, first recorded in the books of Samuel, gives the most obvious indication of the change of thought regarding Satan. The first writer told of David's taking a census of his people, an act that Yahweh had forbidden. Yet, strangely enough, Yahweh is said to have influenced David to disobey this order. A later, post-exilic writer revised this confused bit of reasoning by asserting, in the Book of the Chronicles, that David's actions had been prompted by Satan.

Once evil became a definite personality, it was necessary to give him a physical form and a history. The Jews, in giving Satan a form, followed a pattern that has been used in many religions. Satan took the form of enemy gods and evil spirits against whose worship the religious leaders wished to strike a blow. His history took more time to formulate, but by the second century B.C. the book of Enoch described Satan as a fallen angel. When Christianity arrived some two hundred years later, it inherited this still growing cult of demonology. How much it drew on the concepts already formed will be seen in this and following chapters.

As A Three-Headed Monster in an Icy Hell

Of the three authors, Dante presents the briefest and also the most repulsive view of the devil. His Dis is a monster imprisoned in the icy pit of the Inferno. Dis's size is so gigantic that Dante can measure it only by explaining
that his arm is much larger than the giants present in the same vicinity. Dis retains his wings, but they are those of a bat, not an angel. He has three heads for his great, shaggy body. One face is red, the other a pale yellow, and the other black. Beneath each face is a pair of the bat-like wings whose furious flappings only cause the river to freeze faster and imprison him more rapidly. He is a vile, repulsive monster; Dante explains that his ugliness is in direct proportion to his former beauty.

Dante drew less on folklore than the other two writers, but even he is influenced by it in his characterization of the devil. The multi-headed demon is known in folk tradition. The pre-Christian Slavs worshipped a deity named Svantovit, whose images show him with four heads, two in front and two in back. Other Slavic gods with several heads included Rugievit, with seven faces on his head; Perrevit with five heads; and Porenutius, with one of his five faces on his breast. The Slavic priests explained that the god Triglave had three heads to signify that he ruled over heaven, earth, and the underworld. The Norse knew an evil three-headed Frost giant named Hrimgrimmer who battled with the gods. The Greek

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Hecate sometimes had three heads: one of a toad, one of a man, and one of a lion. Typhon, who warred against Zeus, had one hundred heads. Since Dante was a student of the classical Greek learning, he was more likely influenced by the demons of Greek mythology.

Although Dante's departure from the conventional picture of a fiery hell served his own literary purpose, there are, nevertheless, folklore parallels to his icy pit. In Norse mythology the abode of the goddess Hel (underworld home of the dead) is said to be "sleet-cold." When the first Christian missionaries approached the Eskimos and told them about the heat of hell, the natives were impressed. They wanted to know immediately how to get to hell. Anything warm appealed to them; a lake of perpetual fire they regarded as paradise. The peoples of many northern countries pictured the afterworld as a cold, dark region.

Although Dante's Dis is more a symbol than a character, the Italian poet put him into a physical form with features already popularly associated with the Evil One. As shall be


12 Waterman, op. cit., p. 276.
seen later, the devil's physical form was important to Dante only in the punishment and evil it symbolized. The fact that folklore influenced his picture indicates the many pagan features of a devil which popular Christianity claimed.

The Devil as a Fallen Angel

The concept of Satan as a fallen angel comes primarily from the Jews, although they must have been influenced by the Persians and Babylonians. The Persian idea of two great forces engaged in conflict has already been explained. The Babylonians knew an evil dragon, Tiamat, who led her forces against the champion of the gods, Marduk, and out of whose body the god fashioned the universe. These demons were the offspring of the great Heaven-god Anu (as were all the gods), but they warred against the gods and were malicious toward man. By making Satan a fallen angel the Jews could explain the presence of evil without accepting the Persian theory that a being existed whom God had not created.

The first Jewish reference to Satan as a fallen angel came in the second century B.C. in the first Book of Enoch. On reading Genesis 6:2-4 (which tells how the "sons of God" took human wives and the children of these unions were giants


14 Ibid., p. 357.
or "mighty men") the writer of Enoch decided that if angels came to earth and had human wives, there must have been a previous rebellion and sin on the part of the angels. Developing this hint, they concluded that a large number of angels had been cast out of heaven. Led by certain archangels, these hosts landed on Mount Hermon and while living among men, taught them various sins. Further support of this theory came from the word *nepilim*, the word for giants or mighty men. According to rabbinic legend, the word comes from the Hebrew verb *nafal*, "to fall."16

A Jewish story of the second century A.D. tells that Satan and his followers rebelled on the sixth day of creation. After God had created man and the universe, He called his angels together and commanded them to worship his new creation. Jealous of the new creature and proud of his own high rank, Satan refused, and God banished him from heaven.17 In this story Satan appears in a bad light; he resembles a spoiled, stupid child. When he learned that Adam was going to name all the animals, he protested to God that this privilege should be his, since he was older than Adam. God says his claims

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16Max Wiener, "Angels (In the Talmudic Period)," The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isaac Landman (New York, 1939), 1, 312.

17Langdon, op. cit., p. 354.
were justified and brings the animals to him so he may name them. Satan's ingenuity is exhausted before half the animals are named; and God has to call in Adam, who easily does the job, obviously because of superior intelligence. Before Satan obeys God's command to leave, he states his plan to become God's enemy.18

Early Christian theology accepted the devil as a fallen angel. However, the verses in Genesis which had been the basis for the Jewish concept were given a new interpretation. Saint Augustine taught that the "sons of God" who took wives of the "daughters of men" referred to a connection between the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain.19 The church taught that the creation of man was not planned until after the expulsion of Satan and his angels.20 The church accused Satan of being jealous, not of man, but of God himself.

Although the Bible does not give the story of Satan's fall, the story has enjoyed wide popularity among Christian countries. The border Mexican is familiar with it. In one of the stories relating the devil's activities in Ojinaga, Mexico, Diablo tells the padre his history:

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In heaven I was not satisfied with my low rank, so I tried to grab the reins of power from God. I was soundly defeated and was bodily thrown out of heaven with my rebellious companions. As I fell through the sky toward the planet earth, I knew I was an exile forever from the heavens, so I tried to think of a place I should like to live. As the approaching mountains and valleys of the earth came more clearly into view I could see far below my feet a tall and pointed peak, which I named La Mitra. When I landed on top of the peak, I saw a most beautiful valley lying below. (Mitre Peak is between Fort Davis and Alpine, in the cool Texas highlands.) I knew I could not be happy here for in its beauty it would be too sharp a reminder of the heaven to which I can never return. So I spread my wings and took flight once more, heading south. When I found this desolate and tortuous mountain, I took my abode here in this cave overlooking the valley, and here I have lived ever since.

That the Mexican knows the story and adds local color to it is further proof of its acceptance in folk imagination.

For the most part, Milton followed the usual story of the fall of the angels, but he added much to the character of Satan in *Paradise Lost*. He accepted the basic assumption of the church that pride was the cause of Satan's fall, but gave Satan many of his own faults. Milton recognized in himself a fiery, passionate nature which he found hard to reconcile with the stern teachings of Puritanism. Milton's brilliant, brilliant

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and often skeptical, mind must have rebelled against the rigid Puritan theology. Pride, egotism, and a sense of one's own rights, Milton considered the greatest of temptations. They led to inaccuracy, malice, idiocy, and finally hell. Because of Satan's self-love, he reasons inaccurately when he attempts to overthrow God; his malicious attitude toward God leads him to degenerate personally. Because of the rebellion, hell became his dwelling place. By showing how Satan's pride, sensuality, and love of power led to decay and destruction, Milton gave a warning to himself as well as to others.

Although Satan may reflect Milton's own evil propensities, the impression he makes at the beginning of the poem is quite favorable. His very physical appearance is impressive. In his first speech Satan remarks the change in the bright heavenly forms of his followers, but Milton indicates they still have much of their former beauty:

Thus Satan talking to his nearest Mate  
With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes  
That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides  
Prone on the flood, extended long and large  
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,  
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove.

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Modern society, which tends to admire the underdog, or the rebel against established power, finds in Satan's speeches the stuff of which heroes are made. Here is one who, even though defeated, will not give up a cause in which he believes:

What though the field be lost?
All is not lost; the unconquerable Will,
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield. 26

His strength ("...to be weak is miserable") 27 and his ambition ("Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven") 28 gave him the stoic-like courage with which he accepts his new home:

... profoundest Hell
Receive thy new Possessor; One who brings
A mind not to be chang'd by Place or Time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav'n of Hell, a Hell of Heav'n. 29

Although Milton's stated purpose was to glorify God, his proud, rebellious angel wins more admiration than the Almighty.

With these speeches in mind, members of later generations declared Satan the hero of the epic. The romantic poet Shelley thought that Milton's god, as a moral being, was inferior to Satan who "perseveres in some purpose which he had conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture." 30

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28 Ibid., p. 18. 29 Ibid., p. 17.
majestic characterization of Satan led Blake to declare that Milton "was of the devil's party without knowing it."\textsuperscript{31} Tillyard thought that Milton, a rebel at heart, had been led away from his original purpose by the exciting character of Satan.\textsuperscript{32} According to P. H. Forsyth, Satan's behavior toward his fallen helpers is his finest feature. Satan volunteers to go to earth, Forsyth claims, partly because of ambition, and partly because he feels responsible for the future of his fellow devils. In his journey to earth he will liberate the devils as Christ will later liberate man. Satan sacrifices himself for his followers, Forsyth concludes; but God does not.\textsuperscript{33} The Romantic Age especially hailed Milton's Satan as the "real" devil, and his rebellion against a stern God captured the sympathy of many poets and critics.

These critics seem to have considered only the Satan of the first part of the poem. They did not take into consideration Milton's full picture. The romantic allure of Satan is destroyed by knowledge of his incestuous relations with his daughter Sin, of his underhanded plan to avenge himself on God by causing the downfall of innocent mankind, and of his


\textsuperscript{33}Forsyth, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 519-530.
degeneration of character which finally causes him to take
the form of a serpent. In allowing Satan such appealing qual-
ities in the beginning of the story, Milton was only keeping
his character true to the legend. This Satan was among the
greatest of God's angels; he would necessarily have had many
noble qualities. The few faults he allowed to develop proved
his downfall. Milton did what Shakespeare and other writers
have done; he showed the decaying effects of sin on what was
once a noble character. Satan is a heroic and admirable char-
acter as in Macbeth or Dr. Faustus. The qualities of pride
and defiance which make him so admired are the very same qual-
ities that cause the degeneration of his character. The true
picture of Milton's Satan must be the entire picture.

The Devil in Human Form

Two of the devils under consideration (Mephistopheles
and Diablo) used the form of a human being. However, the devil
cannot appear in perfect form. There must be some character-
istic by which the faithful may recognize him. This is usually
some physical deformity such as an oddly shaped foot or a
limp. Mephistopheles is so close to normal that he can travel
with Faust without being detected. However, during the drinking
scene in Act I, Siebel, inspecting Faust and Mephistopheles
closely, asks of Mephistopheles, "In one foot is the fellow
lame?" Medieval demonologists considered this defect a

34 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust, translated by Bayard
definite characteristic of the devil. They explained the limp in two ways. One theory supposed that the devil broke his leg when he fell from heaven. The leg did not heal correctly, and he has had a limp ever since. The more popular reason for the limp is that one of the devil’s feet is shaped like an animal’s foot. In European myths, this was usually the cloven hoof of a goat. When the witch met Faust and Mephistopheles, she did not recognize the demon. Upon learning his identity, she apologized and remarked, "Yet I perceive no cloven foot." Mephistopheles explained that since he last saw her, he had discarded the old-fashioned horns and tail and had disguised the cloven hoof:

The days of that old Northern Phantom now are over
Where canst thou horns and tail and claws discover?
And, as regards the foot, which I can’t spare, in truth,
’T would only make the people shun me;
Therefore I’ve worn, like many a pindly youth,
False calves these many years upon me.

But even though he disguises the deformity, Mephistopheles still keeps the feature that would identify him as a devil.

Mephistopheles inherited his goat foot from the gods of antiquity. Every animal form that was assumed by ancient gods has had its body occupied by the devil. Goat-formed deities and spirits of the woods existed in the religions of India,

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36 Goethe, op. cit., p. 92.
Egypt, Assyria, and Greece. The goat was sacred to the Northern god Thor. The Greeks had many minor deities like Pan, the Satyrs, and the Fauns who either were in goat form or had some part of the goat's body. Dionysus, Greek god of fertility, appeared more often as a huge bull, but at times he too took the form of a goat. These gods were present when Christianity began fighting paganism; and when the early church fathers and artists conceived the devil as a physical being, they gave him the features of these pagan gods.

Stories from Europe and early America show the cloven hoof as an accepted part of the devil's form. A popular European tale told of a demon who seduced the beautiful wife of a lord. When fleeing with her lover, the faithless woman was horrified to discover he had the cloven feet of a goat. In 1521 the artist Lille did two pictures, "The Devil Pointing Out Hidden Treasure," and "Apparition by the Secret of the Black Hen," in which he showed the devil with cloven hooves. As late as 1764 the devil appeared to two Americans as they walked through a dark wood. Among the many shapes he assumed,


39 Sister Mary Edith, op. cit.

one was that of a black man with one cloven foot. Even Mephistopheles, the humanized devil of the Enlightenment, is identified by this medieval trademark, the cloven foot.

In their stories of Diablo the Texas Mexicans do not mention a goat's foot. Diablo does appear sometimes with a mule's hoof for a right foot. He uses this hoof to kick his victims most viciously. The change from the goat's cloven foot to the mule's hoof is hard to trace. Loki, of Norse mythology, had a horse's hoof, as did an Arabian Jinn (evil spirit of the night) which appeared to a desert Arab, according to a story told to explorer C. M. Doughty. At the explorer's request, the Arab drew a picture of Jinn, showing her as a bird-like creature having one foot shaped like a horse's hoof. Perhaps the Mexican decided that if the devil were going to have an animal's foot, it should be one with which he could do harm; and, as he well knew, the mule can kick harder than a mere goat. Or perhaps he felt that the mule was a more lowly, evil-tempered animal, and so gave his hoof to the personification of evil. Whatever the reason, the hoof appears only rarely.

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42 Frank Goodwyn, The Devil in Texas (Dallas, 1936), p. 15.

43 Rudwin, op. cit., p. 45.

Diablo's most prominent feature is a rooster's claw which always takes the place of his left foot. Sometimes the claw forms both his feet. The people of Ojinaga tell of a beautiful girl who attended a dance against her parents' wishes. When a handsome stranger in black asked to dance with her, the young woman noticed that he approached her "not on human legs, but strutting on scaly, spurred legs like those of a rooster. She knew immediately that this stranger, half-human suitor was the devil himself." The same story explains how the devil uses these strange feet. The next morning the girl's parents found her mangled body in a dry irrigation ditch; she had been savagely clawed.

When Diablo attended a dance in Balmorhea, Texas, a small boy noticed the rooster's foot and screamed a warning to the others. Angered by the discovery, the devil struck at the dancers, killing all present. When Matasiete, a notorious outlaw, was buried on the outskirts of Monclavo, Mexico, curious people went to see his grave. On boulders near by they found imprints of the devil's claws. "Matasiete was not

\[45\text{Miles, op. cit., p. 207.}\]

\[46\text{Note: The widely popular story has been told to me by various students in both Midland, and Pyote, Texas. Soledad Perez found it among the Mexicans of Austin and included it in her folklore collection. The name of the girl and the setting vary, but the basic story is the same.}\]

\[47\text{Story told by Jesusita Natividad, student, Pyote, Texas, April 15, 1958.}\]
a human being, but the devil," they concluded. South Texas vaqueros tell of a young man who recognized the devil's peculiar feet and tried to run away. Diablo used the cock's foot to catch the culprit and then clawed him severely. In a cave near Devil's River, in Southwest Texas, Diablo once imprisoned a man by burying him up to his neck in sand; then he tortured the man by clawing his face.

Diablo inherited his cock's foot from Asmodeus, a popular Jewish devil well known to medieval Europe. According to the writers of the Talmud, Asmodeus was a handsome devil who limped slightly because of the cock's foot. In tracing the history of the devil, Maximilian Rudwin concludes that the Jew borrowed Asmodeus from the Persians; and Nathan Ausubel, in his studies of Jewish folklore, linked Asmodeus with the Persian demon Ahriman. Ahriman did not have a cock's foot, and why his descendant should have one is hard to discover. Rudwin attributes the cock's foot to two possible sources. During their captivity the Jews came into contact with a cock

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51 Rudwin, op. cit., p. 93.

52 Ausubel, op. cit., p. 592.
which was sacred to the Persian sun-god. Since it was connected with a heathen deity, the cock became obnoxious to the Jewish leaders who assigned its foot to the devil. He also mentioned an Ethiopian demon who had one cock's foot and one hoof. Because of the exchange of culture between Egypt and Ethiopia this demon may have been known to the Egyptians, and hence, to the early Hebrews who lived among them.

However, the cock's foot may be an outgrowth of a Babylonian tendency to give the claws of a bird to demons. On a bronze plaque found in Babylon is an engraving showing the Sumarian demon Lamashtu fleeing from a god. Her feet are those of a bird of prey. An image of Pazuzu, the Babylonian wind-demon, shows a four-winged figure with hands of a savage wild animal and legs that terminate in the talons of a bird of prey.

These half-animals, half-human demons may be related to two birds which the Babylonians once considered as demons. In their creation myth the eagle is allied with the wicked sea serpent who opposed the creation. On some monuments an eagle with rapacious claws is the storm bird. A cylinder seal shows Marduk, the chief god of Babylon, battling a lion

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53 Rudwin, op. cit., p. 311.  
54 Ibid., p. 45.  
55 Langdon, op. cit., p. 367.  
56 Ibid., p. 119.
with an eagle's head and talons. The ostrich was associated with demons in both Babylonian and Arabian myth. When the Babylonians changed their demon from animal to human form, the demons retained some of the animal parts. The Jews were first introduced to a demon with claws when they were exiled in Babylon.

Both Christian and Jewish folklore associated the cock's feet with the devil, although neither explains how he acquired them. The cock's foot was not popular in medieval Christian folk tales, but it was used by several artists of that period. One drawing by Grant Kalendrier, done in the sixteenth century, shows the devils tormenting victims in hell and standing on feet much like roosters' claws. The artists Sassetta (fourteenth century) and Moliter (fifteenth century) show the devil with the cock's feet, as does a picture of the fifteenth century found in Augsburg. Why Diablo should have the rooster's foot and not the cloven hoof is one of the mysteries of folklore. Perhaps the claw makes a better weapon than the hoof.

The horns which Diablo sometimes wears, and which the vaqueros say are part of his true form, have an ancient history. In religions of antiquity horns were a mark of the deities. Horns were found among the gods of the Babylonians, the

57 Ibid., p. 281.  
58 Ibid., p. 356.  
Egyptians, and the Syrians. The Babylonian high gods often wore a head-dress with a double pair of horns. 60 Hadad, chief male god of the Syrians, had a bearded human head and horns. 61 Cows were sacred to the Egyptian goddess Isis; she was often shown with the horns of a cow on her head, or even as a woman with the head of a cow. 62 Sir James Frazer explained the origin of this idea (giving horns to gods) in his comments on Dionysus, a horned god of early Greece. Dionysus's first form was that of a powerful bull, god of agriculture and a general fertility symbol. To early cattle breeders the bull was the most natural emblem of generative force. When the god took on human form, he retained his animal parts; the horns denoted the virility of the god by recalling the bull. 63 This same thing might have happened to many of the old gods. The horns suggested the generative force in nature; they also suggested strength. Early man must have been greatly impressed by the destructive strength of a maddened horned beast. 64


The degeneration of the horned god probably came with the Christian era, and with the final degeneration of Pan and the Satyrs. These wood spirits of the Greeks may have once been great gods whose popularity was diminishing when their worshippers were conquered by others, or when some outside influence brought in a more popular god. These old gods were not discarded but allowed to degenerate into half-animal wood spirits and eventually, under the influence of Christianity, into devils. The close resemblance between Pan and Satan is noticeable in pictures of the two.

Stories from America and Europe prove the wide acceptance of this part of the devil's person. The Russian gypsies tell of a beautiful girl who married the devil. She was unaware of her husband's identity until she noticed the children in her husband's tribe. They were all sprouting little horns. The Hungarians tell of the devil trying to trick a farmer; the wily peasant noticed the horns and outwitted the devil. When Diablo wished to visit Texas, he hid his horns under a tall black hat. Once the demon Camandolas went to a Texas ranch to get fresh beef. Because of his dark color, his tail, and his horns, he was able to slip among the herd of cattle;

65 Ibid., p. 793.
67 Ibid., p. 102.
the cowboys thought he was another calf.69 The medieval pictures, which have already been mentioned, give the devil horns.

Another physical feature by which Diablo is recognized is his eyes. One story tells of two sisters, as usual on their way to a dance without their parents' permission, who were offered a ride by a handsome stranger. The girl riding in the back seat looked at the driver's face in the rear view mirror, and saw fire in his eyes.70 When the devil walked one disobedient girl home from a dance, she recognized him by his limp and his glowing eyes.71 The devil with glowing eyes was known to the medieval Jew as can be seen in several stories. When a pious rabbi succeeded in capturing Satan and his mate, they took human shapes "except they had wings and their eyes were fiery."72 A little widow who allowed the devil (disguised as a pious, bearded Jew) to escort her to the synagogue, looked down from the woman's gallery, and when her eyes met those of the stranger, she noticed they were dark and seemed to flash fire.73 The uneasy feeling experienced even by sophisticated moderns on meeting a cat unexpectedly in the dark and watching

70 Story told by Margarita Lopez, student, Midland, Texas, May 17, 1961.
71 Perez, op. cit., p. 18.
72 Ausubel, op. cit., p. 215.
73 Ibid., p. 602.
its glowing eyes should explain why the Mexicans, whose devil appears mostly to punish or frighten sinners, give Diablo these features.

The color black is most often linked with Diablo. The vaqueros say it is his true color; even when he appears as a handsome stranger, he retains the color in the clothes he wears. He is described in story after story as a "handsome stranger in a black suit." Primitive man connected black with darkness and with evil things. To the early Hebrews black was a symbol of death, humiliation, and mourning because black absorbed all colors and buried the light. In many religions the god who was first thought of as being the ruler of the dead, or the underworld, was pictured as black. The Egyptian gods Aker (ruler of the underworld) and Osiris (who ruled the dead) were black. The peoples of the Malay Peninsula told of an enemy of their god: "... Kakuh, who lives in the west, He is dangerous and very black."75

That the color black still contains some mystic power is a belief of many peoples, both medieval and modern. The Wahuma tribe of Africa uses the blood of a black goat in their magic mixture to bring rain.76 The medieval Europeans burned


the entrails of a black cock to exorcise a withh;77 they used
the blood of a black pullet to call up a devil.78 The Bantu
tribes of Africa kill a black ram or black ox, take the un-
digested grasses from its stomach and use them in a rain mix-
ture.79 The pre-Christian Lithuanians, in the time of drought,
sacrificed a black heifer, a black he-goat, and a black cock
to the thunder god in the woods.80 The Lapps of the same
period sacrificed black animals to the ruler of the dead.81
The common superstitions regarding a black cat, known to most
moderns, are further proof of an evil and mystical meaning
given to this color.

Diablo is associated with the color red in only two places,
in this research. In two religious dramas still performed in
border villages, folklore collectors have found the devil
dressed in red. Both of these plays were brought from Spain
by the Franciscan fathers in the seventeenth century. In "Los

77 Hartley Burr Alexander, American Mythology (north of
Mexico), Vol. X of The Mythology of All Races, edited by L. S.
78 Seligman, op. cit., p. 294.
79 Sir James Frazer, Taboo and the Perils of the Soul,
81 Uno Holmberg, Finno-Ugric Mythology, Vol. IV of The
Mythology of All Races, edited by MacCulloch and Moore (Boston,
1931), p. 75.
Matachines, a dance given to honor the Virgin of Guadalupe, the gaudily dressed worshippers dance near a house where lives the devil. This character, who appears at intervals and is driven inside by the dancers, wears a fiendish red costume, with horns on his head and a long tail.\textsuperscript{82} In \textit{The Shepherd's Play of the Prodigal Son}, given in several border communities, the devil is dressed in a red suit and a mask; he holds a violin with which he leads the singing of the shepherd's chorus.\textsuperscript{83} Red is perhaps derived from the color of the flames among which the devils make their home. It has not become connected with Diablo in folk imagination.

As can be seen, the devil of Christian folklore has a great many pagan features. His horns once belonged to gods, as did his cloven hoof. His station as a fallen angel comes indirectly from Babylonia and Persia. His claw foot was first associated with a Babylonian demon. The ancient gods of the underworld once claimed his color of black. His position as God's chief enemy was first held by the Persian demon Ahriman and the Babylonian Tiamot. Thus some of his features were already associated with an evil power. Many of them became

\textsuperscript{82}Dellos Urban Bucknew, "A Study of the Lower Rio Grande Valley as a Culture Area," unpublished master's thesis, Department of Sociology, University of Texas, Austin, Texas, 1929, p. 108.

\textsuperscript{83}George C. Barker, editor and translator, \textit{The Shepherd's Play of the Prodigal Son} (Los Angeles, 1953), p. 14.
characteristics of the devil because they belonged to gods that Christianity replaced. The popular Christian devil is a culmination of both gods and demons of the religions known to Judaism and Christianity. His pedigree is ancient and most impressive.
CHAPTER II

THREE ANIMALS CONNECTED WITH THE DEVIL

The devil's relation to the animal gods of antiquity has already been mentioned. The discussion of these three animals will also have to be a discussion of the gods which were connected with the animal in the pre-Christian world. Two of these animals were thought to be the devil himself; the other was a companion of the devil. Milton has Satan take the form of a serpent; Goethe first introduces Mephistopheles in the form of a black poodle. The ravens which bring messages to Mephistopheles were companions of a pre-Christian god.

The Biblical writers sometimes called Satan an animal. The medieval scholars had a tendency to convert symbols and metaphors into facts. If the New Testament called the devil a roaring lion, a dragon, a serpent, a wolf, or a dog, these scholars instantly supposed the devil was in the habit of actually taking the forms of these animals. In their story of the Fall of Man, the canonical writers blamed a serpent for the coming of sin and death. Milton, reflecting the popular Christian interpretation of this story, showed the serpent only as a form taken by Satan. Although Christ and

1Rudwin, op. cit., p. 38.
his apostles referred to the devil or wicked ones as dogs, 
the Bible does not give any example of the devil appearing 
in this form. This Biblical use of the term was enough, how-
ever, to give rise to many medieval stories in which the devil 
did take this form. The raven was not condemned by any Biblical 
writer, but his friendship with several pagan gods made him a 
natural ally of the devil. The widespread tendency to see 
the devil in some animal had its beginning in the writings of 
the Bible.

The Devil as a Serpent

The serpent played a part in the mythology and religion 
of every country where it was known. Primitive peoples have 
worshipped the snake from pre-historic times down to the 
present day. Typical of snake worship found all over Africa 
is the snake cult in Whydah in Western Africa. Here the chief 
god is a giant python which is kept with other snakes in a 
temple; the python may be seen only by the holy priests. Its 
worshippers journey to the temple to offer sacrifices and 
prayers for good weather and fertile crops. To the American 
Indians the snake was an object of veneration, if not actual 
worship. Many tribes knew a Rain Serpent. The most widely 
known of these groups are the Hopi Indians whose strange snake 
dance is a prayer for rain and crop growth. To the ancient 
Egyptians, a serpent was often the embodiment of certain god-
desses, and live snakes were kept as sacred animals in shrines
and temples. The Aztec used snakes in the rituals of their god Coatlicue, whose name meant "serpent." The priests kept rattlesnakes in the Aztec temples and fed them with the flesh of human sacrificial victims. In Greece, snakes fed by a virgin priestess lived in Apollo's shrine at Epirus. The goddess Demeter had a snake as her attendant at Eleusis. The list of serpent worshippers could include peoples of many races and times.2

One of the various reasons for this reverence toward the snake was the tendency to make the snake a phallic symbol or a god of fertility. The serpent was probably connected with adoration of the male principle of generation.3 Primitive man watched the snake crawling into holes in the earth and thought it was the cause of fertility.4 Its connection with fertility is evident in many religions. The African natives on the shore of Lake Victoria Nyanza believed the snake was a giver of children. There they erected a hut in which the snake was housed, and a priestess fed him daily on milk and bread. Expectant mothers came to pray for healthy children;


barren women, for offspring. The Greeks of antiquity thought of the gods as taking the form of snakes, and cohabiting with women who visited their temples. Both Greek and Roman legends related that the gods, as serpents, were fathers of well-known personages by human mothers. The mothers of Augustus Caesar and Alexander the Great were both supposedly visited by gods in snake form. The snake in its phallic connection was not conceived in any obscene sense, but as representing regeneration and new life force.

To some peoples snakes were worthy of reverence because they might contain the souls of the dead. Since the tombs were likely dwelling places for snakes, they were thought to embody ghosts who returned to their old abodes or lingered near the grave. The African Zulu feeds milk to any snake he finds in his house; if the snake is killed accidentally, a sacrifice must be made to placate the offended soul. A few North American Indian tribes thought the snake contained a human soul. The Moquis and Apache tribes would not harm a snake, holding it to contain the soul of a wise man. The Indonesians believe a human soul may animate snakes which come up out of holes from underground. In Greek myths the dead

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7 Howey, op. cit., p. 43.
sometimes were turned into snakes, as happened to Cadmus and Harmonia. The Roman historian Pliny reports that serpents were housed and fed by many Roman families who believed them connected with the souls of the dead. The belief seems to have been a fairly common one in many areas of the world.

The ancients believed that when the snake shed its skin, it renewed its youth. The Caribs and Arawaks believed the gods gave this ability to the snake because man was too wicked to deserve it. The Egyptians especially thought of the serpent as representing eternal life and carved it on the tombs of their dead. In many creation stories some animals, many times a snake, was entrusted to take to man a plant which would assure him of eternal life. The animal kept the plant for himself; it gave him the ability to cast off his skin and so renew his youth each year.

The first record of serpent worship among the early Hebrews comes in the Old Testament book of Exodus. When the tribes of Israel had been attacked by serpents, Moses made a brass image of a serpent and put it on a pole in the center of the camp. The tribesmen were told to look at the image and they would be healed.

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of the camp. He commanded the people to look at it and be healed. This serpent image is not mentioned again until more than five centuries later when the prophet Isaiah tells us that the image had been worshipped in the temple for many years. Isaiah and King Hezekiah stopped this worship by removing the serpent. There is no explanation of how the image came to be in the temple. In his study on the Holy Ark of the Covenant, R. H. Kennett suggests that the brazen serpent may have been an image of Yahweh, and that the Ark may have been designed to house this image. If this story is true, it would explain the presence of the image in the temple. Kennett believes the story of Moses and the serpent is the attempt of a later age to explain the origin of an object which seemed inconsistent with its iconoclastic law. The worship of the brazen serpent, he concludes, had its origin in worship of a living serpent.¹²

That the Hebrews were familiar with serpent worship and participated in it is shown in several other places. The seraphim mentioned in Exodus were serpent images and were probably used as household charms. Excavations at the ancient city of Taanach in Palestine unearthed many serpent images, small enough to be worn as amulets. The prophet Isaiah, who was responsible for the removal of the serpent image from the

temple, thundered against the Hebrew women for the wearing of enchantments, probably small figures of serpents. He warned them against Lahashim, which is translated "Houses of the Soul," a term by which serpents were known. That the Jews clung to serpent worship is illustrated by the bitter complaints that came periodically from their religious leaders. When the writers of the Jewish Pentateuch wanted to emphasize the worship of the one true god without the use of images, they first tried to rid the people of the earlier faiths. The serpent, as a deity of that earlier religion, was discredited in the well known Biblical story of the Fall of Man. Here the serpent became the cause of all man's suffering; the Almighty pronounced a curse upon him. The vehement curse was not pronounced against the animals as such, but against a form of worship the leaders wanted to denounce.

In making the serpent the villain of the Fall myth, the Hebrews were only following a pattern already set for them by more civilized peoples. In contrast to most ancient peoples, the Babylonians and Persians regarded the snake as evil and did not take part in serpent worship. In their theory of dualism, the Persians believed that some animals, the snake included, were the creations of the evil force, Ahriman.

The Jewish writers must have known the Sumarian myth of Gilgamesh, which dated back to 2000 B.C. and was older than the story recorded in Genesis. This old myth tells of the hero Gilgamesh searching for eternal life. He is finally given a plant called "Man Becomes Young in Old Age." Tired and weary from his travels, he throws himself into a pool to bathe, leaving the plant on the shore. A serpent devours the plant, thus robbing man of the gift of eternal life. From studying the ruins of ancient pottery excavated in the Euphrates valley, S. H. Langdon concluded that the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden is of Sumarian origin. In carvings and paintings on the pottery, the serpent is often connected with a tree. These decorations he takes as a survival of the serpent guarding the tree of life. On one cylinder roll now in the British Museum, the design shows a tree, obviously a date-palm. On the left is a woman; behind her stands the serpent. The man on the right has the horned head-dress of a god or earthly patriarch. Langdon finds it hard to dismiss the connection of these decorations with the Hebrew myth. Another Sumarian legend told of man's creation by the gods, and of his early life in an earthly garden or paradise. The ancient text is


16 Langdon, op. cit., p. 179.
incomplete in many places, but man is forced to leave the
garden and his leaving has some connection with a forbidden
plant. All of these stories contain some element of the
Biblical story.

After an extensive study of the creation myths found
among primitive peoples of the world, Sir James Frazer drew
the conclusion that all had come from the same source. The
Biblical writers, as well as the medicine men of present-day
tribes, had only part of the story.

If we may judge from a comparison of the ver-
sions dispersed among many peoples, the true original
story of the Fall of Man ran somewhat as follows.
The Creator, after modeling the first man and woman
of mud and animating them by the simple process of
blowing into their mouths and noses, placed the pair
in an earthly paradise. As a crowning mercy he
planned for our parents the great gift of immortality,
but resolved to make them the arbiter of their own
fate by leaving them free to accept or reject the
proffered boon. For that purpose he planted two
wondrous trees that bore fruits of very different
sorts, the fruit of one fraught with death and the
other with life eternal. He sent the serpent to the
man and woman to deliver this message: "Eat not of
the Tree of Death, for in the day ye eat ye shall
surely die; but eat of the Tree of Life and live for-
ever." But the serpent deliberately changed the
message to: "Eat not of the Tree of Life, for ye shall
surely die; but eat of the Tree of Death and live for-
ever." The foolish woman believed him, ate, and gave
to her husband. That is why men have been mortal
and serpents immortal ever since, for serpents cast
their skins every year and renew their youth.18

17 Ibid., pp. 190-202.

18 Frazer, Folklore in the Old Testament, I, 3 vols. (Lon-
don, 1919), 50.
By the time the Jewish writers set the myth down, it had become obscure to them. The tree of life plays a smaller part in the Genesis story than in most others. Since the Jewish people by this time did not believe in the alleged immortality of serpents, this part of the legend would have been only a stumbling block to them. So the recorder simply removed this part and placed more emphasis on the hated serpent.¹⁹

Many of the basic beliefs of Judaism, which were passed on to Christianity, originated during the period when the Jews were in close contact with the superior civilizations of Persia and Babylon. It seems probable the Hebrews were serpent worshippers in their early history; they may have gained their dislike of this worship from their conquerors. A dislike for the snake cult is certainly reflected in the Genesis story. When the Christian adopted this story, however, he did not know that the curse was pronounced against serpent worship, but understood it to be against the animal itself. By this time the theory of Satan as the chief enemy of God had developed, so it was a natural step to assume that the serpent who caused Man's downfall was actually Satan in disguise.

The effectiveness of this idea can be seen even today. When Milton wished to show how sin had degraded the former angels, he could think of nothing worse than having them turn into coiling, hissing serpents. In several pieces of modern

¹⁹Ibid., p. 76.
literature the devil makes his appearance in this form. Even stranger is the fear and repulsion with which modern man (at least in Christian countries) regards the snake. W. H. Hudson declares that the snake's ability to harm man is not great enough to warrant this fear, nor does it explain man's immediate desire to kill a snake even though it be harmless. Hudson found that in Europe, where hatred of the snake was greater than on any other continent, the snake was rarely poisonous. In India, where the poisonous cobra abounds, the snake is not feared so greatly. Perhaps the snake's connection with the devil has been so firmly planted in the Christian's mind that he unconsciously sees Satan in the gliding form of every snake.

The Devil as a Dog

The relationship between the devil and the dog was partly established by the Biblical writers. They often referred to evil people as dogs (the term is still used in this sense today). One can better understand their attitude toward the dog by considering the dogs known in Palestine in Biblical times. These animals were semi-savage and showed fierce, unsympathetic attitudes toward man. The shepherds and farmers used them as watchdogs, but no one had discovered their nobler qualities at this time. The beasts roamed in packs over the cities where

they acted as scavengers, feeding on the refuse in the streets and even eating the remains of the dead. They were filthy and treacherous animals. Their name was a term of insult or reproach. 21

An even stronger connection between the devil and the dog comes from the animal's long established association with the kingdom of the dead. The ancient Egyptians considered the dog an animal of the underworld; their god of death, Anubis, had a dog's head. The Greek Cerberus guarded the entrance to Hades; the Germanic Garmr had a similar mission. The sons of Sarana, dog messengers of death in India, remind one of the wolves of the Norse god Odin. 22 Even today the howling of a dog under a window is supposed to forecast death for someone in the family. The Aryan mind conceived the wind as a howling dog or wolf, come to claim a soul and escort it to the underworld. 23 The plaintive howling of the modern dog revives this ancient fear. The dog's connection with the underworld or realm of the dead made him a natural ally for the Christian devil.

21 "Dog," The Jewish Encyclopedia, edited by Isaac Singer and others, IV (New York, 1907), 630.


23 John Riske, op. cit., p. 35.
The black poodle which appeared to Faust had his counterpart in many European legends. One such legend relates that some men noticed a big black dog watching a dance. When asked why he was there, he replied that he was the devil and had come to carry away a soul. The arrival of the local priest foiled these plans. Another priest was not so successful. He came to administer the last rites to a dying magician, but was prevented because a large black poodle lying under the bed hypnotized him. Another black poodle came swimming to the side of a ship on the high seas. In spite of the attempts of the astounded crew to stop him, he climbed on board and went straight to the captain's cabin. The sailors heard the sounds of a struggle; then the captain ran out on deck. The poodle chased him overboard, and both disappeared beneath the waves. The sailors could only conclude that the man made some kind of compact with the devil and his time was up. There was no question as to the identity of the dogs in these stories.

In some other stories, the dog is not the devil, but an uneasy ghost. This is true of the dogs appearing in two Danish stories. One of these dogs began haunting a churchyard just after a suicide had been buried there. Another dog contained the soul of a murderer who was condemned to roam near the pond where he drowned his victim. A Belgian story tells of a

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26 Ibid., pp. 23-25.
captain who stabbed a sentry for sleeping on duty; now as a black dog his ghost wanders near the army camp and awakens sleeping sentries. An American ghost appeared as a dog, and then took on a human form to name his murderers. In most of the stories, the ghost that appears as a dog has been a wicked person, or has some reason for not being able to rest.

The Mexican also knows stories of a black dog. The story usually seems pointless to the Anglo. It concerns some relative or friend who was walking home (or sometimes driving a horse-drawn vehicle) as darkness was coming. Suddenly a little black dog appeared at his side. No matter how many times the man changed his speed, no matter how slowly or rapidly he went, the dog remained at his side. Sometimes the story has him racing his horse furiously, but the dog has no trouble keeping pace with them. Just before he reached his home, the dog disappeared. The Anglo waits for something more exciting to happen, then realizes the story is ended. When asked why the man should fear a little black dog, the Mexican looks uncomprehendingly at his questioner as if the idea had never occurred to him before. Was the dog a ghost or could it have been the devil? Perhaps, the Mexican shrugs. The Anglo is unimpressed, and the Mexican cannot explain the story further. The black dog is simply something to be feared, some

26 Ibid., pp. 23-25.
supernatural thing. What does it matter exactly what it is? Ghost or devil, it is evil.  

This vague fear in the Mexican stories is closer to the basic root of the superstition than are the explanations of some other stories. For in this is the fear the primitive man felt toward the unknown, toward the dark, toward strange dogs, toward all the vast world of spiritual and natural laws over which he had no control. This is part of the old belief that evil spirits lurk ever waiting to harm man. Anything strange might be one of those spirits. A black dog (whose color suggests the darkness) appearing unexpectedly (and usually at night or in the late evening), strikes on the deepest chords of primitive fear. Later, man rationalized this fear by explaining that the dog was a ghost or the devil. This is not the reason the dog was originally feared; it is only an explanation of an already existing fear.

An indication of the depth of this fear is suggested by Barbara Allen Woods in her studies of the devil in dog form. When the devil appears as a dog, he is always to be feared and usually carries off his victim. This, she points out, is in contrast to many popular medieval stories in which the devil (in some other form) is tricked or outwitted. This later

28 Note: I have heard this story from several different students. There was never an exact definition of the little dog; he is merely something evil and fearful. The Mexican understands this instinctively and derives a thrill of terror in telling the story. He is amazed that anyone should question why the dog should be feared.
devil was a popular clown in the medieval drama, and was known in the folklore of northern Europe where stories of a stupid giant had been known since pagan times. But when the devil appeared as a dog, he was to be feared. Man's primitive fear was still too strong for the devil-dog to become anything but a serious threat.

The Raven's Connection with the Devil

In the course of his adventures with Faust, Mephistopheles once used his magic powers to win a battle for an Emperor. As the battle progressed, two ravens approached Mephistopheles with news of the progress of his troops. When the Emperor was disturbed about these croaking birds, Faust soothed him with the reminder that pigeons were sometimes used to send messages. Would not the raven be more fitting to carry messages of war? Still disquieted, the Emperor left his strange helpers and went back to his tent. Had he realized that Mephistopheles was carrying on a rapid conversation with these birds, he would have been even more upset. Mephistopheles, however, found them excellent messengers, for the raven has been the devil's bird for many years.

He has also been a bird of ill omen and death. In an oriental story, the hero realized his project was doomed to

failure because a raven hovered on his left hand. In Celtic mythology the ravens belonging to a certain warrior Owein were feared even by King Arthur. In the Shetland Islands, even in modern times, the raven supposedly stays close to a house in which there is a corpse. In Africa its flocking portends war; no rain will fall where the raven lays its egg. Yama, the Indian god of death, used the raven as his messenger. With such a background, the raven was easily associated with the devil in the minds of medieval Europeans.

The Greeks endowed the raven with prophetic powers. They held it to be the sacred bird of Apollo, god of prophecy. Greek augurs drew meaning from its croaking. Pliny reported that ancient diviners thought they could eat the hearts of ravens and thus take into their bodies the prophetic soul of the creature. Both Alexander and Cicero believed the

appearance of a raven foretold death. The raven had a place of prominence in classical times.  

Two medieval stories show the raven housing strange spirits. Once Saint Gregory, the Theologian, became so inflamed at a group of infidel gypsies that he commanded them to leave Egypt. He marched them down to the sea and struck it with his cloak, causing the water to part and leave a dry path. When the gypsies started across, the sea closed up. The gypsies swam upon the surface of the water and were turned into ravens which flew safely away. According to another European story, the devil once appeared as a raven, bent on a rather strange errand. A pious young girl named Agnes was walking down the street, and unwittingly was about to enter a house of ill repute. Upon seeing her approach, the devil and his companions changed themselves into ravens and blocked the door. Frightened by the squawking birds, the girl fled, and did not learn until later the kind of establishment she had been near. She considered her deliverance as a divine omen and later built a convent on the same spot.  

The raven's black color, which undoubtedly adds to his bad reputation, is explained in various ways. The Greeks said  

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36 Wallis, op. cit.  
38 Kurt Seligman, op. cit., p. 226.
that at one time he was pure white. He was the messenger who brought to Apollo the news that Coronis, an earthly maiden the god had loved, had been unfaithful to him. In wild anger, Apollo not only killed the girl, but punished the bird that had brought the message. He turned the raven's snowy feathers to a deep black.  

A medieval story, told from Russia to Ireland, related why the raven is black. According to this story, when Noah sent the raven out of the Ark to see if the flood waters had receded, the bird did not return. It remained to feast on the carrion it found. Because of its disobedience, Noah cursed the bird. Hereafter it should feed only on carrion, and it should look like a burnt stump.  

Chaucer, who used folklore frequently, told of a raven in the Manciple's Tale. Here the raven was a beautiful white bird with a sweet voice. When his master returned from a trip, the bird informed him of the unfaithfulness of the wife of the household. In a fit of rage, the master killed his wife. Then he began to doubt the bird's story and decided to punish him also. He pulled out the bird's white feathers, declaring that henceforth the raven should be black and his beautiful voice only a croak.  

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The awe with which the raven has been regarded may be explained in several ways, according to Sir James Frazer. First, it has the ability to imitate the human voice. What must the primitive man have thought of this creature who could produce sounds such as he himself used for language? Only a being of supernatural powers could do such, he must have reasoned. The raven was fierce and bold when attacking his prey. He quickly learned to follow human hunters in order to feast on their refuse. These qualities of boldness and intelligence must have been noticed and respected by the early hunters. The fact that the bird sometimes ate the remains of the dead gave him certain prestige. The primitive man believed that he could acquire the desirable characteristics of the dead by eating some part of their corpses. From this reasoning it is easy to imagine what fine qualities of wisdom, strength, and courage the raven acquired from his meals. The superstition with which the bird was regarded made him a fit companion for the gods, and later for the devil.

Although there have been other animals associated with the devil, these three are most prominent in the literature under consideration. In at least two Mexican stories, the devil appears as a hog and also as a donkey; however, for the most part, Diablo's form is that of a human being. Dante uses no animals; Milton uses only the Biblical serpent.

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Mephistopheles, drawn from medieval folklore, uses both the dog and the raven. All three animals come from pre-Christian religions. The serpent was an early god; the dog and raven were helpers of several pagan gods. The serpent has suffered most abuse because of its close relationship with the powers of evil. The dog's role as a messenger of death and sometimes embodiment of the devil has not prevented him from earning man's respect and affection. However, the dog holds a low position in folk similes. The expressions "sick as a dog," "in the dog house," and "leading a dog's life," do not express a good opinion of "man's best friend." The frequency with which the uncomplimentary terms "dog" and "cur" are still used might suggest that the dog has not yet overcome the stigma that his former associate brought upon him. The raven is still the center of some superstitions, mostly in rural or primitive regions of the world. All three were especially popular in stories of the Middle Ages. They provided the devil with forms in which he could travel among men without attracting notice. They also provided living objects toward which superstitious human beings could direct their fear and resentment.

43 George D. Hendricks, "Texas Folk Similes," Western Folklore, XIX (October, 1960), 245-262.
CHAPTER III

POWERS GIVEN TO THE DEVIL

Christianity recognized the devil's place in the cosmos, and gave him certain powers. According to Christian belief, this power was great but limited. The Christian concept of Satan denied him independent power. Ultimately his power came from God, and God had firm control over it. Although the devil sought to thwart God's purposes and do great harm to man, he could do nothing which God did not permit; all he did worked inevitably for God's glory. He is doomed to final overthrow by God, according to the best Christian authorities.

Satan was most interested in extending his power over human beings, and the stories of the four devils under consideration deal mainly with his attempts in this field. Mephistopheles was concerned with showing Faust all the adventures of mankind, so that he might win Faust's soul. In Paradise Lost Satan's main plan dealt with man. How can he best gain entrance to man's home and cause him to disobey God? The answer to this question formed the plot of the story. Diablo continuously waits to punish any wicked person, especially one who has disobeyed his parents or his church. Only Dis was impotent, but the Inferno was filled with people whose actions
he supposedly had already influenced. Human beings are the devil's main concern.

Judging from the picture given of him in most folk tales, the devil could often lose his power over human beings. God stood ready to save the sinner any time he repented. For further protection, the church provided holy charms, such as the cross. Human beings themselves could break the devil's power and cheat him by their own cunning. The devil was often tricked by some man who was more intelligent or more dishonest than he. In folk tradition there were so many limits on the devil's power that his self-chosen job was not an easy one.

The devil's powers over the elements of the natural world seem to be much more secure in folk literature. He was the controller of many spirits, as well as more concrete things such as fire, water, and wind. Since he ruled nature, he was capable of changing any natural law. This power he extended to those witches and magicians who were his special servants. The field of magic was the devil's own. When God chose, He could set aside the devil's power there, but he did not often do so.

The Devil's Power Over Human Beings

In Christian thought, the soul of man was recognized as the devil's most natural prey. The literature under study indicates, however, that the devil could have control of man only when man was willing that he should. By popular belief,
when man chose God and strived to please Him, the devil had little power over him. It was only when man allowed his selfishness or his ambitions to draw his attention away from God's will that the devil could really have power over him. In most of the material studied, the devil was constantly alert for some flaw in man's character that could be enlarged and used to cause his downfall. If man did fall, he had only himself to blame. If he had kept within the recognized rules of Christian behavior, the devil would have been powerless to overcome him. The individuals involved in this study illustrate that the devil could control them only if they were willing to listen to his suggestions.

Mephistopheles gained his power over Faust through the doctor's ambitions. Not content with his life, Faust wanted to taste every experience known in the life of mankind. Even Mephistopheles told him the ambition was an impossible one. But because of Faust's restless seeking for life, he called in the devil and entered a pact with him. Actually, Faust seemed to be in control of the devil, for the pact stated that Mephistopheles was to serve Faust. Faust had no compunctions about ordering the devil around rather sharply when things did not please him. It was Faust's unnatural ambition which drove him through scenes of destruction. Mephistopheles merely provided the means of achieving these ambitions. How little power Mephistopheles had over Faust was seen in the end of the story when he lost Faust's soul.
The power Mephistopheles had over Margaret came because of her own foolishness and her love for Faust. When Faust first desired Margaret, Mephistopheles, who knew the girl's basic innocence, told Faust he had no power over such a soul. At Faust's insistence, Mephistopheles helped him win the maiden. They appealed to Margaret's love of finery by sending her a basket of jewels. Margaret's love for Faust, though innocent and trusting, led her to sin and suffering. Her own weaknesses, though not intentionally evil, led her away from the teaching of her family and church. Margaret's soul, however, was not in danger from Mephistopheles; her genuine repentance was accepted. Mephistopheles and Faust were able to destroy her life, but not her soul.

Diablo's power, in most of the stories, seems to be over those who have chosen to disobey God's teachings. He is concerned mainly with punishing the sinner. Story after story tells of his punishing some person who has knowingly and willfully disobeyed parents or church. Diablo does not appear as tempter, although the stories vaguely allude to him as the cause of evil. Usually he comes without warning to carry out this punishment. Sometimes he comes at the request of some worthy individual. In some stories the dinner was cursed by a pious relative who had been wronged beyond the point of human endurance. One story tells of a vaquero who killed his youngest child by deliberately starving the infant. The mother
begged him to have mercy. When he would not stop, the mother cursed him. The devil came for him the next night.\(^1\) Another young man was so cruel to his mother that she finally cursed him; the devil came for him a few days later.\(^2\) The stories are not explicit on how much Diablo is to blame for man's sinful actions. Man himself seems to be in control of these. Diablo only waits for him to sin, then steps in to punish.

Satan, in *Paradise Lost*, gained his control over man by direct temptation of him. He did not wait for Eve's curiosity and appetite to persuade her to eat the forbidden fruit. Eve's vanity, curiosity, and appetite were her weak points. Satan realized this and appealed to them when tempting her. His influence was strong enough to cause her to disobey God's command, and to change the nature of God's creation. But Satan had this power only because Eve was willing to let her weaker characteristics take charge of her. Milton wanted the reader to understand that God knew of Satan's plan and could have stopped him. Milton felt the only fair way would be to let man himself decide the matter, by exercising the free will He had given him. Satan's persuasion proved too much for man's nature.

\(^1\)Jovita Gonzalez, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

Limits on the Devil's Powers

Although God left the devil free to try to work his will on men, He did not leave man helpless against this foe. He provided priests who could give protection. There were holy objects which would put the Evil One to flight. Certainly a prayer from a sincere soul would enlist the personal help of some saint against the devil. Sometimes the person using these objects need not be particularly righteous; it was enough if he sought to escape from Satan and recognized God's power while doing so. These assumptions are based on incidents from the material under study.

Of all the charms applied against the devil in Mexican folk tales, the cross is the most powerful and the most frequently used. One story relates how the priest at Ojinaga chased the devil into a cave by advancing on the Fiend with a cross in his hands. The cross protected him from stones and other missiles thrown by Diablo. When the devil took refuge in a cave, the priest set the cross in front of it, thus holding the devil prisoner. A certain Juan Garcia made a pact with the devil to gain riches. When time came for him to pay with his soul, Juan covered himself with crosses. The devil could not take him because of the crosses. The musician at the Balmorhea dance was not killed when the devil attacked

4Edna Vasque, op. cit.
all the others, because in playing his violin he was unconsciously making the form of the cross. An old woman who wished to trap the devil in a room sealed up all the entrances and put a cross on the door. When he saw the cross, the devil would not go through the door.

This magic power attributed to the cross developed in early Christian Europe. In its earliest days, Christianity had fought against the belief in magic and charms which was strong in the pagan world. The charms, small objects worn upon the body, were used to ward off evil. The new faith did not convince its converts the charms were not needed; it simply gave the charms another form. The cross then appeared as an ornament, used for protection. By the beginning of the third century the church began to compromise with the pagan ideas, and soon the church leaders themselves were wearing crosses as part of their dress. The popularity of the cross became so great that pagans accused their Christian neighbors of actually worshipping the cross. Certainly a great many Christians attached a magical value to it. They even marked their cattle with it to protect them from disease. Soon the people began to tell stories about miracles performed by the cross.

Its power was emphasized in several stories, of which the

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5 Jesuita Natividad, op. cit.
following is typical. Saint Hilarion once saved the city of Epidaurus from being flooded by a stormy sea by drawing three crosses on the sand. Even the destructive forces of nature respected this symbol. The crusaders later wore the cross on their coats of arms. It was not merely a decoration; it was a means of victory and security.8

The reverence the Christians held for the cross is easy to explain; the place of respect which it held in the pre-Christian world is not so easy to explain. Some form of the cross has been found among the religions of people all over the world. The early Egyptians had a cross, surmounted by a handle, which many drawings and carvings show in the hands of a god, or a priest, or maybe a king. This symbol was known as the key of life, and archeologists have offered many and conflicting views as to what it represented.9 When the Spanish came to America, they were amazed to find that the Indians knew and worshipped a cross. In the ruined city of Palenque in Mexico there is a slab of stone on which is a picture of a cross and the figures of two worshippers. In the state of Chiapas in Mexico is a hollowed-out figure of a god on the cross. He wears a head-dress like that of the Egyptians sphinxes, and his arms are outstretched. These Mexican figures

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9D'Alviella, op. cit., p. 326.
are all pre-Christian. A cross was used to mark the graves of the early people who inhabited Italy before the Romans. In the cave of Elephanta in Bombay, India, is a relief showing the slaughter of babies at the time of the birth of the Hindu Saviour, Krishna. The executioner stands before the tearful mothers, and over his head is the cross. Some Buddhist crucifixes found in India are pre-Christian. From the earliest times, the form of a cross has been honored among practically every people known to history.\(^{10}\)

Scholars and archeologists have offered many reasons as to why the sign is so prevalent. Some see in it a phallic symbol. Others see the remains of the wooden fire-drill. Still others notice the frequency with which the geometric design of a cross appears in natural objects and conclude that it was only natural that man should use the design in his art and religion. An inscription from Mexico explained the cross as representing the four cardinal points from which came the four winds of the earth. The emblem usually signified some life giving force or good fortune.\(^ {11} \) Whatever its origin in the pagan world, the cross gained even greater fame because of the spread of the Christian religion.

The Mexican stories tell of other holy objects which can put the devil to flight. One man used a rosary to drive the

\(^{10}\) Philip Waterman, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 162-164.

\(^{11}\) D'Alviella, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 327-328.
devil away from an intended victim. A woman once took some palm branches that had been blessed by a priest and beat the devil with them. The fiend was unable to fight against the holy objects. An evil serpent fled from a shepherd, who made the sign of the cross as the beast approached him. Sometimes a sincere prayer is enough to drive the devil away. One story tells of a girl who had cursed her invalid grandmother. She was terrified to awaken one night and discover the devil hiding under her bed. When she prayed for forgiveness and protection, the devil left.

Not only can the devil be foiled by these holy charms; sometimes mere human beings can put him to flight. The vaqueros especially like to tell stories of the devil being discomfited by some tough cowboy or by the rugged country in which they live. One such story tells of a jolly vaquero who went to hell. The devil was amazed at how comfortable the man was. The vaquero informed the devil that hell was not as hot as his former home, Texas. Diablo decided he must see this amazing land. Disguised as an Eastern dandy, he traveled toward a ranch in Southwest Texas. After unhappily mistaking

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12 Jovita Gonzalez, op. cit., pp. 103-106.
13 Riley Aiken, op. cit., pp. 66-72.
15 Story told by Florentina Sais, student, Pyote, Texas, April 15, 1958.
the chili pepper plant for wild strawberries and the prickly pear fruit for figs, he discovered that the hot, sand-filled winds and the glaring sun were almost unbearable. Arriving at a ranch, he watched the vaqueros throw a cow by jerking her tail. When he asked to be taught the trick, the cowboys jokingly told him to twist the cow's tail slightly. When he tried this, Diablo was kicked for some distance and, according to the story, left Texas forever. In a similar story, he sent one of his little imps, a devil named Camandolas, to Texas to get fresh beef. Camandolas walked on all-fours and slipped into the herd, where his black color, horns, and long tail camouflaged him well. Jealous cows hooked at him, the dust almost strangled him, and finally the vaqueros roped him, dragged him to the branding fire, and burned the owner's brand on his flank. The devil's experiences among the vaqueros of Texas have not been happy ones, according to the stories the vaqueros tell.

Often a woman is the cause of Diablo's defeat. In the popular story of Juan the Gambler, the woman was the devil's youngest daughter, a beautiful girl named Blanca Flor. Juan lost his soul to Diablo in a poker game; he went to the devil's house and was given a chance to save himself by doing three

16 Mary Austin, One Smoke Stories (Boston, 1934), pp. 56-62.

tasks the devil set for him. The tasks were beyond human capacity; but Juan had enlisted the help of Blanca Flor, who used her magic to perform the tasks. Then Blanca Flor escaped with Juan and later married him.\(^1\) Another story, already mentioned, concerns the old woman who nailed a cross on the door to keep Diablo from escaping. When the devil changed himself into a small insect to escape her, she sealed up the bottle into which he had crawled for refuge.\(^2\) A similar old woman simply took her ax in hand and chased Diablo away. He feared the old hag so much that later, when a shepherd told him the old woman was coming, he fled again.\(^3\)

The character of a gullible devil, tricked or frightened easily, had its beginning in Europe. This devil may be traced to the Norse stories of stupid giants or trolls who inhabited pre-Christian lands. These giants were stupid, mischievous, and evil beings. They were the oldest of all creatures, with great destructive vitality and monstrous exuberance. They lived in dark caves and ate human flesh.\(^4\) But for all their fearful appearance, they were sometimes tricked and destroyed by human beings. These are the creatures who appear in the very popular Jack-the-Giant-Killer type of stories. One of

\(^{1}\)Story told by Alfonso Natividad, Pyote, Texas, April, 1958.

\(^{2}\)Aiken, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 66-72.

\(^{3}\)Goodwyn, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 21-36.

the best known tells how a young man named Boots was threatened by a giant one day. Boots took a cheese out of his scrip and squeezed it until whey spurted out. The troll thought the object was a rock, and begged Boots not to harm him with his great strength. Later as they dined together, Boots challenged the giant to an eating contest. Boots tied his scrip in front of him and poured soup into it by the ladleful. When the giant marveled at how much the youth had eaten, Boots cut open the scrip and poured the contents on the ground. He told the giant he had now emptied his stomach and could eat more. When urged to try the trick, the giant split open his own stomach, and thus killed himself. The giant's tremendous strength and ill nature made them feared, but in story after story a clever hero outwits and kills them.

The popular story of the stupid giant was carried over into Christian times. The giant became the devil, much reduced in size, and interested in man's soul, not in simply eating his flesh. One story about a stupid devil is very much like the Greek myth of Odysseus and Polyphemos. A German button maker promised to give the devil a new pair of eyes. He bound the demon to a bench for the operation, then poured molten lead into his eyes, blinding and killing him. Another German story told of the devil's coming to get a medieval merchant whose soul he had purchased. The merchant wanted to finish

\[\text{Fiske, op. cit., pp. 130-131.}\]
his accounts; he made the devil promise not to take him until the candle, by whose light he was working, should be burned away. He then threw the candle into a pit of water and quickly had his servants fill in the pit. The devil had to leave without his prey. Once the devil agreed to build a house for a Dutch farmer in return for the man's soul. They agreed that the house must be finished before cockcrow the next morning. The devil was finishing before the specified time, but the man imitated a cockcrow, awakening all the cocks in the neighborhood, who then joined their voices to his. So the devil lost his clever victim, much in the same way the Norse giants once lost theirs.

Perhaps the limits on the devil's powers were best illustrated by one of Chaucer's tales. The jolly friar entertained the group of pilgrims with a story of the devil who was joined by a Summoner. They agreed to share whatever gains they made on their journey. They passed a teamster who cursed his horses and loudly called for the devil to take them. However, the man's curse was not sincere, and the devil must go on his way without the horses. When the Summoner later tried to cheat an old widow out of twelve pence, she threw a pan at his head and consigned both pan and Summoner to the devil. The Summoner could not repent for this deed, because his heart was hardened by his wicked life. Her curse was sincere; the

devil carried off his traveling companion. The basic idea was, of course, that the devil can have only what man wills him to have. Not only must the curse be sincere, but the victim must have so turned his thoughts away from God that he was no longer capable of repentance. The devil could not take a man against his will. Man brought his own damnation by choosing the devil's company.

The Devil's Powers in Magic

The citizens of the Middle Ages considered magic to be the devil's own art. The church heartily condemned it and destroyed witches, alchemists, and magicians. The church opposed these professions because the very nature of their work made them displeasing to God (and to the church, of course). The Christian should offer his prayers in a spirit of humility and leave the final decisions with God. The magician sought to control God, or at least the laws of His universe. Why the magician thought he could accomplish this feat is best explained in Sir James Frazer's definition of magic.

Magic assumes that the universe is run by uninterested powers, who follow a set of immutable laws acting mechanically... Thus it assumes that all personal beings, human or divine, are subject to those impersonal forces which control all things, but which can be turned to


Since the priest was the socially accepted mediator between man and the supernatural, the magician, who offered another way to control events, was condemned as one who had forbidden powers. Where else could he receive this power but from the devil, the medieval Christian reasoned.

The belief that man could control the elements of nature with the use of certain rituals is an ancient one. It is present among primitive peoples of today in much the same form as it was accepted by our own pre-historic forefathers. W. H. R. Rivers, English physician of the last century, found in the primitives he studied a strong belief in magic. These primitives considered that injury or defeat in battle was not due to the superiority of the enemy; it came because some sorcerer had directed the missiles of the enemy. The most widely believed cause of disease concerned a "soul-substance" which was believed to inhabit every part of a person, even some object he had recently handled. By harming this soul-substance, still present in some dismembered part of the body (such as mail parings or hair), the sorcerer could harm his victim.\footnote{27}{W. H. R. Rivers, \textit{Medicine, Magic, and Religion} (New York, 1924), pp. 9-19.} The primitive magician believed there was some peculiar bond in nature which exercised great power. By this belief a wax image of a person might be treated in any way the
magician desired, and the person represented by the image would undergo identical experiences. These beliefs in magic seem to have been well established in the minds of most primitive peoples.

Since the Middle Ages linked the devil with magic, it was only natural that Mephistopheles should be master of this ancient art. Goethe's devil many times seems more like a powerful magician than the personification of evil. He gave Faust a liquid that would restore his youth. He changed forms several times, appearing first as a playful dog, and later as an old woman. For the Emperor's entertainment, he produced the shades of Helen and Paris. He used the spirits of the air to fight a battle for the Emperor and to build a kingdom for Faust. He carried on conversations with the ravens, thus indicating that he understood the language of animals. He cast a hypnotic trance over the tavern drunks who would attack him. Most of his tricks were preceded by an incantation. Mephistopheles, more than the other devils, understood the charms that make the laws of nature work in his favor.

In keeping with popular medieval belief, Mephistopheles was also the master of witches. He went to the witch to obtain the youth-giving liquid; he entertained Faust by taking him to the witches' revels on Walpurgis Night. He used the witches' services whenever he chose; they all hailed him as

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28 Tavenner, op. cit., p. 9.
their master. The activities of Goethe's witches were based on stories told by many medieval citizens put on trial for witchcraft. Under torture, these pitiful creatures confessed fantastic accounts of the ceremonies they had attended. These were usually referred to as the Witches' Sabbath, a meeting which took place in some forest glen. The devil was said to preside over the immoral activities; a kettle in the center of the glen brewed a magic mixture to be used as charms against innocent people. When Goethe's witches came flying in on broomsticks, they were following the pattern set for them. When Faust examined the witches' cave, he saw weird implements and materials used by the medieval witch. The Witches' Sabbath which Faust attended was similar to those the convicted witches had allegedly attended. As the most medieval of the demons, it was quite natural for Mephistopheles to have a great deal of power in the witches' world.

As ridiculous as the witches' activities sound to us, they did have some basis in fact. At least, this is the opinion of Kurt Seligmann, whose extensive study on Middle Age magic traces its beginnings in ancient Persia. There were witches in the Middle Ages, he explains, though not of the kind the prosecutors sought. They did not fly through the air on broomsticks or conjure up hailstones to ruin their neighbor's crop. But they did attend the meetings known as the Witches' Sabbath and carry on activities the church did
not approve. They themselves thought they were worshipping Satan.

This worship of Satan began as a worship of the pagan gods by the peasants of Europe. As a revolt against the tyranny of the church and state, Seligmann explains, the peasants kept the rituals of their ancient faith. The priests warned the people that these old gods were delusions sent by the devil, but the old gods suited the people better than the new one. The church was a severe master, and Christ himself symbolized suffering and bloodshed. The old gods were much kinder, and their festivals much more entertaining. So the traditional gatherings, the Bacchanals, the Diana feasts, and the Druids' Festival on the eve of May day, became the Witches' Sabbath. The peasant knew his Christian priest did not approve, but at the Sabbath he was free from a church that sought to regulate even human emotions. Seligmann further explains:

The sabbath and the witch existed because there were nonconformist people in Europe who, oppressed though they were, clung to the defeated gods of the past, their brethren in oppression. Today we tend to overlook the fact that the new religion was alien to Europe whereas the old peasant customs were rooted in the very soil where they had always lived.29

Although Christianity had conquered officially, the old religions lived on even into fairly recent times. The pagan gods had not been forgotten; they were forced to join ranks with the Christian devil.

29 Seligmann, op. cit., p. 260.
This relationship between the ancient gods and the medieval witches is illustrated by the descriptions given of the devils.

A witch confessed to De Lancre that her devil had one face in front, the other at the back of the head. "Just as god Janus is represented," the learned judge adds, and he was perfectly right. Another witch said that her devilish paramour looked exactly like a billy goat with a human face. It was none other than old Pan.30

So when the witches confessed, some of them were describing rites which they had probably attended. When asked about the devil, they described the old god whom their priests had told them was really the devil. The other details, which their imaginations created, pleased the large audiences which packed the courtrooms to hear them confess. The confessions given began to take the same pattern, and the picture of the witch was completed.

When Mephistopheles took Faust to see a Witches' Sabbath, he chose Walpurgis Night. Although the witches met at other times, their power was supposedly greater on this night. The belief in their power can be seen in the customs by which the peasants tried to protect themselves against the witches. Frazer reports that on Walpurgis Night peasants in the Tyrol gathered at twilight to begin their processions. Many carried torches; others carried some household implement that could be used to produce noise. They marched through the

30 Ibid., p. 257.
village, shouting and beating their implements. The church bells added their clangor to this noise. The people waved burning brands wildly in the air, supposedly to burn any witches that might be lurking there. The procession went around the houses or village seven times. The smoke and noise drove out the witches. In some sections of Germany, all the young men of the village gathered at a certain spot, as darkness came on, on April 30. They brought long whips, which they cracked in unison to hit the witches and frighten them away from the village. The Bohemians protected their cattle from the witches by laying thorny branches on the thresholds of the cattle sheds, or chalking crosses on the stall doors. The entire village usually joined in the fight against the witches.31

For some reason Walpurgis Night preceded May day, one of the most ancient of festivals. In historic times it was a festival of the druids, a Celtic priesthood whose influence extended into the Christian era. However, the druid's festival probably arose from an earlier agricultural celebration. Agricultural people throughout the world established rituals about the critical periods of their industry. These revolved around the changes of the seasons.32 They were


joyous, merry occasions, celebrated with the effervescence and abandon characteristic of renewed life when all nature was reviving from its wintry death.\(^{33}\) The custom of setting up a May day pole or tree (common in most European countries) may have been an attempt to increase fertility. Sexual excesses, which many primitives thought caused the general fertility of the earth, were probably encouraged.\(^{34}\) Since this was the season of planting, fertility rites would have been appropriate. Even in recent times the peasants of Germany thought that crops needed special attention at this time. On May 1, they carried out certain dances and rituals to promote this growth.\(^{35}\) The sexual excesses at May day celebrations were noted and condemned by the Puritans of England.\(^{36}\) Both of these customs are survivals of a pre-historic ritual.

Why the devil and his witches should be especially powerful on this night is uncertain. The peasant may have felt that his tender crops were especially susceptible to harm at this time. Knowing this, the witch would choose to ride when she might do the most damage to them. Or perhaps this became the witches' most famous night because a pagan holiday


\(^{34}\) Crawley, *op. cit.*., p. 502.


\(^{36}\) Hartland, *op. cit.*., p. 822.
was being celebrated the following day, and this seemed a logical time for the powers of evil to be abroad. Whatever the reason, the combination of the excitement of Walpurgis Night and the abandoned merry-making on May Day gave the peasant one of his most enjoyable holidays.

One power in the field of magic which is not connected with witches is the devil's use of fire. When Mephistopheles gave each man in the tavern the kind of wine he desired, he warned them not to spill any. Siebel accidentally did, and the wine burst into flame. Later, when one of the men made ready to attack Mephistopheles, the demon sent jets of fire leaping at him. A light flame arose from the liquid Faust drank to obtain youth. Faust declared Mephistopheles himself to be a thing "of filth and fire." The only other devil to use fire was Diablo, and he used it only rarely. Once, taking the form of a ball of fire, he chased a frightened boy across the fields. On another occasion, his helper Camandolus threw sheets of flame at a cowboy who was pursuing him. Mephistopheles seems to have the element under much better control than Diablo.

In folk belief, fire was more often used against the devil than by him. The Mexicans of Ojinaga told of keeping the devil imprisoned in his cave by building a fire in front

37 Perez, op. cit., pp. 22-25.
of it. Their ceremonies were held on May 3 and were accompanied by the noise-making already described in the similar European ritual. The Europeans built their famous "need fires" to protect themselves against the powers of the Evil One. All across Europe the peasants gathered in groups on Midsummer Eve (June 21). They kindled a fire by the primitive method of rubbing two sticks together. From this fire they lighted huge piles of brush which had been gathered. They herded their cattle through the smoke to ward off diseases. In wild games and dances they leaped over the flames themselves. They used fire in other festivals, but not to the extent to which they used it on Midsummer's Eve. In all cases, they believed that the devil and his witches would not come near the fire and smoke.

Another power which Mephistopheles and Diablo shared was their knowledge of hidden wealth. Mephistopheles used this knowledge to obtain two caskets of jewels for Margaret. He assured the Emperor that he knew the location of hidden minerals. Diablo guarded jealously the treasure hidden under the floor of an old deserted Mexican church. To one searcher who tried to take this treasure, Diablo proposed a trade: the soul of the treasure seeker in return for the gold.

39 Elton Miles, op. cit., p. 211.
41 Alice Aquilar, student, Midland, Texas, April 17, 1961.
the Jewish counterpart of these two devils, also had this power. Once he passed a magician who was bragging about his ability to foretell the future. Asmodeus laughed cynically. He explained to his companion, "Wouldn't you also laugh at a man who pretends to reveal secrets, while at the same moment he is unaware of the fact that a treasure lies buried at his feet?"\textsuperscript{42}

The devil might owe his knowledge of hidden treasure to his identification with the serpent. Hindu mythology regarded the serpent as the guardian of treasure. In the Orient, he has this same office.\textsuperscript{43} In one Mexican story a shepherd was unable to obtain a treasure because a great mass of rattle-snakes lived in the cave where it was hidden. The local priest told the boy that these snakes were either evil spirits or ghosts whose duty it was to guard the treasure. It could be taken only by one who had made arrangements with the devil.\textsuperscript{44} Since the devil, in any form, was thought to dwell within the earth, he would naturally be supposed to know of subterranean treasure.

One of the devil's most spectacular and popular powers in the field of magic was the knowledge of alchemy, the

\textsuperscript{42}Nathan Ausubel, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 597.

\textsuperscript{43}Maximilian Rudwin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 43.

\textsuperscript{44}Dante, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 367.
process by which men tried to turn lead into gold. Alchemy was a fantastic dream that held the attention of the Western world for several centuries. Strangely enough, Mephistopheles did not make use of this power. Dante, however, used one of the lower circles of hell to punish the practitioners of this art. It should be noted, however, that this punishment was given to "false" alchemists. Dante's famous teacher, Thomas Aquinas, distinguished between two kinds of alchemy. One was a serious search for a method of transforming metals, the other a quackery which cheated ignorant and greedy men. Dante punished those who pretended to produce precious metals by tricks and mystifications.\(^4\)\(^5\) So Dante, along with his teacher and several early scientists, believed in the art of alchemy. He assigned only the dishonest alchemists to the devil.

Alchemy began as an attempt at serious science, but degenerated into a mystical art of magic. It was first a fraudulent craftsmanship among the ancient Egyptians. At Alexandria it fell under the influence of a mixture of religions and took on mystical qualities. Early Christian alchemists pitted their skills against Jew and pagan, each group calling upon the powers of their god to aid them. The Moors took up the art and carried it into Spain. Christian Europe received it avidly.\(^4\)\(^6\) Thomas Aquinas believed in the art, as did Roger

\(^4\)\(^5\)Ibid.
\(^4\)\(^6\)E. Riess, "Alchemy (Greek and Roman)," The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, edited by Hastings (New York, 1925), I, 287-289.
Bacon. Pope John XXII practiced alchemy in the Papal palace at Avignon, and reportedly left behind 25,000,000 florins as proof of his talent. Even Isaac Newton directed his studies for a short time to alchemistical methods. The research methods developed in the study of alchemy eventually became the science of chemistry.

The fact that some alchemists were dishonest was not the reason the church frowned on the practice. When man attempted to change one element of nature, he was infringing on power that should belong only to God. The world should be accepted as God made it, the church reasoned; and when man tampered with the natural laws, he was trying to change God's creation. The change the alchemist sought to make was clearly in the world of magic, for it was an operation beyond the natural ability of man. From this reasoning it was but a short step to the theory that the alchemist must gain this knowledge from the devil. The sixteenth century English dramatist, Robert Greene, wrote about the evil alchemist Friar Bacon, who was in league with the devil. To emphasize the Christian virtues of humility and piety, the evil Bacon was shown to repent and bemoan his wickedness. Chaucer's pilgrims were joined by an alchemist and his yeoman. The yeoman told of the obsession


men developed for this art, devoting their last bit of money and stealing more, vainly hoping that the next experiment would be successful. The story he unfolded for the company related how an alchemist tricked a priest. The yeoman warned the company to beware of alchemists.49

Diablo exercises a power that is the reverse of alchemy, but involves the power to change one element into another. Several treasure stories, which acknowledged the devil as master of treasure, tell of some person who found a buried treasure. When this person returned to the spot to claim the gold, the treasure had turned to charcoal.50 The devil was vaguely responsible for this. A parallel to this is found in Washington Irving's story of the user Tom Walker. The money that Walker gained from his contract with the devil was turned to cinders when he died.51 Though not the result the alchemist desired, the fact that the devil could change the elements illustrates his power in this field.

Each of the four devils obeyed certain limitations on his power. Diablo cringed before the holy charms provided for the faithful. The world of magic was understood by

49Chaucer, op. cit., pp. 504-528.
50Story told by Bonifacio Natividad, student, Pyote, Texas, February 12, 1958.
Mephistopheles, but even he must obey the rules it imposed. He must depart by the same door he entered; he could not cross the sign Faust put on the threshold; he must go to the witch to renew Faust's youth. Satan had more power over human beings than the others, for he caused them to fall from an earthly paradise. Yet this power was permitted by God, and God immediately planned for man's redemption. Dis was held prisoner and not even allowed to hear the names of Christ and Mary. Diablo's tendency to be tricked by a wily man was such a recognized trait of the devil that even in the last century Daniel Webster reportedly challenged the Evil One for the soul of a certain Jabez Stone. Mephistopheles spoke for all the devils when he replied angrily to Faust's demands, "Have I all the power in Heaven and Earth?" When in answer to this question he outlined his plan for Margaret's escape, it was obvious that his power was limited. "This much is in my power," he concluded. The histories of the other three devils would confirm the conclusion that this power cannot compare to the power of God.

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53 Goethe, op. cit., p. 170.
CHAPTER IV

PURPOSES SERVED BY THE FOUR DEVILS

Christian theology established the purpose of the devil to be that of continuous war against God. Christian leaders believed that the devil desired the souls of men, because he knew they rightfully belonged to God; and he hoped that in taking them, he could have revenge. Man became evil when he allowed certain desires or actions to draw his attention away from the will of God, as explained by the church. When this happened, the church asserted, man was opposing God and putting himself on the devil's side. God gave man free will, that is, the right to choose between God and the devil without God's interference or limitations. When Satan influenced man to turn away from God, he caused man to share in the great punishment which will some day be given to the devils. The devil causes man to lose an eternity of happiness he would otherwise have shared with God. For this reason, Satan became the chief enemy of men, as well as of God, in Christian thought. Such was the purpose of Satan, as directed by Christian belief.

The purpose of the devil's literary creators, however, was more varied. Why did these authors use Satan as a major character? What did they have to say through the person of
Satan? The answers to these questions will reveal, not the devil, whose form was well standardized, but the writers themselves. Since the devil was the personification of evil, each man saw in him the sin, or human trait, that he considered the worst. Yet each author spoke not only for himself, but also for the religion and society that shaped him. Dante spoke sharply against political and social injustices. His Inferno contained punishment for those guilty of greed, dishonesty, and other sins which Dante saw as the curse of society in his day. Milton wanted to explain to his fellow Puritans how evil came into the world and what that evil was. Goethe recognized in the devil an essential destructive force, and his Mephistopheles was the personification of this. Diablo is the creation of a folk mostly illiterate; they use the devil to exact obedience from their children. While each allowed the devil to go on with his purpose, that is, the destruction of men's souls, each author had his own purpose with the devil.

Satan, the Incarnation of Pride

Pride is defined as being a high opinion of one's own worth. It is a self-isolating quality, a conscious independence which is usually indifferent to the opinions of others. Aristotle, however, listed pride as a characteristic of the high-minded man. This pride would enable a man to recognize his own worth and achieve a suitable goal. He recognized as vanity the tendency that caused a man to overrate himself. Aristotle considered one who under-estimated himself to be
mean-minded. Yet the pride of his ideal man was necessary for success.¹

However, pride has a long record of condemnation in both Jewish and Christian teachings. The writers of the Old Testament book of Proverbs warned the people against it in many places; the following verses are typical of this sentiment.

Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.²

Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.³

A man's pride shall bring him low; but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.⁴

To medieval Christianity, pride was even more obnoxious and dangerous. On writing on the religious attitude toward pride, R. Martin Pope explained the Christian attitude by referring to the life of Christ.

His conception of the brotherhood of man invests the claims and rights of one's neighbors with a new dignity. The soul of the individual has an intrinsic and eternal worth; hence His emphasis on the laws of mercy and forgiveness, His eulogy of the "poor in spirit," and of the voluntary surrender of power, His proclamation of self-repudiation as the condition of moral greatness, His warnings against self-assertion and self-advertisement. Pride is a contradiction of the Christian

²The Holy Bible, Proverbs 13:10, King James version.
³Ibid., Proverbs 16:18, King James version.
⁴Ibid., Proverbs 29:23, King James version.
ideal of unselfishness and stands condemned by the general spirit of the Christian ethic.\(^5\)

Christ's emphasis on humility and service to others has no room for pride, which is a selfish trait. The church listed it as the first of the seven deadly sins. Saint Thomas Aquinas regarded pride as the most serious of sins because every kind of sin sprang from it, and because it involved non-subjugation to God.\(^6\) To both Christian and Jew, he who would not humble himself to be obedient to God put himself on the devil's side.

The belief that other sins sprang from pride was illustrated by Milton's picture of Satan. Basic in Satan was his pride, the feeling of his own worth and independence. This sense of self-importance caused him to be jealous of God's chosen Messiah. When jealousy led to planned rebellion, Milton saw this as the appropriate time for the birth of Sin.

All of a sudden miserable pain
Surpris'd thee, dim thine eyes, and dizzy swum
In darkness, while thy head flames thick and fast
Threw forth, till on the left side op'ning wide,
Likest to thee in shape and count'nance bright,
Then shining heav'ly fair, a Goddess arm'd
Out of thy head I sprang; amazement seiz'd
All the Host of Heav'n; back they recoill'd afraid
At first, and call'd me Sin . . . .\(^7\)

Thus Milton thought the engendering seed was pride; the result was a being called Sin, whose birth paralleled that of the


\(^6\) Ibid.

\(^7\) John Milton, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
Greek Athena, who sprang full grown from the head of Zeus.
The idea may have come from the writings of Saint James: "Then
lust when it hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin,
when it has finished, bringeth forth death." Milton finished
the idea by telling of the union between Satan and Sin which
produced the monster Death.

Since pride would not allow Satan to admit dependence on
others, he was loath to admit his reliance upon God. To his
followers, he denied that God created him; he told them they
were self-created and were equal with God. When the angel
Abdiel reminded Satan of the allegiance he owed to God his
creator, Satan mocked him.

That we were formed then say'st thou? and the work
Of secondary hands . . .
We know no time when we were not as now;
Know none before us, self-begot, self-rais'd
By our own quick'ning power . . .
Our puissance is our own, our own right hand
Shall teach us highest deeds, by proof to try
Who is our equal . . .

Led by such speeches, the angels were ready to follow Satan
when he declared that they should test their might against God.

Satan's pride led him to love power. Because he enjoyed
being a leader, the loss of heaven was not as great a sacrifice
to him as a return to heaven would have been. Having a third
of the angels in some region where he could reign over them
alone was preferable to ruling them when he had to acknowledge

8 The Holy Bible, James 1:15, King James version.
9 Milton, op. cit., p. 68.
a superior. This prospect led Satan to mislead his followers; he must have known from the beginning that the rebellion could not succeed. He saw the enterprise from the beginning in a different light than his followers. He was losing his position in heaven to gain more power in a less happy place. This love of power was equated with pride, for it was the opposite of humility and willingness to give service to a superior.10

The hatred which Satan developed toward God was the cause of his degeneration. The plan to become a devil came after the rebellion. Beelzebub could see in the future nothing but a prospect of continued suffering until Satan told him his conception of a way of enjoying action in the midst of suffering. Some of the angels appeared to have been considering the possibility of retrieving their former condition by patient suffering. The gigantic scheme of becoming a devil was Satan's.11 When he turned from rebellion to revenge, he entered a second fall, which led to the decay of his character. When he arrived on earth to attempt his mission, he realized the change that would take place in him; but he applied himself to his purpose.12 Satan turned more to envy and hatred; he jeered and sneered instead of breathing defiance, and he

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11 Ibid., pp. 25-27
12 P. T. Forsyth, op. cit., pp. 519-530.
stooped to flattery and deceit. When he returned im triumph, his vanity led him to indulge in stage-acting and melodrama. Although he knew of the change in himself, his stiff pride and unrelenting hatred would not allow him to repent.

By showing how pride led to Satan's downfall, Milton reflected the attitude of the Christian church of his day, whether Catholic or Protestant. During the Middle Ages the church had set the class structure of society and had wielded great political power. It desired that each man, whether king or serf, accept his proper place in society as God's will, and render homage to God through obedience to His church.

Pride, that quality that would cause a man to have excessive confidence in himself, might lead him to question his place in society, or the right of the church to dictate to him. As the turbulence of the Renaissance threatened the strength of the church, the church leaders fought more violently to stress humility upon the revolting subjects. To hold the status quo, church and state emphasized obedience and humility. Milton only reflected the attitude so prevalent in his time when he condemned pride.

Dis and the Sin of Treachery

In the Inferno, Virgil led Dante through a region populated with many and varied sinners. At the bottom of the pit,

13Ibid., p. 535.

imprisoned in an icy river, was Dis, the final form of degradation. With Dis were those whose sins were so like his that they had been given to him for special punishment. Here, in the final pit of hell, and in the person of the devil, the most terrible sin Dante could imagine was punished. This was the sin of which the devil himself had been guilty, the sin of treachery.

To understand Dante's attitude toward this sin, one must consider the times in which he lived. The society of Dante's day was a feudal one, a system composed of many small groups bound together by oaths of loyalty. The serf swore loyalty to his overlord, this overlord to a noble, the noble to the king, and the king to God. The strength of such an organization consisted in the strength of the loyalties from man to master. Because Dante had seen the chaotic conditions and civil wars resulting when ambitious nobles broke their loyalty oaths, he looked upon treachery as the greatest sin mankind could commit.

The belief in an established government for society was strong in Dante. Civilization, he thought, was a process of mutual helpfulness centered in and supported by the church and the state. When sin attacked one of these, it endangered the process which made human life superior to the lower animals. Anyone who harmed these institutions was guilty of dragging

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down all human nature by destroying the society in which man could reach his perfection. Dante sought unity among all mankind. God is one, and humanity was most godlike when it was most unified, he reasoned. To help man attain this eternal bliss, God set up one church and one temporal government (the Roman Empire). Thus whoever destroyed them did harm to the entire society.

Because Dante saw the need of a strong, united government for man, he punished most severely those who tried to destroy it. These are represented by Brutus and Cassius, whose crime was to kill Julius Caesar, the founder of the Roman Empire. They were punished more severely than others for two reasons. First, they owed greater loyalty to Caesar than did the others who joined in killing him. Even though Cassius and Brutus had fought with Pompey against Caesar, the conqueror pardoned them, asking only that they take an oath of loyalty to him. Thus they owed their lives to Caesar's generosity, but this did not prevent them from turning against him. In killing Caesar, they hoped to overthrow the Empire he was establishing. Yet it was under this Empire, Dante thought, that God planned to give mankind a strong government that would keep down civil

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17. Ernest Hatch Wilkins, Dante: Poet and Apostle (Chicago, 1921), p. 34.
dissension and allow the development of His church. Thus these two did more than murder a man; they struck a blow at a divinely instituted government. Their punishment was in keeping with their crime and their characters. Each was chewed in one of Satan's three mouths. The pale face of Dis, representing impotence, chewed Cassius whose main motive was a desire for power. Brutus, the student and philosopher whose reputation for wisdom was great, was chewed by the black face of ignorance. By thus perverting the men's chief characteristics, Dante showed how they had tried to pervert the plan of God.

The second organization which Dante considered necessary to the happiness and unity of man was the church. Dante knew of church leaders who committed treachery by neglecting their spiritual duties and using their ecclesiastical powers to their own profit. Several church officials populated his Inferno. The greatest of these traitors was Judas, who attempted to destroy the founder of the church, Christ himself. Judas was chewed by the red mouth of hatred; unlike the others, his head was completely submerged. His back was torn by Dis's claws until the backbone was laid bare. The flaying of his back might be a repayment of the scourging to which he delivered his Lord. The devouring of his head might be the return to him of the kiss by which he betrayed Christ. Again,


19 Ibid., p. 480.
his betrayal was aimed at an individual, but concerned an institution.

The greatest traitor was Dis himself. He set the pattern for the others to follow by daring to turn traitor against God Almighty. He wanted to be equal or superior to God, whom he was supposed to serve. His punishment was that he became the exact opposite to God. Instead of the power and activity he enjoyed as an archangel, he was now held impotent in the freezing, stagnant river. Whereas his mission once was to spread the warmth of God's love, his cold and ungrateful nature now imprisoned him.20 His three faces were the opposites of the attributes of God. The black face signified ignorance, as contrasted to the wisdom of God. The red face showed hatred, in contrast to God's love. The pale face suggested weakness and powerlessness, against God's power.21 All the rivers of hell joined the one in which Dis was held. From Mount Purgatory came the River of Lethe, carrying the forgiven and forgotten sins back to their source. It would seem that when all the sins and sorrows of Time had drained into hell, Dis would be completely frozen in, and his punishment completed.22 As with the others, Dis's punishment was in keeping with the sin he committed.

20Ibid., p. 465.
22Carroll, op. cit., p. 475.
Dante's attitude toward treachery and its punishment was well defined by John D. Sinclair, one of Dante's modern translators.

Treachery, the deliberate and contrived outraging of the closest human ties and the prostitution of the powers of the mind to the cruelest ends, effectually and inevitably cuts off these souls from human consideration and makes them by their choice outcasts from fellowship human and divine. It belongs to their penalty to be bound forever in a fierce dis-fellowship even with their fellow-traitors. For treachery, the sin of cold blood, is a deeper, more inhuman, more paralyzing sin than all the forms of violence or simple fraud, and it is its own penalty in the numbing, hardening and disabling of the soul with cold.  

As Sinclair suggests, sin carried its own punishment, according to Dante. The punishment was the warping and marrowing of the human personality. This was the basic message Dante gave to his readers. He especially directed himself to the leaders of his day, whom he felt had betrayed the responsibility given to them. The evils which he denounced most strongly were those that harmed the great institutions of church and state. For when men betrayed their responsibilities in these, all humanity suffered. His low opinion of this sin is seen in the character of Dis. Of all the possible ways of portraying the devil, Dante chose to show him as a traitor. These four traitors to church and state—Dis, Brutus, Cassius, and Judas—deserve the worst punishment in Dante's hell.

Mephistopheles, Spirit of Destruction

Mephistopheles differed from the devils of the other two authors in that he did not personify a particular human fault. He was much more complex. He was first a destructive force, the one who deliberately blighted men's hopes. As he told Faust, "I am the spirit that denies." In the second place he was a sarcastic, calloused spirit, indifferent to human suffering or ambitions. He refused to see anything good in man or to have any sympathy for him. If he represented an evil quality to Goethe, it was this indifference which he tried to instill in man. In the first of his roles, Goethe saw him as a necessary force. In the role of sarcastic onlooker, Goethe saw him as an evil force.

As the spirit of destruction, the devil was the negative part of creation. He sought to destroy, yet his destructions only made room for more and better creations. George Santayana explained Mephistopheles' part in creation as follows:

He says he wills evil, because what he wills is contrary to what his victims will; he is the great contradictor, the blaster of young hopes. Yet he does good, because these young hopes, if left alone, would lead to misery and absurdity. With his mockeries and seductions, he helps to keep the world moving and men wide awake.

Mephistopheles expressed his frustration at the hopelessness of his task while explaining that task to Faust.

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24 Goethe, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

And that damned stuff, the beastial, human brood,—
What use, in having that to play with?
How many have I made away with?
And ever circulates a newer, fresher blood.
It makes me furious, such things beholding:
From Water, Earth, and Air unfolding,
A thousand germs break forth and grow. 26

Mephistopheles also explained to Faust why he seeks destruction. He had known existence before order and light were created, he said, and this chaotic darkness was much preferable to the creation. The Greek words which form his name mean "not loving the light." 27 Since he preferred darkness to light, he worked to destroy the order of the creation, especially man. Yet he defined himself to Faust as "Part of that Power . . . which always wills the Bad and always works the Good." 28

Mephistopheles' ancestry might explain his attitude toward man. Although he had all the trappings of the medieval devil, he was basically the Earth Spirit that Faust invoked. As the Earth Spirit, he was one of the pagan demons of the air. These spirits were basically impish and mischievous. This was appropriate since not all the aspects of nature are lovely or kind. As a whole they were without malice in their irresponsible, elemental life—winged powers darting through space between the earth and the moon. They were not dwellers in a subterranean hell; they were not tormentors nor tormented.

26 Goethe, op. cit., p. 47.
28 Goethe, op. cit., p. 46.
Often they swarmed and sang blithely, as they do in Faust.
If at other times they croaked or hooted or howled, it was like
frogs or owls, or dogs, less lovely creatures than humming-
birds, but not less natural.29 As one of these spirits,
Mephistopheles recognized man as another creature, not su-
perior in any way to him and his fellow spirits.

Mephistopheles' attitude toward humanity was the char-
acteristic he hoped to instill in Faust. It was specified in
the wager between Mephistopheles and God. God assured Mephi-
stopheles that no matter how far or how long he led Faust,
the man would retain his sense of justice, of compassion, of
knowledge between right and wrong, God wagered that Faust
would never become hard-hearted as the devil is. This predic-
tion was true. When Faust learned of Margaret's sufferings,
he upbraided Mephistopheles angrily for not telling him sooner.
The devil nonchalantly shrugged that this girl is not the
first, nor will she be the last, to fall in such a way. It
was only at Faust's bitter urgings that Mephistopheles would
undertake to rescue the girl. Faust suffered greatly because
of his part in Margaret's downfall. When the devil sought to
entertain him with members of the spirit world, Faust was only
disgusted with their revelry and abandonment. Even at the end
of his life, when his plans for the future of his kingdom un-
intentionally caused the death of an old couple, Faust was

29 Santayana, op. cit., p. 162.
smitten with sincere regret. Mephistopheles did not win his wager; Faust retained his instinct for the right. 30

Faust was tortured by a restless ambition, and by the remorse at the destruction this ambition caused. Mephistopheles thought Faust was foolish to desire so much; he considered Faust's pangs of conscience as disgusting weaknesses. 31 When Faust angrily accused the devil for Margaret's ruin, Mephistopheles reminded Faust of his own part in the girl's downfall and mocked Faust for his soft heart. "Why didst thou enter into fellowship with us, if thou canst not carry it out?" he demanded. "Did we thrust ourselves upon thee, or thou thyself upon us?" 32 Mephistopheles tried to soothe this restless, driving ambition. In the contract with Faust, he promised to make Faust forget his ambition and settle for the comfortable mediocre. Knowing the strength of his torturing desires, Faust declared:

When on an idler's bed I stretch myself in quiet,
There let, at once, my record end!

. . . .

When thus I hail the Moment flying:
"Ah, still delay—thou art so fair!"
Then bind me in thy bonds undying,
My final ruin then declare! 33


31 Santayana, op. cit., p. 167.

32 Goethe, op. cit., p. 169.

33 Ibid., p. 58.
While the devil saw this impossible ambition as very foolish, God recognized it as a basic human trait and did not condemn it. He explained to Mephistopheles,

While Man's desires and aspirations stir, He cannot choose but err.\(^{34}\)

All the suffering Faust's ambitions caused did not condemn him in God's eyes. As long as he remained conscious of good and bad, as long as he retained sympathy for his fellow men, God condoned the unrest that drove him to strive for the impossible. In this sense Goethe was more humane than Milton or Dante.

Goethe's ideas differed in many respects from those of the other two writers. His devil sought to make man indifferent to the world about him; he would lead man to be completely satisfied with himself and his work; he would kill man's driving urge to experience and understand all life. It seems that Goethe stood almost in opposition to Milton and Dante. They urged submission to the church's standard code of beliefs. Goethe had nothing to say of organized religion; his praise went to the ever seeking, ever dissatisfied spirit of man. The quality of dissatisfaction which Mephistopheles tried to pacify in Faust was also condemned by the medieval church as an unbecoming trait in a humble Christian. Goethe's God was more sympathetic than the church or Mephistopheles. While the other writers saw the devil's activities as wholly

\(^{34}\)Ibid., p. 11.
evil, Goethe recognized them as necessary. The scene between God and Mephistopheles was not a picture of two powerful enemies bent on destroying each other. It was, instead, a relationship between master (God) and servant. Goethe, a more modern writer, was less concerned with church dogma or social reform. His picture of the devil reflected the ideas of his period, a period the historians called the Enlightenment.

Diablo, Punisher of the Disobedient

Diablo is a combination of two devils. He is first of all the devil of Spanish folktales, transported to America. He is best represented here in the comic stories in which the devil is outwitted or defeated. He is next the creation of the early Spanish missionaries. These men undertook to convert great numbers of Indians to Christianity, and then to teach them Christian morals. Their problem was how to keep the Indians, and the Mexican peons living among them, from slipping back into a more primitive way of life and behavior. These simple, illiterate people could not be expected to grasp the profound truths of Christian theology, the priests reasoned. They must be shown a pattern of morals for daily living and then coerced into practicing what they were taught. For this last purpose, the priests made use of the devil, and Diablo entered his career as an earthly punisher of sinners.

The very practical application made of the devil is illustrated in a story told by an old Mexican Indian. She recalled
her priest telling his congregation a story about the devil. Once the devil came into a church, he said, while the young padre there was assuring his followers that the devil could not enter such a holy place. As he talked, an evil looking man in the back of the church began to laugh. When asked why he had so rudely interrupted the sermon, the man replied that the priest was wrong. The devil was present in this very building. He was slipping through the congregation, waving his tail slowly before the eyes of some, causing them to sleep during the sermon. He was using his tail to wiggle the tongues of the more talkative ones. Because this man was very evil himself, he could see the devil while the priest could not. But anyone could see the results of the devil’s presence.

Thus, the old priest explained to his listeners, the devil is sometimes present even in church. He disrupts the service by causing worshippers to sleep or talk.35 The priest who invented this story had a very definite aim in mind. He wanted his audience to stay awake and pay attention to his sermon.

Diablo is used most often to punish the wicked. The majority of stories collected for this paper show him punishing some wicked person. The stories of his being outwitted, or of carrying on other activities, are rare. He is most popular as a punisher, because this role serves a practical

35 This story was told to me in Denton, Texas, July 3, 1961, by graduate student Bernada Jiemes, librarian in San Diego, Texas. She had heard it in childhood from a Mexican-born Indian servant.
purpose. The priest probably instigated the stories, but they became popular among the members of the congregation. Many generations of Mexican parents have warned their children against wickedness with some of the stories already mentioned in this paper. Diablo may not be as complex and profound as the devils of literature, but he has served a more definite purpose in the life of a common people.

When Diablo comes to punish, he usually punishes the sin of disobedience. This may indicate something of the society that developed the stories. Today the stories are told mostly by members of the laboring class; the educated, white-collar worker has shrugged them off as ignorant superstitions and tried to forget them. The laborer still uses them. This is rather ironic because the stories were first used to keep the laborer in his place in the feudal society which the early Spanish settlers established in the New World. The peon who belonged to the laboring class in this society was important to the whole structure. The church and nobles desired to keep him in his very vital place. So they urged on him the importance of obeying his parents (which meant carrying on the customs of the past) and his church (which taught him humility and patience and, of course, obedience to superiors). Later, when many Mexican families found themselves surrounded by Anglos and living under a system they did not understand, they realized a threat to their way of life. Their children wanted to copy the ways of the neighboring Anglos. To preserve the
way of life they had known, and their culture and customs, the older generation found it harder to exact obedience from their children. They presented the same code of behavior that had been given to them and, by training their children to obedience, hoped to keep stability in their way of life. So they told more often the stories of the devil's punishing disobedient youth. The term disobedient became almost synonymous with wickedness. As one Southwesterner pointed out, modern Mexicans still stress the virtues of filial piety. Children are trained to obey their elders. Perhaps this explains the popularity of many current tales about the devil punishing some disobedient child. The devil is well known in Mexican folklore because he serves a very useful purpose.

Even though the four devils are supposedly based on the original Biblical character, they serve very different purposes and represent different ideas of evil. To Dante, in strife-torn Florence, the greatest evil seemed to be man's unfaithfulness to the institutions of church and state. Milton, who had been a proud rebel himself, saw in Satan the human qualities that alienated man from God. The Mexican uses stories of Diablo to frighten his children into obedience, just as early priests used the stories to stress obedience to the Spanish peon. Goethe is not preaching a sermon; he is merely trying to explain certain things about human nature.

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36 Honora DeBusk Smith, "Mexican Plazas Along the River of Souls," *Southwestern Lore*, edited by Dobie (Dallas, 1931), p. 84.
Mephistopheles represents destruction, but Goethe sees this as an inevitable consequence of change and even of progress. As was true in the various physical forms he assumed, the evil the devil represents changes from time to time. The sin most prevalent in any particular day was considered the chief characteristic of the devil. Thus, the devil represents a certain evil, because man is a certain kind of creature. The devil must change as man and his ideas change.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Although the popular Christian devil is pictured as the destroyer of man, he is dependent upon man for his own existence. The earthly creature has not always been kind to the demon, as can be seen by the unattractive forms in which men have made the devil appear. The French demonologist, Collin de Plancy, who claimed to have seen the devil in the nineteenth century, affirmed that the demon had most of the traits the folk tales had given him. This was natural, the devil explained to de Plancy, because God had decided to give the devil whatever form men attributed to him. "In the beginning I had no tail," the demon explained, "until popular belief gave it to me." He was given other traits which he did not desire, among them the horns which he claimed were given him by ladies who wished to terrify their children.\(^1\) Whatever evils the devil may have caused man have been partly revenged by the hideous forms man gave to the devil.

After enjoying great popularity in the literature and folklore of the Middle Ages, the devil is less sure of a place in the modern world. The few groups of people who still tell his stories to their children are being reduced by

\[^1\]Seligmann, op. cit., p. 235.
education and progress. The Mexican school child of today will probably be ashamed of his parents' superstitious stories and will not likely tell them to his child. The world crises in our century have so upset the European folk culture that many of the old tales and customs have been forgotten. The church alone seeks to preserve the devil's identity, and even it is losing interest in him. The Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury is debating whether to retain mention of the devil in a proposed new Church of England Catechism. The present catechism asks the believer to "renounce the devil and all his works, all the sinful lusts of the flesh." The proposed new version asks him to "renounce all that is wrong and fight against evil." In omitting the devil's name, the church is only reflecting the thoughts of the general public.

The figure of the devil in modern literature is illustrated in two works. In an article by Whittaker Chambers, the demon appears in a modern nightclub; he is a well-dressed, sophisticated gentleman with a Miami tan. This handsome devil comments on the fact that men no longer believe he exists, and is pleased with this situation. He can work undisturbed in anonymity. He assures his companion that he is still very active, still very much interested in man's destruction. He names several philosophies which he has inspired in modern man. He sounds like a modern Mephistopheles. He envies both

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man and God, for both of them are capable of creating something. He can only destroy, and his destruction makes way for God to improve the creation. In the popular book, *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis presents the correspondence between the chief demon and his nephew Wormwood. This worldly-wise demon instructs the younger one in the tactics of seducing a modern worldling. Here the devils are much improved in personal appearance but are still at their traditional jobs of causing discord among men.  

These two works of modern writers show the modern attitude toward the traditional devil. He is still recognized as the power of evil, but is not nearly so fearful. He becomes a likable character. The medieval folk gave the devil animal-like physical characteristics. One so evil and fearful must be very ugly, they reasoned. The Mexicans allow him to be handsome, but give him the animal feet and glowing eyes to remind us of his true nature. By showing his appearance more pleasing, we tend to lessen the terror he could cause. In most cases he is no longer a power to be feared.

These changes in the popular Christian devil may have come because he outlived his usefulness to man. The things which the folk used to explain with stories of the devil and his witches can now be explained by an elementary science student, without the aid of a fiend. The anti-social behavior in man

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is now explained by the psychologist in a much different way than the minister used to explain it. The stories about the devil, for most people, are already in the same category with fairy tales and other stories told mostly for amusement. A great many folk would testify that they believe in the devil, but could not give a vivid description of him or relate his history as the medieval peasant could have done. He is for them some vague power about which they do not concern themselves or their imaginations. He is no longer needed by them to explain any event or to serve any useful purpose.

A few voices have been raised against this treatment of the devil. The Roman Catholic Church has been more insistent than most Protestants in keeping alive a belief in the reality of the devil's powers. The Swiss writer and student of religion, Denis de Rougemont, warns mankind that the devil does exist. In his book, The Devil's Share, Rougemont claims that the most clever trick the devil ever invented was to cause man not to believe in him. The American theologian, Reinhold Neibuhr, gives the same warning in Nature and Destiny of Man. Other students of history and religion warn of the danger of ignoring or denying the existence of the devil as a power of evil.4

The present position of the popular Christian devil differs in many parts of the world. He is probably strongest in the folklore of those people of the Christian world who

4Ibid., pp. 76-85.
are mostly uneducated. The devil is probably more widely known to the peons of Mexico and South America than to any other groups. There are some peoples, many still in a primitive state, who have only recently been converted to Christianity. No doubt they have already given the devil many new and interesting forms. If the devil gains a new foothold in the minds of the mass, it may be among these people to whom he is a new creature. Although not active in the modern American's folklore, he has a place or purpose to most of Christian America. The problem of evil is still a real one for the common man. He does not fully understand or accept the psychologist's explanations of it. He still searches for a cause of the evil. The idea of a certain supernatural power responsible for evil is deeply entrenched. The devil has been considered the cause of evil in the Christian world for the past 2000 years. While it is doubtful that his popularity will ever attain the heights it reached in the Middle Ages, he is not likely to be completely forgotten until the common man can accept some other explanation for the cause of evil.

What the future holds for the devil is hard to predict. World events will have a great effect upon him. If some unforeseen event should destroy the Christian religion, the devil would probably die with it. Barring that unlikely catastrophe, he may be destroyed by science, which has done much harm to him already and will probably do more. The tendency of most moderns to make him some vague personality
is not in his favor either. Even if modern Christians decide to recognize him as a real power, it is doubtful he will ever become part of the folklore of a citizen of the twentieth century. At present attention is turned too much toward the activities of the space age. The masses would no longer accept the superstitious stories once told about the popular Christian devil. He could only be the nucleus of material concerning moral problems. It seems unlikely that the masses would ever become that concerned with moral problems. It is believed that when the devil is no longer a character in the folklore of a people, he has ceased to exist for them, for all practical purposes. Only folklore can make him real to the present generation and pass him on to the next. And the folk do not long remember stories which have no application to their present lives. If the devil survives, he must once again make himself useful to man.
Here are some of the folk tales that students have told to me. I have included the stories which were mentioned in the paper. The first three stories show how the devil punished a disobedient child; the next two tell how the devil was outwitted by some human being; the next two stories tell about the devil's guarding a treasure. The last story shows how the cross saved a man from the devil. The story told by Barnada Jiences is related fully in Chapter IV, and for that reason I have not included it here. I have tried to retain the flavor of the stories by using the distorted English in which they were related. I wish I could keep the excitement and expression of horror with which they were told.

Rosita and the Devil

This story is about a girl named Rosita. She liked to dance very much. She would go to a dance every time there was one. One night her mother told her not to go to this dance because she had gone to a lot of dances already. The girl didn't pay attention to her mother, so she went to the dance. At this time the song "Celito Cindy" was being sung a lot. When the girl was sitting in a chair, the band began to play this song; and it was her favorite song. All of a sudden there at the door appeared a very handsome young man. She
liked him at first sight. All the girls turned to look at him. But this handsome man came straight to Rosita and asked her to dance. Everybody envied Rosita at this time. But while they were all dancing, the other boys and girls noticed that he had the feet of a rooster; and they started yelling that he was the devil. When Rosita heard this, she stopped and looked down. It was true. Then she fainted. The devil ran outside and disappeared. The next day Rosita was dead of shock.—Told by Edna Vasquez, Midland, Texas, May 22, 1961.

The Disobedient Sisters

This story took place in Ysleta, Texas, near El Paso. It is believed to have been true. There were two sisters who wanted to go to a dance. They asked their mother if they could go. The mother did not let them. So they walked out of the house and started walking toward town. They came to a street. A car stopped and a handsome young man offered them a ride. One of the girls got in front with him, and the other got in the back seat. The girl in the back seat looked through the front mirror and saw in the young man's eyes—fire!

She told the other girl, "Look at his eyes. They're on fire."

When the girls screamed, the devil scratched them. That same night some people found them in the street. They called an ambulance and took them to the hospital.—Told by Margarita Lopez, Midland, Texas, May 17, 1961.
Once there was this girl who lived with her parents and her grandmother. The grandmother was very old and was paralyzed and the girl had to wait on her. But this girl was lazy and sometimes said mean things to her grandmother. One day the grandmother asked for a glass of water, but the girl was busy getting ready to go to a party and didn't get it for her.

"I'm tired of waiting on you," the girl said. "I wish the devil would take you."

The grandmother warned the girl that this was a wicked thing to say, but the girl didn't pay any attention to her.

She came in late that night and went to bed. All of a sudden she woke up. She heard something moving under the bed. When she looked, she saw the devil. She was so scared she couldn't say anything, but she started praying in her heart. She stayed awake the rest of the night praying. She decided that when she got up that morning she would tell her grandmother she was sorry for being mean to her.

When morning came and the girl was not afraid, she went to her grandmother's room. But the old woman was very still, and the girl thought, "She's still asleep. I'll wait until later."

Much later this girl went back to the old woman's room. Then she discovered that her grandmother was dead. The girl
was very frightened. "Now I can never tell her how sorry I am," she thought. "The devil can haunt me the rest of my life."

This girl never saw the devil again because she had repented in her heart. But she was very sad for the rest of her life for she could never tell her grandmother she was sorry for treating her so mean.—Told by Flo Sais, Pyote, Texas, April 16, 1958.

Juan and the Devil

This story begins when Maria and Juan have been married for about three years. They are very poor. They have no children, and they want to have pretty clothes and go places. So one day when Juan was walking on the sidewalk, he found a paper that said, "If anyone dares to call the devil at twelve o'clock at night he will become a very rich man." Juan told his wife about the paper; and that night when the clock struck twelve, Juan yelled for the devil and he appeared. The devil told Juan that he had dared and now he was going to be a very rich man. But he told Juan that his soul was due or he would come back for him, when an angel would crawl to Juan's right foot. Juan said that was all right with him.

When the devil was gone, Juan said to himself, "Oh, we don't have any children so it will be a long time before a baby or—how did the devil say?—an angel will crawl to my feet."
The two became very rich and went on trips and bought pretty things. Then four more years passed, and then Maria told Juan she was going to have a baby. He was very happy, and every Sunday they went to church. But then one day the baby was born, and the year passed fast. Now the baby was crawling. So one day the baby came crawling, and he took hold of Juan's right foot. When Juan saw this, he went to a field where there were roses; and he put crosses all over him because he knew that the devil was coming after him. When it came time for the devil to come, he appeared and told Juan to come from where he was and take his crosses off. Juan told him that he was very comfortable where he was and that he was ready to pay him. The devil then went away because he had lost and Juan had won. Juan kept all the money and was a rich man. He lived with his family very happily for the rest of his life.—Told by Edna Vasquez, Midland, Texas, May 22, 1961.

Juan the Gambler

Once there was this fellow named Juan who liked to gamble. One day he gambled with the devil and lost; the devil told him to come to his house after three years. So when the time came, Juan set out to find the devil's house. He asked all the animals, but none of them knew where it was. Finally he asked the eagle. "You got to travel seven days into the mountains," the eagle said, "and you will find the devil's
house. Now I'll tell you something else. When you get there, go first to a lake near by and wait until sundown. The devil's three daughters come there to bathe. The youngest one called Blanca Flor is very pretty. Wait until they are in the lake; then hide Blanca Flor's clothes. Don't give the clothes back until she promises to help you."

So Juan did everything the eagle told him, and Blanca Flor promised to help him. When he saw the devil, the devil told Juan he would give him a chance to save himself. "If you can do three jobs for me, I will let you go," the devil promised.

Then he took Juan out in the front yard and pointed to a field that was rocky and dry and had nothing growing on it. "I want a beautiful garden there," the devil said. "You start work tomorrow morning, and you have until the sun comes up the next day."

So poor Juan, he went to work digging in the field and planting flower seeds, and the devil rode by several times and laughed at him. Blanca Flor came at sunset and told Juan to go to bed. That night she brought her little demons in; and when the devil looked out his window the next morning, there was a beautiful garden.

Then the devil showed Juan a mountain that was in front of the house. "I want it moved to the back yard," he told Juan.
Juan got a shovel and began carrying the mountain to the back yard, but he didn't move very much of it. That night Blanca Flor finished the job for him.

The devil was pretty mad by now, so he called Juan.
"There's one more thing you got to do, Juan. Come to my corral tomorrow at noon. There's a horse you got to ride."

When Juan talked to Blanca Flor, she told him what to do.
"The horse is my father in disguise," she said. "My mother id the saddle, and I'm the bridle. Get on the horse without the saddle and whip him and use your spurs."

So Juan did this, and the horse couldn't throw him off. After a while the horse got tired and stopped and let Juan get off. That night Juan went to see the devil again, and the devil was bruised and looked tired. He had to let Juan go, but he didn't want to. Blanca Flor was in love with Juan, so she ran off with him and they got married. They lived happily ever after.—Told by Alfonso Natividad, Pyote, Texas, April 15, 1958.

The Buried Treasure in the Temple

This is a story which happened away back in the 1800's. My grandfather told it to me. It happened to an uncle of my grandfather. He lived in Vera Cruz, Mexico. He heard about a treasure that was buried in a church. This treasure was dangerous because it belonged to the devil. It was in a town near a mountain called Guadalupe. This town was a ghost
town; several old houses were there, but no people. Beneath
the mountain was an old church which had been built since
1784. This treasure was buried under the floor of the church.

Well, my grandfather’s uncle didn’t believe anything
about the devil. He went into the church, and it was very
dark. It was very quiet. Suddenly he heard the door open.
Then he heard the door close and latch. Then a voice called
him by name. It said, "Give me your soul before you get this
treasure."

The man said, "I give you nothing at all. You don’t
even deserve a glass of water."

Then the devil said, "You have to give me your soul to
get that treasure, because that treasure is mine. When a
person gives me his soul, he can have the treasure."

My grandfather’s uncle was very frightened, and he ran
out of the church and didn’t stop until he was out of the town.
This treasure is still supposed to be there in the church.
This treasure will not be found until a person is willing to
give his soul to the devil.—Told by Alicia Aquilar, Midland,

The Buried Treasure

My cousin knew this man who found this treasure. This
man used to work in town and walk back and forth every day to
his house. Every day about dark he would walk past this big
tree. Sometimes he would see lights or hear funny noises
near his tree, so he thought maybe a treasure was buried there. He noticed that these lights were always above the same spot of ground, so one night he decided to dig. Well, pretty soon he found these six gold bars. He got so excited he ran to get his brother-in-law to help him carry them. When they came back to the place, the gold bars were gone. Instead, there were six big pieces of charcoal. You see, if this man had taken the gold and not showed it to anybody else, he could have had it. But you're supposed to take it when you get the chance, because the devil won't let you have another chance.

Told by Bonifacio Natividad, Pyote, Texas, February 12, 1958.

The Devil at the Dance

There's this dance hall in Balmorhea, Texas, where the people used to go every Saturday night for a party. It's closed now because of a terrible thing that happened there. One night when they were having a very good party, a handsome young man came to the dance. He had on a new black suit, and all the girls wanted to dance with him. There were a lot of little kids there at the dance, and they were playing and running across the dance floor. Nobody paid much attention to them except this stranger. He frowned at them and then told them to go outside and play.

So they all went outside except this one little boy. There was a chair standing by the wall, and he hid under the chair and watched the feet of the people as they danced by.
When the stranger in black came by, the little boy saw that his feet were shaped like a rooster's.

"He's the devil!" he screamed and ran outside.

Well, the devil was so mad about this that he clawed everybody there and killed them before they could get away. All except one. The man who was playing the fiddle wasn't hurt. You see, he was making a cross as he played his fiddle and the devil couldn't hurt him.

That night the other people in the town closed up this dance hall and nailed boards over the windows and doors. Nobody has been inside this building since that night, and most people won't walk past it at night.—Told by Jesusita Natividad, Pyote, Texas, April 15, 1958.
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